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From the editors

Winter is well and truly on its way in the Manawatu, with many cold nights and wet, miserable days – not much temptation to venture outdoors, but a nice opportunity to catch up on your professional reading and thinking by curling up with *Early Education!*

There are many reasons for reflecting on early childhood as we know it this week and to consider different world views of what is important for children. Like many of you, I have witnessed many changes in my nearly 26 years of involvement with early childhood, across successive governments and policies. The field has made great strides in terms of visibility, educational quality, research and advocacy for children, but it appears that we need to garner strength for a battle ahead to defend these gains.

The early childhood community and other sectors of education have been hit hard by different world views this week, with the announcement that the government will cease funding the Centres of Innovation projects at the end of June and will cease to fund professional development for *Kei tua o te pae, Te Whāriki* and *Foundations for Discovery* from December 2009. There is currently no indication of what future professional development for teachers will involve, except that it will reflect government priorities. Our thoughts go out to those teams most intimately affected by these sudden and seemingly poorly judged decisions. We are fortunate in this volume to have one product of this former investment in early childhood: Ann Allen and Glenda Wightman describe successes the Pukerua Bay Kindergarten has achieved in use of ICT as part of the *Foundations for Discovery* programme. We applaud this contribution and mourn the loss of the funding that enabled such innovative research in early childhood. We need to let this government know that their budget decision making is short sighted and will ultimately impact on the quality of education and care that children receive.

The writing appears to be on the wall in terms of government priorities for early childhood. The decision to maintain current adult:child ratios in the new budget signals a rejection of previous government direction and we will need to watch their movements with regard to our agreed priorities in the strategic plan. Although I recently heard John Keys publicly declare that early childhood is a priority for the government, this was also framed in economic terms; clearly producing future tax payers is of paramount importance. Joy Cullen's letter from Melbourne in this volume gives important insight into changes in early childhood in Australia and how government policy can affect the lives of children and their families in sometimes unanticipated ways. It will be important while this government reigns that we champion the importance of having well qualified, reflective practitioners and not support the surprising early childhood voices that have recently espoused right wing, profit driven philosophies that teachers of young children do not need qualifications.

The themes of reflecting on practice and strong communities are clearly evident in this volume, as in addition to the paper already mentioned, Ramila Sadikeen and Jenny Ritchie report on research funded by TLRI and NZEI at Brooklands Kindergarten in New Plymouth, which discusses how one kindergarten community has embraced biculturalism, with positive results for teachers, children and families. We also have some other thought provoking articles in this volume. The first is by Tae Hashimoto about the meeting of Asian languages and cultures within one kindergarten community. The second is by Anna Whitehead, who discusses an intervention using yoga with a small group of young school children, which supported children's emerging spirituality. Finally, we have one from Lynsi Latham Saunders about how an early childhood community has to work together to support John, whose behaviour had been causing much anxiety. All these articles provoke us to rethink our current practices and offer new possibilities for learning for children. We conclude this volume with a book review by Sue Stover on Helen May's new edition of "Politics in the playground".

Before I sign off on this volume, it is important that we take a moment as a community and give our thanks to Cushla Scrivens, who was editor of this journal for several years and has acted as coach and guide for Sue Stover and me since we took over as editors in 2006. The "one year" that Cushla promised me as support into the editorial role has turned into three and Sue and I both immensely grateful for the guidance and wisdom Cushla has provided. More importantly, I think we need to stop and think about Cushla's contribution to early childhood education in this country – not just editing Early Education after Caryl Hamer handed the reins to her - but also as supervisor to many Massey postgraduate students and provoking a generation of teachers to think about management, leadership and advocacy issues in the early childhood sector. On behalf of the Advisory Committee for the journal, Cushla, can I publicly extend our heartfelt thanks for your generosity, your wisdom and your uncompromising belief in the rights of children to experience high quality environments? We hope that you enjoy the many other activities and enjoyments that we know that retirement holds for you.

Finally, we hope that you will enjoy reading this volume as much as we have enjoyed editing it and it will provoke you to defend the successes and gains that we have made as a profession since 1985. As always, don't hesitate to contact me or Sue Stover, if you would like to contribute to *Early Education*.

Kia kaha

Claire McLachlan, Ph.D
Co-editor, *Early Education*

Letter from Mornington, Victoria

Kia ora katoa

Mornington is a seaside town south-east of Melbourne's urban fringe. I now live here following my retirement from Massey University, in 2007, and consider myself a trans-Tasman citizen – rather than a displaced Kiwi! I still compare initiatives in early childhood in Australia with New Zealand's early childhood services, ponder reasons for differences, and consider challenges that arise when we take on new perspectives.

I frequently walk past an empty ABC Learning centre, a legacy of the collapse of the ABC empire in Australia, and reflect about the hazards of entrusting early childhood services – a public good – to a commercial enterprise. Should early childhood education and care be deemed to be a commodity and ultimately governed by a profit and loss motive? Yet, dilemmas do exist: control over the unfettered growth of corporate centres is undoubtedly warranted by the ABC events but with the large growth in full day care services in both countries it is hard to see how for-profit services could just disappear. The receivership of the ABC centres has raised issues that cut across a simplistic position that all children's services should be community-based. For example, some parents who lost access to ABC centres were unhappy at the alternative offered by the receivers because it involved replacing a small (for-profit) centre with a larger (not-for-profit) facility. Clearly, there are major issues for government funding of childcare, notwithstanding the recent sale of 210 of the 241 centres deemed to be financially unviable, to 65 operators.

The recent Victorian bushfire tragedies also raise issues for services and systems. A Bushfire Survival Plan is part of the official language of Victoria in much the same way that earthquake plans are promoted in New Zealand. What does this mean for schools and children's centres? One mother in the fire-alert zone reported that when she collected her baby early from child care on a high-risk day she found staff worrying about how to evacuate the babies, should they have to evacuate before parents arrived. The monitoring role of New Zealand's Education Review Office makes good sense, if ambiguities of this nature are detected in a centre's policies and procedures. Children of all ages are showing signs of anxiety and trauma, following the firestorms, as they cope with loss of homes, families, friends, pets, familiar toys and routines. The national professional association, Early Childhood Australia, responded promptly through its on-line News (ECA WebWatch), disseminating information about children, bushfires and trauma, and counselling

teams have been provided for schools and communities through the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. But the most heartening outcome has been the informal assistance and support unhesitatingly offered by neighbours and communities. This is a powerful reminder that early childhood services are part of the communities in which they are located; that relationships with families and communities form the basis of networking in times of stress.

To a New Zealander, Australia's provisions for early childhood education and care seem strangely fragmented: first, because of the continuing divide between education and care; and second, because of differences in provisions across States: structures, school starting age, curricula differ in each State. In late 2007, the new federal Labor Government announced comprehensive policies to address these differences, including the development of a *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care*, and a *National Early Years Learning Framework* (birth to 5 years). I was initially concerned about the policy to locate the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care within the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Would early childhood be seen solely through an instrumental lens, I wondered; its function viewed primarily for its contribution to a skilled workforce? This concern has lessened as it became clear that early childhood academics, professionals and stakeholders would be fully involved in the development of both Frameworks (now in draft form). Thus far, the draft Learning Framework has avoided the trap of being overtly driven by a narrow school-based skills focus that can beset early childhood provisions if conceptualised primarily as a pre-academic programme.

I am less sure that it will avoid the trap of complacency – the reaction that "of course, this is what we do" - in the way that many educators reacted to the draft *Te Whāriki* curriculum, in the early 1990s. To NZ's early childhood educators, the four learning outcomes that structure the Australian Framework are couched in familiar terms: (1) children have a strong sense of identity and well-being; (2) children are confident and involved learners; (3) children are effective communicators; and (4) children actively participate in relationships and communities. The framework specifies six principles that underpin early childhood pedagogy: the rights of the child; secure relationships and interactions; genuine partnerships with families; respect for diversity; commitment to equity;

reflective practice. The concept of *play-based learning* is central to the framework and discussion of the term *intentional teaching* reflects contemporary views that teachers have an active role in early childhood curricula.

> ## *Diversity in its many forms is fundamental to Australian society; something to be celebrated - but this requires shared understandings that take time and commitment to evolve.*

The very familiarity of this language from a NZ perspective suggests there could be several challenges ahead for Australian early childhood educators. Australia's early childhood services have been strongly developmentally oriented. Will educators, as happened in NZ, initially underestimate the pedagogical challenges of the new framework? Use of the term *'facilitate'*, to structure sections on teaching strategies evokes a conservative view of early childhood teaching despite reference to a range of teaching strategies. The framework appears more detailed about essential learning areas than *Te Whāriki* but will still depend critically on the teacher's knowledge of content areas. Will teacher education and professional developmental programmes respond to this stronger focus on content knowledge? Just as I have queried if New Zealand's teachers fully understood the centrality of culture in children's learning, I wonder if the full implications of the diversity principles will be realised. Diversity in its many forms is fundamental to Australian society; something to be celebrated - but this requires shared understandings that take time and commitment to evolve.

Many of you could recall, as I do, how critical it was for New Zealand's early childhood community to recognise *Te Whāriki*'s challenge to entrenched thinking and practices before new forms of pedagogy could evolve and be researched. Commitment to *Te Whāriki*'s ideology has grown over time, but adopting a critical stance to working with *Te Whāriki* - essential to both reflective practice and evidence-based teaching, has been slower to evolve. What is the evidence about children's foundational learning in early childhood centres? Does the early childhood curriculum make a difference to school learning and life chances? These are evaluative questions for both countries to grapple with as public funding for early childhood education increases.

Best wishes,

Joy Cullen

Poem

E tu Kahikatea
I see the Kahikatea,
a rusty ace of spades
stranded on the slope
isolated,
the swamp drained away.

Hei whakapae ururoa
Be staunch.
Stretch as high as you can.
Face forward.

Awhi mai, awhi atu
"Give me back the Waikato,
my children need water-laden soil
for their seeds to germinate.
I gave you
lemon wood for butter boxes."

"We are in this world together,"
Tatou, tatou e.

E tu Kahikatea
Stand tall!
You are so beautiful;
soft yellow-green foliage
smooth grey trunk,
frosted-blue and orange fruit.

E koro koe e hinga
Stretch out your branches,
Giant tree.
We cling to you like epiphytes
and shelter at your roots.

Awhi mai awhi atu.
We could put back the water
allow some flooding
make a space for seedlings to grow.
Reserve you as the tallest in the forest.

Tatou tatou e
We can do this together.

E tu Puriri
Stand tall Puriri tree,
You feed the birds and give shelter,
charm us with your flowers and berries.

E rere ou peka
Be strong.
Spread your finger leaves
Gather the rain from future storms.

Awhi mai, awhi atu
Enjoy the drips, the drops, the puddles,
The mist, the rain, the snow.
The joys and challenges of water.
Swim.
Fear and face the floods.

Together we will triumph.
Tatou tatou e

Maryrose Doull

Researching Tiriti based practice

A teacher's journey

By Ramila Sadikeen and Jenny Ritchie

Since 1996, early childhood educators in Aotearoa have been working with the strongly bicultural curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). This document is founded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi's validation of Māori people, their language and culture. Whilst it is recognised that this is challenging for early childhood teachers who lack facility in the Māori language and culture, many teachers have worked hard to transform their practice to reflect Te Tiriti-based obligations. This paper reports on a study by one such kindergarten head teacher, Ramila Sadikeen, who focussed on exploring *Te Whāriki* principles of Ngā Hononga and Whānau Tangata.

Introduction

Over the past eight years, Te Kura Mokopuna o Brooklands (Brooklands Kindergarten) in New Plymouth has been on a journey of discovering what is involved in transforming a state-funded kindergarten to embrace a foundation of kaupapa Māori (Māori educational philosophy). Through Ramila's leadership, and support of colleagues, kaumātua, and whānau, this commitment to a kaupapa Māori philosophy has been nurtured, guiding daily enactment within centre operations and consolidating a strengthening of relationships with whānau Māori.

For Ramila, who has Sri Lankan Malay ancestry and over 25 years of kindergarten teaching experience, a disposition of enquiry and a strong commitment to social justice underpin her approach. Teasing the conscience of her pedagogical perspective as a practitioner have been questions such as:

- How can we claim inclusion if we exclude the place of our whānau Māori?

- How might we embrace all other cultures that are a part of the diverse composition that makes up our communities?

Adopting a critical lens through which to view her kindergarten's practice, Ramila has been able to identify significant signposts and milestones along what she describes as 'our journey'. During this journey she has examined aspects of culture, inclusion and equity. Following the work of Jenny Ritchie (2002) and Cheryl Rau and Jenny Ritchie (2006), Ramila began to lead her

centre to embrace a 'whanaungatanga approach', adopting particular Māori concepts such as awhinatanga and aroha (reciprocal obligation to care) to guide their practice in daily interactions with whānau as a way of addressing the inequities of cultural in/exclusion.

Building and sustaining relationships within the centre community has been an ongoing commitment. It has required leadership qualities that could withstand the test of time. It has tested the unwavering vision to see a philosophy consolidate while managing aspects of an ethical, moral conscience that has tapped on the discomforting, sensitive and challenging nature of cultural issues and their underlying power effects. Yet for Ramila and her colleagues, the rewards of embracing a philosophy based on whanaungatanga can be seen in meaningful relationships based on mutual respect and reciprocity.

Relationships with kaumātua have been significant in enabling the teachers at Te Kura Mokopuna o Brooklands, who are all of Pākehā/Tauiwi ancestry, to increase their sense of ease when enacting Te Ao Māori constructs, and have been instrumental in consolidating whanaungatanga. *Te Whāriki* considers that:

> There should be a commitment to, and opportunities for, a Māori contribution to the programme. Adults working in the early childhood education setting should recognise the significance of whakapapa, understand and respect the process of working as a whānau, and demonstrate respect for Māori elders. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 64)

The regular involvement of, and guidance from the centre kaumātua, has served as a bridge to enact Te Tiriti-based commitments, alongside the the expectations contained within *Te Whāriki*. This kaumātua presence has been pivotal in consolidating the ongoing relationships of Māori-Pākehā partnership within the centre. Brooklands' journey demonstrates how a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi may be transmitted into practice that gives "all children an opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritages of both partners to Tiriti o Waitangi" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

Integral also to the Brooklands' journey has been a commitment to ongoing research within the centre, which

Kaumātua Albie Martin welcoming tamariki and whānau. Pōwhiri and poroporoaki are rituals integral to Brooklands Kindergarten and part of their embracing of whanaungatanga.

has progressed the implementation of whanaungatanga. Alongside her involvement as a co-researcher within the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project Te Puawaitanga – partnerships with tamariki and whānau in bicultural early childhood care and education (Ritchie & Rau, 2008), Ramila undertook her own research project. She chose to focus on *Te Whāriki* principles Ngā Hononga and Whānau Tangata as a springboard for strengthening understandings and enactment of the bicultural content of the curriculum.

Research questions

The research questions that Ramila adopted were:

- In what ways are practitioners equipped with skills and knowledge to implement the curriculum in accordance to the requirements of the revised statement of desirable objectives and practices to reflect the unique perspective of *Te Whāriki* as a bicultural document?

- What is tino rangatiratanga? What is the teacher's role as an early childhood educator in support of tino rangatiratanga in consideration of the treaty?

The questions and this research built on findings of Ritchie (2002) that strengthening provision of bicultural aspirations of the early childhood curriculum within ECE settings is a central professional responsibility for educators and that a key strategy for achieving this is to build relationships with the whānau Maori of children in their setting.

Methodology

This project utilised a qualitative, narrative methodology as a vehicle to gather and understand thoughts, actions and processes of participants involved in the centre environment. As narrative researchers we view our research as a landscape where our attention is turned to how we are engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving our lives within particular social and cultural plotlines (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Huber, 2002).Narratives were a meaningful way of seeking the stories of the various participants, in order to create a shared story about Tiriti-based practice grounded in honouring of the *Te Whāriki* principles of Ngā Hononga - and Whānau Tangata - (Ministry of Education, 1996). Narrative processes are consistent also with current credit-based early childhood assessment (Carr, 2001), and with oral story-telling as knowledge transmission in Māori and other indigenous cultures.

Narratives were gathered from two whānau Māori, eight Pākehā teachers, five whānau Pākehā, two Māori elders, and two members of the wider community of Taranaki. These narratives uncovered personal thoughts and expert commentary on life and learning in connection to their sense of belonging in our centre. This has been an enlightening process. Parents, extended family and elders were asked how they saw te reo (Māori language) and ngā tikanga Māori (Māori rituals) being promoted and affirmed in the kindergarten. The children were asked about how it

Tamariki perform during the end of year concert, which celebrates all of the kindergarten cultures coming together as whānau. This concert forms part of the annual festive occasion, at which kaumātua and invited guests share a hāngi, honouring values inherent to our land and tangata whenua.

feels to belong to the Brooklands' whānau in an attempt to make links to their understanding of whanaungatanga. Participants' understandings of Te Tiriti o Waitangi generated further questions about what they thought of one's own culture and heritage and how this impacts on inclusion and equitable opportunities for all within the centre.

Transcribing the narratives provided Ramila with the opportunity to reflect on messages and meanings underlying the feelings expressed. Through this time-consuming process emerged understandings of *Te Whāriki*, Te Tiriti, rangatiratanga, tikanga, reo, and whanaungatanga, as well as celebrations and barriers. Engagement with these diverse narratives identified tensions between contradictory, complimentary, positive, encouraging, and progressive perspectives held, as well as ascertaining the participants' understandings of the wider implications and intersections of culture, power, relationships, family and community. Most importantly, the process of transcribing stimulated Ramila to further explore academic literature, generating signposts which indicated that the research was proceeding effectively.

Findings

This paper reflects only a brief overview and sample of the data that Ramila gathered and delivered in her full report submitted to NZEI in 2007. Several key findings are evident however. Firstly, the narrative data reinforces the importance of relationships signified through welcoming, spiritual connection and dialogue. Reinforced also is the capacity for early childhood programmes to provide bridging links to enable communities to generate shared understandings of history and identity. Thirdly, the centrality of educators

in leading this process of re-normalising Māori enactment within early childhood education in Aotearoa is evident. Acknowledging the historical context whereby Māori have had their beliefs and practices marginalised, their culture submerged within the general mix of 'ethnic minorities', teachers such as Ramila and her colleagues are embedding Māori ways of being and doing within their programme as normal, everyday early childhood pedagogy.

Relationships

The data reinforces our understandings of the centrality of relationships, enacted through an acute awareness of the importance of acknowledging each person entering into the centre environment. From this initial welcoming, opportunities can be pursued to build upon previous information shared as ongoing dialogue furthers opportunities for understandings of various cultural perspectives and shared meaning-making. Brooklands' whanaungatanga approach highlights welcoming and farewelling all whānau with a pōwhiri and poroporoaki, enacting Te Ao Māori rituals in a tangible and meaningful way. The Brooklands' community has begun to make links to Māori ways of being and knowing, where a sense of ease has increased with a growing level of comfort in knowing and appreciating the indigenous culture of Aotearoa. A whānau sense of belonging is thus enabled.

For Ramila, this sense of belonging transposes to enable cultural sensitivity, cultural identity and respect within the diverse cultural perspectives. She describes this process beginning 'with gentle openings of the heart and the mind to give and receive moments of examination of the unknown, the unfamiliar and the provocation of the soul. This openness enables a process of getting to know those

around us and with us, generating a cohesive coexistence in a true spirit of inclusion. Although we may be somewhat overwhelmed by the complexity of our increasingly culturally diverse communities, it is still up to us to find ways to enlighten our hearts, accessing paths that would enable us to know a more about cultural perspectives other than ours'.

Bridging shared identities and histories

In addition to the ongoing welcoming, relationships with kaumātua, and everyday enactment of manaakitanga, the emphasis on spiritual connectedness enacted through regular practice of karakia provides Brooklands with a reservoir of cultural reference points to enrich meaningful learning with people, places and things. One such important landmark of the Taranaki rohe which is visited annually by Brooklands is their local marae.

Te Whāriki signals the importance of including "activities, stories, and events that have connections with Māori children's lives are an essential and enriching part of the curriculum for all children in early childhood settings" (p. 41).It further emphasises that:

> Māori and Tagata Pasifika children will be more likely to feel at home if they regularly see Māori and Tagata Pasifika adults in the early childhood setting. Liaison with local tangata whenua and a respect for papatuanuku should be promoted" (p. 54).

Accordingly, "Appropriate connections with iwi and hapu should be established, and staff should support tikanga Māori and the use of the Māori language" (p. 55).

During the collection of narrative data, Nana H shared her responses to having visited the local Parihaka marae on a kindergarten trip with her grandson. Nana H spoke of how the visit had generated in her a sense of belonging, "*Over at Parihaka – oh we felt very important. I felt I belong here now with my grandson. It's really nice!*"This is even more salient when we discover that this was only her first visit to Parihaka:

> *I have never been to Parihaka before. The first thing is that it really surprised me to see how ordinary Parihaka was. I thought Parihaka being one of the well known tribes in New Zealand and with a name like Parihaka,they haven't got the big fancy gates and it's quite humbling and so all that greatness that was there is still there but they are not showing off. I was really amazed! I expected it to be almost like a showplace like Rotorua. Parihaka was like going back to reality. It's like going back to a real place, it really shows what happened. They haven't gone commercial. I could feel the history in Parihaka. It's the real thing; Māori culture is such a saleable thing you know!*"

Nana H distinguishes her associations with the commercial aspects of te Ao Māori, exemplified in the tourist packaging as seen in Rotorua, with the humility and sense of history she felt at Parihaka. She recognises the importance of making connections with the heritage of the land.

For Nana H, Brooklands is an appropriate educational setting for her grandson, who has Māori ancestry, yet she acknowledges that "there will be people who would not want to come here because of things Māori. There will be those who will miss out, they are not going to have a bigger experience in life, by not being part of a place like this."Nana H alludes to the covert existence of hegemonic discourse that is unappreciative of te Ao Māori, and its potential to limit children's and families' access to wider views of culture, heritage, land and people.

For Nana H, the Parihaka visit becomes part of her own journey of discovery:

> *Tracing my family history, I have read more history about Māori culture. Being able to visit a place like Parihaka and being there with my grandson and seeing things Māori integrated in his life in a daily way at kindergarten means a lot for both of us, it is interesting and I know this whole generation will have to work it through for the better!*

Early childhood education is uniquely positioned to provide a bridge to wider cultural horizons, extending these for both children and their wider families. This is significant, since people's identities are shaped by their life experiences and the discourses that have enabled them to articulate their social and cultural positioning.Brooklands' kaupapa of accessing significant places in their community creates openings for whānau/families to reframe their understandings of the legacy of our shared cultural histories.

Renormalising Māori enactment

Through their commitment to enactment of kaupapa Māori understandings, such as the concepts of whānaungatanga and manaakitanga, Ramila and her colleagues became aware of ways in which 'normality' is a construct defined by mainstream Pākehā, and the impacting dynamics of this power-culture paradigm. A key finding of this study emphasises mainstream Pākehā practitioners' enactment of their potential to make a significant contribution towards progressing the transformative potential of *Te Whāriki* to generate practice that moves beyond colonised educational frames (Ritchie & Rau, 2008). Ramila's colleague articulates her understanding of this enactment:

> *The important parts of the bicultural curriculum are the tikanga. We all need opportunities to be a part of rituals like pōwhiriand poroporoaki,taima whārikiand projects that bring the community together and to have karakia and waiata as part and parcel of all things that we do in the centre. The core element of the bicultural curriculum is the use of te reo and making links with the community and to have a kaumātua to give us overall support.And when we reflect these, the Māori families will come in and see it and feel comfortable and from there the relationships will start to grow and continue. For us it is great to see many Māori whānau empowered to take their 'Māoriness' and to embrace and live it. It has been great to have whānau Māori take on doing the karanga and whaikōrero and leading the way to visit the marae.*

Key transformative elements that make meaning for practitioners in early childhood in a kaupapa Māori context are seen here in the enactment of tikanga Māori. Educators who are committed to enhancing their incorporation of Te Ao Māori have potentiality to engage and initiate Māori engagement in the education setting, which can be linked to tino rangatiratanga. The two research questions for Ramila's study inquired as to teachers' competence with regard to our bicultural curriculum, and in support of Māori aspirations **for** tino rangatiratanga. Ramila and her colleagues, through generating deeply respectful relationships with kaumātua and Māori families, are delivering educational practice that is consistent with *Te Whāriki*'s requirement that educators focus on "bicultural issues, [and] actively seek Māori contributions to decision making" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 40). They are responding to Māori calls for their values and knowledges to be honoured and celebrated.

Conclusion

In this study, the transformative potential of *Te Whāriki* can be seen in validation of Māori and other cultural paradigms, repositioning these as central within an educational paradigm previously dominated by Western colonial assumptions of 'universal normality'. The experience at Te Kura Mokopuna o Brooklands, as led and documented by Ramila, demonstrates this capacity for hearts open to a journey of learning and knowing. It also shows how involvement in research provides educators with deepened understandings of both their practice and their potential to transform it.

Key ingredients in the Brooklands' journey are seen in the dedicated leadership and shared team commitment, the involvement of kaumātua with whom longstanding close relationships have been fostered and nurtured, the daily enactment of welcoming and other spiritual rituals of inclusion and celebration, and the fostering of connection to local iwi and heritage. This validation of the local Māori context can be seen to create bridges towards awakening appreciation and respect for the increasingly diverse and complex cultural heritages converging within our early childhood education communities.

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Glossary

Aroha: reciprocal obligation to care

Awhinatanga: loving support

Karanga: ritual calling

Kaupapa Māori: Māori educational philosophy

Manaakitanga: nurturing

Ngā Hononga: relationships

Pōwhiri: ritual welcome

Poroporoaki: ritual farewell and leave taking

Rangatiratanga: the right of political authority that enables Māori to exercise self-determination in relation to people and resources (see Jackson, 1992, p. 175; Skerrett, 2007).

Rohe: a geographical area

Tino: absolute

Taima whāriki: mat time

Tagata Pasifika: people of the Pacific

Te Ao Māori: the world of things Maori

Whaikōrero: ritual speechmaking

Whānau tangata: family and community

Whanaungatanga: sustenance of whānau relationships

Children reflect their teachers

Fostering learning in 'Little Asia' kindergarten

By Tae Hashimoto

I am a Japanese migrant and also an early childhood teacher. Living in New Zealand I have learned about the culture, how people live, the language and many more things in everyday contexts. However, having interactions with other people I have a better understanding of the culture at a deeper level. I am experiencing how migrant children co-construct knowledge about the culture in which they live and I know that this is something that cannot be learnt independently.

According to Statistics New Zealand, the Asian population has increased by almost fifty percent in the last five years (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). As a result it has made Asian people the fourth largest population category in New Zealand. Consequently, it is becoming the norm for Asian children or students to enrol in mainstream education settings from early childhood education to tertiary level education in New Zealand.

The prospect of working with young Asian migrant children particularly excites me, has always been my passion and interest, and is the one of areas I would like to explore through further research. As an Asian migrant myself, I have the advantages of first hand experience which allows me to have a better understanding of Asian cultures and people.

I remember how I felt when I came first to live in New Zealand. I was very excited and full of hopes and dreams for my new life. However, on the other hand I often felt overwhelmed. Even though I felt contented and settled in New Zealand, at times, I also felt extremely lonely, despairing and felt like a fish out of water. Especially at times when cultural misconceptions happened, I yearned for the familiarity of my birth culture.

Working with migrant children I find that this is how Asian migrant children and their families are feeling in their everyday life in New Zealand and I like to use my knowledge and experience to support them. My experiences have given me opportunities to be able to relate to them. We can give and receive support from each other in our journey to make New Zealand our home country. This is the reason why I am especially interested in the prospect of working with Asian migrant children and their families.

This paper addresses three aspects of fostering young migrant children's learning in early childhood education settings. The first relates to what sociocultural theory says about working with young migrant children. The second focus is on the well-being of these children and how the environment influences their learning. Lastly, the significance of the teacher's role is examined, to consider what teachers need to know about working with migrant children.

Teaching Asian children in New Zealand

The research literature presents a variety of perceptions regarding migrant children's learning, including not only the gaining of a new language but also what factors help children to learn effectively and what kind of dispositions enable the children to settle into the early childhood education setting. It emphasises the necessity of children's well-being in order for the children to take an interest in people or activities which are important for their learning journey. The importance of teachers building up their knowledge and understanding of working with migrant children is also emphasised.

However, some teachers struggle to articulate exactly how to work with migrant children. Denise Heald (2006) discussed such findings in her research review. She cites the Education Review Office's (ERO) research in 2004 which found that even though early childhood teachers recognised and promoted culture diversity within their centres, they still presented only a surface knowledge of minority cultures. Nadine Ballam (2008) argues that while teachers acknowledge cultural diversity and accept modified (cultural) educational policies, it is a different matter to apply the policy to their teaching. It seems that teachers are constrained by the lack of practical suggestions or steps they can take to incorporate into their daily programme to support these children.

So what does sociocultural theory say about this?

Within Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, teachers believe that children can not learn solely by themselves,

but need socialisation with peers and others who have more knowledge than themselves (Reusser, 2001). In other words, teachers must be culturally efficient themselves and have strategies to work and communicate with the migrant children. The Education Review Office (2004) stated that 'children's sense of familiarity and ease in service is likely to be reflected in active participation and engagement in programme, and the future development of competence as a learner' (p. 6).

Especially at times when cultural misconceptions happened, I yearned for the familiarity of my birth culture.

Western early childhood educators strongly believe that culture plays an important role in children's learning and development, with language being emphasised in sociocultural theory as a fundamental tool in children's learning. As Ballam (2008) states, 'Language can be key barrier to social instruction and academic achievement in initial transfer to the mainstream school setting' (p.6). Reusser (2001) points out that language is the vital communication tool for collaboration and needed to make things known and understood by others. Ballam (2008) also comments that due to a lack of English proficiency, many children will withdraw themselves from interaction.

This means that teachers must be capable of planning and modifying the programme to an appropriate level which not only draws the attention of the migrant children, but also encourages English speaking children to participate.

As Bruner (1986, p.86) states:

Most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture. It is not just that the child must make his knowledge his own but that he must make it his own in community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture (in Reusser, 2001, p. 2058).

Teachers must then have fundamental knowledge and strategies to foster the young migrant children's learning.

Well-being of children and the environment

The environment has a tremendous influence on children's well-being and is an essential part of their learning and development. The New Zealand early childhood curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) states that the early childhood setting should be a homelike environment, which means that the children should be encouraged to bring their own culture to the early childhood education setting and be supported

and respected by the teachers and their peers. Thompson (1994) found that children tend to make connections with others from the same nationality (cited in Feng, Fan Foo, Kretschmer, Prendeville & Elgas, 2004).

This could be the reason why children feel secure; their sense of familiarity with the culture, language and expectation enabling them to confidently participate in their environment. *Te Whāriki* also states that 'the feeling of belonging, in the widest sense contributes to inner well-being, security, and identity' (p.54). It cannot be stressed enough that the children's well-being is an essential part of children's learning and development. Heald (2006) states that the children need to have a sense of identification with where they come from. Corsaro (2000) supports this idea, saying 'it is the right of every child to know the rules of culture and society they belong to' (cited by Brennan, 2007, p.2). Corsaro mentions that children's well-being can be reflected in the children's ability to be successful in the playground and at school. *Te Whāriki* acknowledges and advocates the importance of children's well-being, indicating which kinds of dispositions are required for supporting children's learning.

Furthermore Paula Casas (2001) states that 'a child's social emotional development results from the interplay between nature and nurture' (p.3). This statement expresses the extreme importance in the early years of children's emotional needs being recognised and fostered, as well as recognising how the children's environment influences them. It is essential for children to have a positive, healthy self-esteem, self image and healthy emotional balance to be able to interact with peers in the first place.

Teachers are the significant other

Numerous studies report the importance of the teacher's role in supporting migrant children's learning, requiring them to be culturally efficient themselves. Researchers have recognised that teacher's teaching strategies require improvement when working with migrant children. Among the studies there is some emphasis on teachers being advocates for promoting an anti bias in early childhood education by diminishing and eliminating stereotypical beliefs of diversity and cultures. Alex Gunn (2003) points out that it is common that adults discuss the similarities in cultural context but avoid discussing differences. It could be due to the not knowing how to go about it. Lack of resources and support also may stop learning the differences.

Balaam (2008), Cullen (2005, 2008), Gibbs (2005), Heald (2006) and Lee (2005) all report corresponding findings that teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes can be reflected in the learning environment they provide for children. As Gonzalez-Mena (2002) explains, 'the teachers' own view of social world, strongly influenced by their culture, values and beliefs about themselves, will largely determine which behaviours they reinforce and encourage in children (cited in Lee, 2005, p. 58). Teachers' lack of cultural efficiency tends to be a negative

aspect, influencing the way teachers work in multicultural settings.

According to Ballam (2008), 'teachers often attempt to change minority students to fit the "norms" of the mainstream culture they are familiar with and find easier to teach' (p. 2). It shows that the teacher knowledge and confidence affects how the migrant children perceive themselves as less valued. Ballam further argues that when children are genuinely acknowledged and valued, children's confidence is boosted and their positive emotional well being is supported, having a positive influence on their academic achievement.

It cannot be stressed enough that the children's well-being is an essential part of children's learning and development.

The present study

This present study examined Asian migrant children's learning in a New Zealand Kindergarten, where English is the dominant language. It examined how the environment and teaching influenced children's learning. The research attempted to identify what attributes children require for their learning, as well as examining how significant the teacher's role is in fostering children's learning in relation to socio-cultural theory.

My research questions were:

• What kinds of dispositions do Asian migrant children need for their learning and development in mainstream early childhood education?

• What is the role of teachers in fostering Asian migrant children's learning?

The kindergarten setting

The setting was an all day, sessional kindergarten located in the South Island in New Zealand. The age group of the children attending was between three years + two months to four years + eleven months. Most of the children included in the observations had been attending the kindergarten for at least eleven months. This meant that the children knew each other very well. There were 40 children attending in the morning session and 30 children in the afternoon session, with a total roll of 45 children. The kindergarten operation changed in July 2007 to running sessions six hours per day. There were three full time teachers and one part time teacher. There was also one student teacher who worked for 15 hours a week as part of a field-based teacher education programme. In addition there was one teacher aide who came in for 15 hours a week in the afternoon to support the teachers and

children. A unique aspect of this kindergarten was the high attendance figures of the children from Asian backgrounds (47% of the total role); specifically Korean, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese and Sri Lankan. The remaining children's backgrounds were Maori, Samoan and European/Pakeha. According to Statistics New Zealand (2001), the suburb the kindergarten was located in has a high Asian population proportionally when compared to any other suburb in the city.

Methods

Qualitative methodology was used to conduct this research. In total, six observations lasting one hour were undertaken during five consecutive days at the kindergarten. Peer interactions and children's and teachers' interactions were observed. Peer interaction was used to see how the children related to each other in terms of learning. Teachers were asked to act as they would normally, because I was hoping to see natural interactions between children and teachers. The observation took place both inside and outside. Anecdotal accounts such as discussions I had with the teachers and activities that I happened to notice or see outside the observation time frame were also recorded. During the observations, I used a non-participant role. I did not interact with the children unless they approached me to ask what I was doing or asked me for help. The children's actions and conversations were recorded in a narrative record of observations. Random alphabet letter were used to identify children and teachers. The recorded observations were used to analyse and interpret migrant children's learning.

Results and discussion

The research results showed that teachers' cultural efficiency has a positive influence on migrant children's well being and learning. The environment reflected the teachers' valuing of input, their willingness to learn from each other and to promote the diversity of children and culture of those who were attending the kindergarten. The observations contained a variety of examples where the kindergarten environment was closely connected to children's well-being and learning.

I noticed a warm, welcoming atmosphere on entering the kindergarten. The children and teachers welcomed me with acceptance and warmth. I was delighted to meet happy, outgoing migrant children in a mainstream kindergarten setting. It was rare experience to be in a kindergarten where nearly half of the children attending were Asian children. It made me feel like I was back in my birth country of Japan. I called this kindergarten 'Little Asia'.

As the observations continued, I came to the realisation that the children were a reflection of the teachers who worked with them at kindergarten. The playful environment was captured, whereby teachers often joked with the children during their conversations. The children enjoyed the teachers' senses of humour. I believe it contributed to creating a relaxing atmosphere in the kindergarten.

For example, Teacher F was using a Korean girl's (Y) banana as a phone. Teacher F said to Y and another Korean girl (X), 'Banana is panama in Korean'. Y and X both laughed. The teacher had picked up a Korean word to use with the Korean children. Teachers often speak Korean to the Korean children.

In another example, a Chinese boy (G) was upset and came to see Teacher F. Teacher F asked G 'What happened'? G explained that the reason he was upset was that he did not want to share the pipes that he had brought in from home with the other NESB (Non English Speaking Background) Korean children (B and K). Teacher F noticed the boys B and K looked worried about this situation. Teacher F carefully explained that no one was trouble in this situation. Teacher F gave them hugs to let them know they were okay.

The same Korean boy (B) came to see Teacher F to show her his painting. Teacher F asked B to explain his painting to her. As B was explaining it, he sat on her knee. I noticed the reciprocal warmth and affection both the children and teachers were giving and receiving. These observations clearly showed that the children were integrating well into a new environment. The environment has a powerful effect to make children feel relaxed or uneasy. Gonzalez-Mena (2008) indicated that creating a positive social emotional environment is indispensable. 'Young children in an early childhood program may not need a mother hen per se, but they do need all those qualities of warmth, protection, nurturance, and responsiveness in their environment, qualities that can come as well from men as from woman' (p. 258).

Through this research it has become even more obvious to me that the children's environment and well-being is associated with their learning and development. Once the children become confident in their new environment, they will participate more actively in their learning. ERO (2004) stated that 'confidence and competence as a learner is the result of active exploration' (p.4). The observations clearly demonstrate and support the statement that children's characters have an influence on their interaction with peers as well as earning peer entrance.

For example, a NESB Korean girl (Z) was 4 years, 9 months and was the oldest child among the Korean children. My observations showed that she was the only child who played and made friends with English Speaking Background (ESB) children. She displayed strong leadership skills and was appeared to be the leader of her peer group. However, her English proficiency was limited at the time and despite being difficult to be understood by others, her strong will and spirit were evident in her outlook. The observations showed that she was accepted and respected by her peer group children. Children need to earn the right for entrance into play and thus they need dispositions such as perseverance and resilience as acceptance into peer culture does not eventuate automatically. Brotman Gouley and Chesir-Teran's (2005) research supports Corsaro's (1981) findings that for

children to be accepted into a peer group, they need to attempt at least three times on average to be included in the group. For migrant children, learning is not just about acquiring another language but it is also about building friendships and learning social rules.

On a few occasions I identified instances which confirmed for me that the children are learning from each other in the kindergarten environment. The first instance where this was evidenced was when a Korean girl (Z) and ESB child (O) were engaging in sociodramatic play. O asked Z what kind of food she wanted and Z replied by saying 'Kimuchi'. O said 'yeah', as if she knew exactly what kimuchi (spicy cabbage pickles) are. This showed two directions of learning. It was not only the migrant children that are learning New Zealand culture, but also ESB children are learning about Korean culture. The other instance was where an ESB child (N) had an argument with Z. N responded by saying 'Hajima', meaning 'stop' in Korean. It happened naturally and showed that the migrant children's language was also having an influence on ESB children's knowledge, as N had used the word in the right context.

> ## For children to be accepted into a peer group, they need to attempt at least three times on average to be included in the group.

Language is a phenomenal tool for communication. Research shows the importance of gaining language for the children to be able to communicate and be accepted in the peers group. Children who cannot speak English fluently can be treated like a baby among English speaking peers and this can negatively influence their participation in their learning (Guo, 2005; Ballam, 2008). During the time of my research period I did not observe any incidents where the migrant children were discriminated against or ridiculed due to their lack of English competency. What I observed was quite the opposite. My observations showed that migrant children's spirit and disposition are more important factors in getting involved with their peer group. The reason for this could be that the kindergarten had established a culture within their environment in which children were encouraged to speak different languages; this was understood, respected and accepted as part of the diversity of language at the kindergarten. Moreover, it is also due to the fact that each child was appreciated for who they were.

It appeared that the teachers at the kindergarten understood and knew the children really well through the observation and conversations I had with them. For example, teachers had been working together to foster a Chinese boy's (E) independence. Teacher F gave him encouragement and suggestions to foster his independence.

Teacher F also tried to pair him up an ESB child (L) who was an older child. L was a very mature and inclusive child who was adored by the other children at the kindergarten. Teacher F was thinking that L would be a good role model for E. Knowing the children meant that teachers were able to identify the children's interests and assess their ability by scaffolding and organising a positive learning experience for them.

What does it mean for the teachers?

Through my teaching career I have been privileged to meet and work with numbers of compassionate and dedicated teachers who care and are trying to make positive differences in migrant children's learning. They have taught me to improve my skills to work with migrant children. These are some of the things that could be helpful for other teachers:

- It is most important that relationships are built between children, their family and teachers. Teachers should make an effort to inform parents about their child's day at the centre.

- Accept and expect the cultural differences. Asking questions is a good way to get the information and get to know about the children and their family. It's important to ask parents questions about their child, in order to get a whole picture of the child. Make a time and take the time to get to know them, just like any other relationship.

- Use body language if English is limited; it is surprising how much you can understand each other. Display a sense of humour and use smiles to create an easy atmosphere.

- Build knowledge regarding Asian cultures. Read and research by gathering information that can help understand the different cultural practices.

- Teachers should create a welcoming and fun environment by simply greeting in children's first languages.

- If Asian parents seem passive or uninterested regarding their children, it is because they are not used to being involved in the education system. They probably do not know what to do. Asian parents often see teachers as experts and they are used to hierarchical relationships.

- Ask children and their parents to come and share their culture through celebration, food, songs and stories with the others.

- Visit and invite the Asian community to the early childhood education setting. It's a good opportunity to get to know local community.

To sum up, just working with Asian children does not make us culturally efficient teachers, but empathy and willingness to accept the differences and put them into practice will make a difference. Do not be worried or afraid to try what you think is good, because I know that when you are reaching out to Asian migrant children and their families, you are already making the difference to them and to yourself!

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Revitalising

Incorporating the spiritual dimension in early childhood practice

By Anna Whitehead

Abstract

Te Whāriki **positions spirituality as part of a holistic early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). What can teachers do to provide experiences that promote the spiritual nature of children? This paper reports the findings of a small scale qualitative study about what spiritual activities could be used in early childhood centres. The findings have implications for the teacher's role and the type of activities that they can share with young children. They also suggest that spiritual activities can easily be incorporated within an early childhood programme.**

Background to the study

The New Zealand eary childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* states that, 'learning and development will be integrated through the recognition of the spiritual dimension of children's lives in culturally, socially, and individually appropriate ways' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 41). As an early childhood teacher educator who visits many centres, and has many conversations with teachers, I have observed that many are not aware of this aspect of the curriculum or of the need to incorporate spiritual activities. English and Gillen (2000) report that educators have paid a great deal of attention to the aesthetic, social, emotional, physical, intellectual and other aspects of education, but have neglected the equally important spiritual dimensions. Education internationally has also stressed the importance of acquiring knowledge and performance skills. As the global economy takes hold, politicians and business leaders are voicing concern about raising educational standards about economic productivity and sees early childhood services as a cost–effective approach to creating a skilled national workforce which is internationally competitive (Dalberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). Increasingly however, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of including spirituality in education (Reedy, 2003; Kessler, 2000; Miller, 2000). This includes a curriculum that educates for all dimensions of humankind and provides a source of nurturance for the spirit that values physical, mental and spiritual knowledge and skills.

Our present early childhood education system, while having 'holistic development' as one of the main strands in its curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), tends to emphasise goals that relate purely to 'secular' tasks, activities and opportunities for learning. Many teachers that I have observed present knowledge as facts to be memorised and particularly noticeable in the early childhood centre is the 'standard teacher talk', 'the automatic question and response mode' that sometimes becomes second-nature in busy early childhood environments (Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007, p. 351). This type of interaction between teacher and child often lacks a caring connection and does not recognise the spirit of the child. Gibbs (2006) reiterates this by saying that in the USA, England, Australia and New Zealand, the curriculum emphasises knowledge, skills and attitudes, and that the spiritual curriculum is essentially ignored. This may be due to teachers' 'fears of crossing the secular religious boundary', or to be seen to be 'advocating particular beliefs' (Gibbs, 2006, p.76). To redress the lack of spirituality in our early childhood practice, teachers need to understand that spirituality can be engaged with children in many ways (regardless of their personal beliefs), and that it also supports our treaty obligations with respect given to Maori traditions such as whanaungatanga (relational acts of love and caring) and manaakitanga (to bestow respect or kindness) (Pere, 1982).

While spirituality may be seen as an elusive subject, this paper uses the term in a broad secular sense that can be fostered by educational practice. When discussing spiritually aware teachers, this is not referring to teachers who work in centres which have a special religious character (such as Catholic or Hindu) or a defined educational philosophy such as Steiner or Montessori. Rather, it encompasses all teachers, regardless of their personal, spiritual or religious beliefs who seek to teach in creative ways that include the mind, body and spirit of children. Moore (2000) states that spirituality is an essential aspect of who we are, our being, and therefore makes an important contribution to developing our identities both as people and as teachers. Gibbs (2006) considers that spiritually aware teachers take the view that humans are whole, integrated beings in which the mind, physical body, and the spirit connect and interact with each other and the environment in which the person dwells.

Also important is the concept of 'everyday spirituality' (Bone, Cullen & Loveridge, 2007, p. 344) which implies an appreciation of aspects of daily life that are often taken for granted or including the spiritual in the everyday life and pedagogical practices of early childhood settings. This can include attitudes and feelings such as 'unconditional positive regard' (Rogers, 1980, p. 138), love, compassion, and simple acts of kindness or caring.

Thus, there is no need to provide a justification for this increasingly recognised area of early childhood education. Indeed, it hardly needs to be stated that our world appears

I'm a spider!

to be rapidly changing in many ways. War, famine, issues of global warming, technological overload, mental ill-health and increased consumerism have led to many people being disconnected from nature and their inner being (Wolf, 2000). The increasing push in our education system to get children to compete and achieve academically at an early age needs also needs to be challenged and given further thought (Elkind, 1981). Maria Montessori wrote 'if education recognises the intrinsic value of the child's personality and provides an environment suited to spiritual growth… then the child can contibute to the betterment of the world' (1948/2004, p.75). Mahatma Gandhi also stated if we are to have peace in the world, we must begin with the children (cited by Wolpert, 2001).

To counter-balance this worldly materialism, efforts are needed that reinforce wisdom, that educate whole integrated beings. Messages to children need to focus on on the highest human qualities: love; compassion; a reverence for the earth; wonder; and joy. The early childhood curriculum should therefore re-emphasise the spiritual dimension by including 'everyday spirituality' and activities that are known to contribute to the child's inner health (Miller, 2000). These may include experiences across all strands of the curriculum. For example in the communication strand, this might include making music, songs, chants, dances or movement to simple rhythms in the natural environment. This is likely to improve children's creativity and self-awareness (McLean, 2001). In the well-being strand, developing a sense of fellowship and community by helping others is likely to provide children with awareness, sensitivity and empathy for others. Yoga,

meditation, and guided visualisation exercises can be used across all strands and have been shown to make children's bodies strong and supple, their minds concentrated and calm (Cheesebrough, Woodhouse & Griffiths, 2005).

Wolf (2000) in her discussion of caring for children's hearts, says that spiritual nurturing can never be reduced to a set of techniques, and that it must 'flow freely from the teacher's own essence' (p.35). However, in general, teachers do need to be taught how to provide these experiences (just like conceptual knowledge around numeracy and literacy).

Many of us in this materialistic, self focused world are strongly disconnected from our inner unity and thus the need to teach and emphasise spiritual techniques in our educational practice is being seen as increasingly important. How then do teachers go about nurturing the spirit of children in our early childhood centres? What practices are suitable in our secular, multicultural early childhood centres?

The Project

The purpose of this study was to try a variety of spiritual/holistic activities with young children in order to see what worked for the children and what challenges or opportunities would arise. I also wanted, as a teacher, to find practices that would be suitable for an early childhood age group. The present study was a small scale, qualitative research project which used participant observation. My role was as a researcher-participant (Bryman, 2004), which meant that I participated in some situations so that I could resume a researcher stance once the situation had unfolded and then I would record notes.

The study was took place in a local hall. Classes were advertised in four local primary schools' newsletters offering free yoga and meditation classes once a week, for eight weeks (one term). There were seven children (4 girls, 3 boys) in the class, with ages ranging from five to seven years. The class had two teachers: one who taught the body-mind sessions; and another who taught the yoga. Class sessions were for one hour and included a routine of drop-off/welcome to parents, afternoon tea, seated circle and introductions, yoga practices, body-mind practices, and a closure session.

Generally at the end of each session I wrote in a research journal about the activities used, how the activity went, the difficulties encountered and general notes or conversation items that were pertinent. Feedback from the yoga teacher was used to verify and support the data, compare perceptions of the children's ability, the children's level of motivation and to provide strategies to improve the sessions.

A specific aim of the sessions was to try out a variety of techniques that were not usually provided for children in the education system. These included different types of body-mind techniques, meditation, visualisation, guided imagery, yoga and art. Each class would start with yoga (after circle and introductions) as it was considered an active but calming activity which also allowed the children to get rid of excess energy through movement and stretching. The meditation sessions were short (3-5 minutes) and started with a simple explanation of its purpose. Types of meditation included, for example:

- breath (focusing on the in and out breath);
- mental (sitting in silence);
- visual (staring at a candle, or mandala);
- mental (visualising a rose, dove on their head, observing clouds);
- auditory (reading the *Peace* book, (Parr, 2008));
- guided visualisations; and
- tactile (painting, drawing).

Findings

Physical environment

It became apparent that in order to create a quiet nurturing space, the physical environment was very important. Similarly to the Reggio approach, our objective was to create an available environment in which children, families and teachers feel at ease (Malaguzzi, 1998). It was soon realised that the hall we had chosen was far too large, cold and draughty, it had poor lighting and was old and musty. The boys in the first session ran around the large space and it was hard to keep them contained and settled. After the first week we changed the location of the classes to a studio which was warm and cheerful, smaller, good lighting and windows that looked out onto grass and trees. This space worked really well and provided a good area to do the activities. We also noticed that having carpet on the floor was better for the children doing the yoga exercises and relaxation postures.

We are stars!

Yoga exercises

The main yoga postures were simple and easy to perform. They included the cat pose, tree pose, dog pose, triangle pose, forward bend, diamond pose, spiral pose, the cobra and the corpse (relaxation) pose (Rozman, 2002). These were repeated every week and as the children became familiar with the routines they were able to stretch their bodies further as the weeks progressed. While there were a few falls (and much laughter), the children became more sensitive to their bodies and the energy flowing up and down their spine. Some comments from the children included:

This feels great – I'm a rag doll (forward bend)

I feel like a cloud floating in the sky (corpse pose)

You look like my cat stretching! (cat pose)

My back feels sore, my knees hurt when they come up (tree pose)

It's hard to keep straight, my legs keep wobbling (tree pose)

Meditations

These started with a simple breath meditation, where the children were told to focus on (be aware of) their breath with their eyes closed. Another technique involved sitting in silence, (becoming aware of their thoughts and letting them go). Another meditation involved staring at a candle. These meditations were short, 3-5 minutes, and allowed the children to settle down and become quiet. These simple meditations needed repetition and guidance (for example refocusing, telling them to quieten down and listen for the sound of their dove in the room) in order for the children to complete the exercise. From a teacher's perspective, the meditations were

generally easy to carry out and needed little preparation. For the guided meditations or visualisations, there are many books providing set examples and suggestions (see resource list). After each guided meditation children were given paper and pens/paints to draw their journey and this provided material to discuss as a group and became a favourite activity of the children. For example, one guided visualisation that I recorded took the children on a journey to the universe.

> One boy was completely focused on drawing a spaceship. I asked 'Where did you go in your spaceship? Did you visit the Milky Way? Did you feel the heat of the sun?' The child explained the focus of his drawing:

> 'I'm making a stairway with two levels… I need an office in the rocket, so I can plan where we're going, also chairs, screens, and I need to make some boosters to catch the sun's energy'.

Of the visualisation or guided imagery techniques that were used, one that the children particularly enjoyed was the 'forest walk' where they lay down with their eyes closed and went on a journey through gardens and forest (Garth, 1997). Although there was no data on the long term effects of these meditations, comments from the group included:

> I went to a really special place and it was so cool, Lucy (her cat) was there, and I found a special star, it was glowing, yellow and gold, and there were fairy lights, and the flowers were playing with me, I'm going to draw the star and Lucy.

One girl commented: *It felt good, I liked that, I feel better now. Can we do it again?*

Another girl talked about her journey and her comments highlight the importance of not rushing these sessions, and giving the children time to relax in their peaceful space for a few minutes before getting them to sit up: *'When I was in the forest, I met a angel who I wanted to talk to, she was about to talk to me, when you said open your eyes'.*

Another activity involved getting the children to imagine that there was a dove on their head and that they had to be very quiet and still or it would fly away. One child stated that she wanted to name the dove, another boy said his 'wasn't a dove, it was a pigeon'. They enjoyed this exercise and it helped them to settle or quieten their body. Another exercise involved visualising a perfect pink rose, with a long green stem, and smelling the fragrance (Vallyon, 2006). This activity was done with the children lying down.

As a teacher I took a confident, strong approach at the beginning of the sessions. It was important for me to establish a group that would be cohesive and effective. I strategically placed the students in a boy/girl, boy/girl arrangement and placed the other teacher in the circle. This created a balanced and supportive arrangement. The start of each session always included a warm welcome, with nurturing language asking them about the best part of their day. I was careful to explain the activities in the simplest of ways and while some of them had not experienced an activity before, once it had been repeated a few times, it became a 'normal' routine activity. None of the activities were difficult to carry out, but keeping the children focused and on-task did need encouragement.

While there was occasional misbehaviour, using positive, encouraging language generally worked to keep the children refocused.

Implications for teachers

A number of important implications arose from the data gathered over the eight weeks that may be useful for teachers when trying spiritual/meditation techniques. From my perspective these include:

- When practising with young children, the key is to make the sessions short (about 15 minutes), fun and varied to keep the children interested and involved. A typical session could start with a simple breathing exercise, then following with a couple of yoga postures, and finishing off with visual relaxation, guided imagery or art.

- The need for repetition. It is well known by those who meditate that it is far better to do short meditations regularly than a long meditation once a week. Teachers should aim for short meditations (5 minutes every day) with children gradually building up the length of time.

- To help settle restless children, it can be useful to start with yoga or a few stretches or relaxation pose (corpse pose), lying down symmetrically with the head and neck in line with the spine. It can also be a good idea to finish with some type of art, particularly if guided imagery has been used.

- Give consideration to the physical environment. Aim for the *same* place to do the practices, somewhere quiet where you will not be disturbed and preferably a space that is appropriately sized for children's movement.

- The sessions can be integrated into any class and done any time. They are not only exercises in creative imagery, but have planted within them seeds which can awaken new realizations about life.

- Teachers should ideally start out with a small group of children and provide scaffolding, encouragement and practice until the exercise becomes routine (like brushing teeth).

- Teachers can try a range of activities. These could include meditations, guided imagery, visualisation, relaxation or yoga postures, art, looking at clouds, talking about the cosmos, peace, care of the earth, kindness, reading books, playing meditative music. This will support the range of learning styles - visual, mental, auditory, tactile - and will provide variety. These can be first practised at home with family or friends or by oneself until the teacher feels ready to use them in class.

- Include an ongoing awareness of 'everyday spirituality'. With babies and toddlers this could include the awareness of warmth, touch, the divinity of the child, cuddles, singing lullabies/songs to soothing music, awareness of the baby's likes and dislikes, and daily rhythms. Teachers can model and foster awareness practices: for example, care of others, empathy, peace, compassion, love and acts of kindness.

- Most importantly try and experience a peaceful time together, allowing children to experience an awareness of their bodies and a sense of revitalisation.

Concluding comments

Spending eight sessions with young children doing yoga and meditation activities was insightful. It was amazing to see how quickly the children tuned into their hearts and how easily they gained pleasure and confidence in their bodies and minds. Early childhood teachers have a wonderful opportunity to deepen their relationships with the children, and transform children in multiple ways. Providing education around the spiritual curriculum gives teachers the privilege of supporting these young children during their most sensitive years when their attitudes, interests and values take root. It is hoped that teachers will also create the time to develop their own spiritual natures for the sake the children they work with. Although the study was undertaken with five to eight year olds, my own experience indicates that all the activities suggested above would be suitable for the three to five year olds in early childhood settings. Other spiritual practices that are particularly relevant to the New Zealand setting are the spiritual practices that are used by Māori. Waiata (songs) and karakia (prayer) are increasingly being used in centres to promote an understanding of wairua (the spirit), and can be easily used to honour diversity and promote inclusiveness.

Useful resources for teachers

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Wonder is an active process

ICT at Pukerua Bay Kindergarten

By Ann Allen and Glenda Wightman

This article seeks to challenge comforting conventional wisdom around using Information and Communication Tools (ICT) with young children. These tools for us at Pukerua Bay Kindergarten include cameras, memory sticks, microphones and other voice recorders, encyclopedia software, computers, wireless network for printing and internet, e-mail, digital web cams, digital microscope, comic life/publisher documents, video cameras, movie making, data projector, laminating and binding tools, photocopying. For other centres, it might also include gaming, skype, cell phones… or more!

We explore the notion of wonder and view it, perhaps, a little differently. We view it not as a noun or a static thing, but as a verb, which is an active process. We consider wonder is an important driving force of engaged learning, but contend that exploration is also paramount to promote and support the wondering behaviour to become the child's 'owned' learning. Wondering performs the function of sustenance to learning, but it must result in a fusion of questioning, thinking, expressing and processing to be useful to the learner. Some of our explorations into using ICT to support wonder, as part of the pilot programme of the *Foundations for Discovery* pilot programme will be discussed in this paper.

What is wonder?

When, as early childhood education professionals we talk about wonder, there seems to be a considerable amount of emotive language about nature, visions of starry eyed children, the Tooth fairy, Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, dewdrops on roses and whiskers on kittens! You get the idea…..a lot to do with fond remembrance of childhood, and less to do with education. However no matter how you view educating children, it is an inescapable truth that, as Jamie McKenzie emphasises, 'Wonder is at the heart of the matter, as is curiosity and passion' (2004, p.1).

Wonder is absolutely about emotions. It is curiosity that engages the heart, senses and feelings. This does not mean that it is not a driver for thinking logically and creatively, for using flexible thinking and research behaviors. Wonder is what makes children take an interest and get involved; language that is very familiar in the early childhood education arena as positive dispositions for learning (Carr,

1999). The depth of wonder is what determines to what extent children tackle difficult things and engage in thought processes, as they work to widen their working theory and add complexity to their understandings. It is what drives children to articulate what they have discovered and share it with a friend.

There has been some pedagogical discussion around the idea that wonder is only valid if experienced in a hands-on way (Brownlee, 2000) and that you can only truly find out about something, or know about it, if you have it in front of you. We tend to disagree. We know where Russia is but we haven't been there - it doesn't mean our knowledge isn't valid. Information contained in books is a representation of real things, not the real article. Do we not also use those? In the current century, there continue to be those who talk about playing as a way to learn and mean purely 'hands' on activity by it. This play has been generally accepted to be developmentally appropriate over the years. This does not mean that using books or ICT tools such as digital photography, digital microscopes, and computers are not. As with any part of the early childhood educative environments, offering a rage of approaches will assist a range of learning styles to grow.

Foundations for Discovery and the Early Childhood Education ICT Professional Learning Programme

Foundations for discovery (Ministry of Education, 2005) is the Ministry of Education's strategy for supporting the development of ICT use in early childhood education settings. Under this framework the Ministry has funded a pilot professional learning programme for a group of up to 60 centres nationally as they undertake action research exploring the uses of ICT tools in early childhood education. They are looking at the tools' impact on learning outcomes for children, teacher skills, and how such a culture of technology use might be sustained.

Kindling, conjuring and nurturing wonder – opening up the wider world

As our Kindergarten team works in our research project with ICT tools such as computers, digital photography,

digital microscopes and to a lesser extent video cameras, we have been surprised at how powerful ICT-based work can be to provoke wonder. Children's own images and voices are immensely engaging to themselves and their peers. Likenesses of known people, voices, familiar events or topics strike a chord with a range of peers and encourage them to be involved in the work the digital files depict. As the tools we offer have changed, so have the range of shared investigations, and ICT becomes the forum for shared understanding of what we are all exploring.

An example of this assertion in action is the value of email for sharing images and stories. What was one family's discovery of a shark on a local beach became a whole community investigation of the event; they e-mailed pictures to Kindergarten to share. The e-mailed photographs were the means to communicate what happened. This led to other families visiting the shark on the beach and sharing their photos too. These e-mailed images also allowed those who never saw the shark to access a shared starting point for their own investigations. They could more easily be included in the excitement and engage with aspects of shark's physiology, relative sizes, habitat and behaviours, in a wide range of Kindergarten environmental curriculum spaces, including the ICT suite.

Wondering performs the function of sustenance to learning, but it must result in a fusion of questioning, thinking, expressing and processing to be useful to the learner.

A second example of collaborative exploratory work with ICT tools providing the input to maintain joint attention was a group of children investigating what makes a chaffinch 'dead'. They used sensory input to observe the real article, but were not able to understand or 'own' the information that it wasn't alive until researching how a live chaffinch might behave using Youtube video footage.

Visual and auditory provocations in our ICT space might also include other photographs sourced from outside the Kindergarten community, a set of images which can communicate a range of ideas as well as provoke a response on intellectual and emotional levels. This emotional reaction, as well as involved attention, encapsulates what wonder is in children. ICT can offer subtle challenges to explore topics that might be outside the immediate experiential repertoire, and may facilitate involvement in a similar concrete activity or playscript across the environmental curriculum. ICT can provoke questions or a wish to pursue the topic further, using ICT research, digital recording, or other expressive tools such as conversation, play or artwork. ICT can be the way children express their ideas (which can be particularly important for non verbal children) and a challenge to genuinely take charge of documenting what they are exploring. We have many instances of children using these tools to record representative artwork with their own photos and recorded or scribed words, work inspired by insect finds, magnification under digital microscope and internet or book based research. If we talk about the '100 languages of children' (Malaguzzi, 1993), then digital communication is the hundred and first.

Making sense of the 'working theory' or letting the wonder fall fallow

So wonder is great! So much attention is given to wonder as an important behaviour in itself. But we need to transform wonder into meaningful learning outcomes, and as McKenzie warns, 'wondering is not a simple joy ride. It has a dark side. The hunger for meaning is not always satisfied … satisfying, authentic answers are often elusive' (2005, p. 1). How fantastic to provoke wonder in any context, but wonder by itself is likely to drop into a large void if the means to pursue it aren't available. With any behaviour we want to encourage in children, we need to support their success in using that behaviour. This is a simple positive reinforcement ethos. If children don't ever find answers to the questions or tasks that they set themselves as they wonder, then the behaviour is not often repeated or consolidated.

Not providing ways for children to be independent researchers and move forward is a type of 'planned ignoring' that will, as we know in our work positively guiding their activity, leads to extinguishing the behaviour.

This is not to suggest we always offer children immediate answers, but we support them to recognise the approach of a researcher. We want children to observe, draw logical conclusions, amend working theories, and to discover the best tools and processes to gain depth of understanding in the most efficient way. Brenda Keogh and Stuart Naylor suggest of scientific learning that we are 'naïve to assume that children can discover most scientific ideas for themselves' (2003, p. 7).

So when you are exploring an interest, particularly one that might occur outside the Kindergarten, or that which cannot be seen well with the naked eye, you need opportunities to gain a wealth of images, sounds, shared forums for discussion. This is part of investigation. Yes, hands-on investigation plays a role here if it is possible, but to add higher level or abstract thinking to the learning episode it might be that this is where the vast resources of the internet, large scale magnification tools, or ways to review or sort images into sequences are necessary to transform wonder into meaningful, consolidated learning. This is offering opportunities to mentally sift and sort, to find ways to classify and develop processes for finding out.

> *We know where Russia is but we haven't been there - it doesn't mean our knowledge isn't valid.*

An example of how this might work in practice is when Thomas found a large spider and was unsure if it was alive. Upon high magnification using a digital microscope he discovered that the spider's eyes were clearly open and so he drew a conclusion about the spider being alive and awake. He did wonder about spiders being able to close their eyes and so he e-mailed the NZ Arthropod collection staff in Auckland who confirmed his doubts. Apparently spiders have no eyelids and cannot close their eyes! This is questioning, but in this case on a national scale!

ICT can challenge working theories that are either examples of 'magical' thinking due to lack of information opportunities (Hedges, 2003) or thinking that is heading in an obviously erroneous direction. When Gracie was exploring a rattle snake play resource and found it rattled, her frame of reference told her it must be a baby's rattle for playing with. 'Googling' the rattle snake showed how a snake uses his rattle and provoked her interest to find out more about snakes and relate her new found knowledge to her friend. It is, as Wellman and Gelman (1998) suggest in their work on knowledge acquisition, a way of incorporating new knowledge into a framework of existing knowledge.

Leavening the thinker's 'bread'

McKenzie (2004) describes questioning as having the role in thinking that the yeast has in bread making. As we have worked in our project looking at using ICT tools to support complexity of learning in science and nature, we have been interested in the amount of complex, genuine, and sincere questions we are experiencing from children. As children develop the notion that they have ways to find out about their topic of interest we are finding that the questioning skills are supporting wondering in the best sense. Good questions have substance. Children are sharing decisions they have made about their line of enquiry and problems they have found that need solving. Questioning is the 'glue' between wonder and thinking.

A place to question or document suggests that wonder can be satisfied

We continue to analyse our qualitative data collected during our research. We have been increasingly speculative about the value of the ICT suite itself. This suite was designed in 2006 as the repository of our computer related and digital tools. It is part of our information landscape. Although a surprising outcome of the work, we identified that the highly visual nature of the suite suggests to teachers and children that research is possible, that questions from across the learning environment can be answered, or that ideas and work can be revisited or shared. This is part of us all 'accepting that you do not know everything, but being willing to find out more… being willing to use a variety of ways to find out' (Keogh & Naylor, 2003, p. 7). Our now commonplace culture of children downloading their pictures and dictating, or digitally voicing, a story to go with it/them, creates a shared forum for articulating coherently. The computer and ICT space is a recognised place where ideas are being genuinely recorded as important for all time, to share with all the stakeholders in education: peers; whanau; self; and teachers.

The more we all knew we could find out so many things if we researched and enquired, the more diverse and interesting questions were being formulated by the children.

- How do we know the chaffinch is dead (What is dead?) – by looking at clips of what they do when they are alive.

- What sort of beetle is this?

- How does the tadpole know the food is in the water?

- What other things hatch out of eggs other than chickens?

- I can see the caterpillar - can he see me?

- How does the snail breathe?

'Thinking without questioning is like drinking without swallowing' (McKenzie, 2004, p.1). We all know we can tell children answers (if we know them!) but the children won't own the knowledge unless they see it for themselves and participate in the research. This doesn't just mean with their hands. Yes, 'hands-on' is great, but Youtube video files can be the next best thing if live chaffinches or rattlesnakes, live sharks or crocodiles aren't just handy when curiosity or teachable moments are evident. Digital microscope images also help children see what they couldn't without the high

levels of magnification, so they can own the information and create meaningful theories for themselves. Technology is another way of 'helping children to observe what is important' (Keogh & Naylor, 2003, p. 7).

Professional decisions should be the key

So although there is some discussion in the wider ECE community about whether computers are appropriate in ECE settings, we advocate that you view what you offer on, or with the computer, the same way as teachers do any other part of the learning environment. Pennie Brownlee (2000) expresses concerns about computers being vicarious and not real experiences and considers it a disadvantage that children won't be doing other things. We suggest that the 'other things' they settle for without good research and communication tools might not always be genuinely a child's agenda if we limit their wonderings to our immediate context.

> *Yes, 'hands-on' is great, but Youtube video files can be the next best thing if live chaffinches or rattlesnakes, live sharks or crocodiles aren't just handy when curiosity or teachable moments are evident.*

'The importance of using children's interests as the starting point for learning and teaching' (Shaw, Woodbridge & Pearson, 2003, p. 6) is surely a 'given' in our sector? Curriculum decisions are made by teachers everyday because of their expectations about valid learning outcomes; decisions such as the books chosen, visual messages in the environment, available experiences and materials provided. The range of professional choices teachers make everyday is large. Computer or digital decisions are no different. We promote use of open ended ICT tools in the same way we promote other open ended materials and interactions with children. There are many things you can do with digital tools, but it doesn't mean you should and teachers have to make good choices about what to include in their curriculum as children are searching for new knowledge.

So what does all this mean for us?

We know that 'children are natural investigators and have a sense of inquisitiveness that can be almost insatiable' (Shaw, Woodbridge & Pearson, 2003, p. 4). The tool you offer them does not change that. Bad teaching decisions can, perhaps. We consider that the use of digital tools alongside other experiences is more in keeping with the 21st Century learner, no matter how challenging that is for teachers for whom use of these tools is a new matter. The use of all these opportunities allows wonder on a wider scale as our

world 'gets smaller' and access to it becomes greater. The communication opportunities available to us make it so. ICT tools allow a wondering behaviour to be continued and extended, and used as a motivator for children to find ways to investigate further for themselves. Children need lots of ways to assimilate meaning, ways that they find relevant.

Wonder without understanding is just a question mark hanging in the void. Unless you support it, sooner or later it will fall into the void or disappear into the wilderness. What is important is that children are encouraged to keep wondering and to keep searching for new knowledge.

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'John's story'

Taking another look at behaviour management

By Lynsi Latham Saunders

Is 'Behaviour Management' an issue for you? John's story may provide you with some insights, as behaviour management strategies 'to stop problem behaviours' seldom work effectively when the focus is just on the child and their behaviour.

John's story

Following a number of instances of John biting, hitting, pushing and punching, several parents had requested that he be removed from the centre, or they would remove their own child. Teachers had heard parents warning children, 'You stay away from John. He's a bad boy'. Children were observed avoiding John and telling him to 'Go away, you can't play with us', as well as comments like 'We don't like John, do we?' Younger children were seen to cry when John approached them. There had been two occasions when John had been named as hurting a child, when John was not present in the same space as the child. On one such instance, John was with a teacher in another part of the centre, so it was clear he hadn't been involved. Teachers reported experiencing major frustrations. They described feeling powerless to change his behaviour and at the same time expressing a need to support John's right to attend and be 'okay' at the centre.

They knew that the Desirable Objectives and Practices (DOPS) (Ministry of Education, 1998) made it clear that teachers needed to support John to be a member of the centre community. For example, the DOPS say:

Educators enhance children's learning and development through:

1a: Relationships and interactions which are responsive, reciprocal, positive and encouraging.

1b: Extending children's thinking and actions through sensitive and informed guidance, interventions and support.

1e: Modelling non-discriminatory behaviour and promoting this with children.

1f: Implementing strategies to include all children.

The teachers were supported to begin a self review. The initial question was: 'How can we make it "okay" for John to be in the centre and keep others safe from John's inappropriate behaviour?' This later became: 'How can we refine our teaching to support children's emotional and social development?'

Data Gathering

According to *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), assessment should enhance each child's sense of being capable people and competent learners; the purpose of assessment is to determine what the child is learning and has learnt. Assessment provides a 'credit view' of the child's learning and development. Evaluation of the teaching within the centre provides useful information to strengthen and refine teaching to ensure holistic development of each child. *Te Whāriki* states that assessment of children's learning and development will be part of the information needed to evaluate the programme, and the programme will be modified in light of evaluation.

Collaboratively the teachers used *Te Whāriki* to carry out a holistic assessment of John's learning and also an evaluation of the curriculum. The teachers gathered information that enabled them to understand more fully what was happening in the centre. There were some surprises and they discovered that they had limited understanding of what John could do, while they knew a lot about what he couldn't!

They found that John:

• Can make choices;

• Has self help skills and a positive attitude to eating, drinking, toileting;

• Understands the routines and can predict the patterns of the day;

• Can recognise when something is not fair;

• Uses non-verbal gestures to express himself and make requests;

• Has an expectation that books can comfort and delight (especially when he is read to by an adult); and

• Has confidence to sing songs.

Evaluation

The teachers found that some aspects of their teaching needed to be strengthened and refined to support John's holistic development. They agreed that unless they focussed on strengthening their practices they were unlikely to support John to experience positive outcomes (or change his behaviour). The key outcomes they

focussed on supporting were:

- Personal worth does not depend on his behaviour;

- Ability to identify his own emotional needs, to express emotional needs and trust these will be responded to;

- A feeling of belonging (the right to belong);

- Use of language to express his feelings;

- Confidence to participate without fear of harm (rejection from others);

- Getting involved and paying attention; and

- Using a range of strategies to enjoy relationships with others.

Making sense of the data

Despite the teachers' insights into how they could better support John, the data they gathered about his interactions showed no recognisable consistent patterns. There were times when the proximity of the teacher still didn't prevent a child being bitten or pushed with excessive force. The teachers struggled to describe more than a few antecedent events and stated 'many of the outbursts were totally unprovoked'.

> *Behaviour management interventions to change John's behaviour were totally ineffective.*

John's Aunty who delivered John to the centre one morning told a teacher that John's father had been arrested. The local newspaper reported that John's father had gang associations, had been charged for assaults and drug offences. Teachers recalled that John's mother had shown signs of bruising and was often dressed in long sleeves and trousers despite very warm weather. Teachers recalled instances where John had had bruises on his arms and legs. They had noticed that John would not sleep willingly in the centre. He was reluctant to go to bed and would remain awake if he could. He had woken 'terrified' on several occasions, screaming and sweating with his heart racing.

Deciding on actions

Teachers made a commitment to support John to overcome the often aggressive, destructive or impulsive behaviours that resulted in his experiencing rejection from other children and adults, reinforcing a poor sense of self worth; they recognised John was a child at risk. The teachers were clear they needed to evaluate and improve practices at the centre to ensure positive holistic outcomes for John. The behaviour management interventions to change John's behaviour had been totally ineffective and teachers had become increasingly frustrated with him. They saw that this had made for more negative interactions with John, and had not reduced the frequency of the challenging behaviour.

The teachers' inquiry process began with discussion of the aspiration statement from *Te Whāriki* that says that 'children will grow up as competent confident learners and communicators healthy in mind body and spirit and make a valued contribution to society' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

A professional development facilitator provided access to and facilitated shared understanding of theory and research material on the effects of violence on children, both as primary victims as well as the effects of witnessing violence. Some of this material was from Child Trauma, an organisation co-founded by Bruce Perry. New Zealand's Dr Robin Fancourt had studied with Perry before establishing the Brainwave Trust here, which disseminates research around the effects of violence on children's development.

Bruce Perry (2006) states that children's experiences of neglect and violence can result in emotional retardation. Children's experiences of violence and neglect (not having needs for safety as well as other needs met with warmth and consistency) can profoundly alter a child's brain development. The part of the brain does not develop that would allow such a child to feel connected to other human beings and to feel sympathy, empathy, and remorse. Perry (2005) considers that any child exposed to chronic intra-familial violence will develop a persisting fear-response or stress-response; they will be overactive and hypersensitive. They may well be 'hyper vigilant', constantly on the alert from attack as they do not have trust that they are safe. They are unable to get involved in an activity as their attention is on looking out for 'danger' from attack. The child learns that if attack is going to happen, it is preferable to control *when* it happens. As a result, children who have been subject to violence will frequently engage in aggressive behaviour in an attempt to avoid the distress of waiting for it to happen. This behaviour is often misinterpreted as being unprovoked or random acts of violence.

Sandra Hewitt (1987) states that emotional disturbance is not within an individual child but in the social environment of the family, the school and the community. The children raised with violence have learned that non-verbal information is more important than verbal so they may 'misinterpret' non-verbal cues and take things out of context; eye contact or a friendly touch can be seen as a threat and they are likely to impulsively react to these perceived threats.

The good news as Perry (2005) points out is that we can make a difference in lives of children who have such experiences through 'repeated positive experiences' that allow for new pathways to develop in their brain and repair some of the damage caused. It is essential

that teachers are positive, nurturing, comforting and appropriately affectionate. Perry recommends that teachers provide a consistent, predictable pattern for the day that the child can predict. When the day includes new or different activities, the child should be told beforehand. Perry also recommends that teachers discuss expectations for behaviour with the child. Make sure that there are clear 'rules' or boundaries and consequences for 'breaking' the rules, so that both the teaching team and the child understand beforehand the specific consequences for non-compliant behaviours, to ensure consistent experiences of consequences. Perry and Szalavitz (2006, p. 5) state that

> Ultimately, what determines how children survive trauma, physically, emotionally or psychologically, is whether the people around them – particularly the adults they should be able to trust and rely on – stand by them with love, support and encouragement and in order to appreciate how children heal we need to understand how they learn to love, how they cope with challenge, how stress affects them. By recognising the destructive impact violence and threat can have on the capacity to love and work, we can come to better understand ourselves and to nurture the people in our lives, especially the children (p.6).

Any child exposed to chronic intra-familial violence will develop a persisting fear-response.

There is a significant body of research that shows a definite connection between the early family relationships and social development, as maltreated children are less successful in forming peer relationships and have a lower self-concept than children in responsive and caring families (Chambliss, 1999; Reinsberg, 1999; Perry, 1995, 2006). This is explained by attachment theorists who argue that children develop cognitive models or 'internal working models' of relationships with others based on their own interactions with caregivers early in their life (Walker, 1997; Honing, 2002). Where these interactions meet the needs of the child they develop self-concepts of competence, and the child believes themselves to be loveable, and others to be predictable and trustworthy, and relationships with others to be both worthwhile and rewarding.

The first ingredient of a secure attachment relationship is love: caregivers 'Love' in an early childhood educational context may best be defined as having warm, nurturing feelings, respectful of the child's competence, where children are cared for responsively in consistent social boundaries for all children in their care (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Jospeh & Strain, 2003; Perry, 1997, 1999,

2005, 2006; Honing, 2002; Gerhardt, 2004; Howes, Brandon, Hinings & Scholfield, 1999).

Harsh discipline is widely reported to be associated with low self-esteem and higher levels of aggression and lack of peer popularity (Perry, 1997; Dunlap et al., 2006) This further reinforces negative models of relationships and the child becomes increasingly distrustful, suspicious and aggressive as they attribute negative intentions to others, where none may have meant (Perry, 1999). A number of studies have found that where a child has positive experiences through a strong connection or attachment to a supportive competent adult this can compensate for early negative experiences (Honing, 2002; Perry 1999; Chambliss, 1999). As Alice Honig (2002) states:

> For those children who have experienced attachment disturbances early in life, or detached or disapproving parents, caregivers and teachers, perceptions, insights, skills and generous nurturing can make a positive difference. These caring sensitive caring attentive adults provide opportunity for young children to form secure attachment and more positive working models for ongoing relationships (p.11).

Honig (2002) found that securely attached children are able to maintain emotional balance in their life, and are more prepared to be confident independent learners and develop successful social skills. The caregiver who is an available attachment figure who nurtures the child and responds readily and warmly make it possible for a secure attachment to develop as the child develops confidence in the availability of this attachment figure. Significantly it is through this relationship that the child perceives their own worthiness and lovability. If needs are not met responsively by the caregiver the child deems themselves unworthy and unlovable, exacerbated when a teacher or caregiver reacts harshly towards a child and shows disapproval not only to the behaviour but also of the child., confirming for the child that they are indeed unworthy of love and care. Sue Gerhardt (2004) says that antisocial behaviours are learned responses to antisocial parenting. Where a child cannot control their impulses and has little empathy with others, this characterises socialisation failure due to experienced rejection or neglect.

Nicola Atwool (2004) explored the links between discipline and attachment, and found that for children whose behaviour is considered out of control, placing the focus on teaching and parenting strategies (ignoring undesirable behaviour, rewards and punishments, time out, etc.) are all doomed to failure if there are underlying attachment difficulties. Poor attachment leads children to believe they are bad and unlovable and negative responses from an adult to their behaviour reinforce this perception.

Walker, Ramsey and Gresham (2004, p. 43) see anti-social behaviour as being 'to a substantial degree, a result

of society's diminishing capacity to effectively rear its children and to socialise them to acceptable standards of responsibility, conscientiousness, achievement, self-regulation, caring and empathy'.

Fox et al (2003) prioritise time spent on building teacher-child positive supportive relationships as they found the stronger the relationships the less time was spent on more demanding and time consuming strategies and interventions. Children noticed responsive, caring adults. They paid attention to what these teachers said and did; they looked for ways to ensure more positive attention from these teachers. This led to children developing positive self-concept, confidence and sense of safety that reduced instances of challenging behaviours in an environment where the routines are clear and known; where children can predict what is going to happen.

Using theory and research to change teaching practices

Teachers understood that John's behaviour was the result of experiences over which he had not control and that their behaviour management practices were punitive and ineffective, especially time out and 'lecturing' him about his behaviour when he was emotionally aroused. They were aware that if they wanted to make a difference in his behaviour, their relationship with him had to prove to him that he was loveable and worthy and that they could be trusted to be there for him. They also could identify with Perry's words 'repeated positive experiences' as they could see that it would take time, but just one day at time for John to experience different relationships that would allow him to learn a different way of being and more successful ways of interacting with others in the centre.

If needs are not met responsively by the caregiver the child deems themselves unworthy and unlovable.

The approach to parenting (and care giving) that Baumrind (1995) and others call *authoritative* was explored by John's teachers. This involves warm adult responsiveness with firm boundaries and consequences (not to punish rather to provide certainty and security). This responsiveness required adults to be sensitive to John's needs, with empathy and positive attention paid to his attempts to use desirable behaviors with clear instructions and demands in a firm but non-hostile manner and consistently followed through with agreed consequences for misbehaviour.

A strategy they developed to ensure that they were not distracted by misbehaviours was to take a photo of John and print it onto A4 sized paper and put it on the wall in a position that it was visible to them. When they felt they were allowing John's behaviour to annoy them they looked at the photo and said silently 'I love him no matter what'. If this was not sufficient to calm down, then they removed themselves with an agreement to 'teacher tag'; that is - to support each other when requested to step in to a situation and allow the teacher to take them self 'to time out'.

They also were proactive with parents by explaining what the plans involved and gained agreement from those who had raised their concerns to withhold removing their child for the time being and teachers would meet with them to keep them informed and to review the situation.

Teachers developed a statement of agreement that they would:

- Unconditionally accept and value John (irrespective of his behaviour) and that he would be treated with respect and dignity. He would receive lots of positive attention – verbal and non-verbal (especially warm eye contact).

- See John positively and reflect this to the child through the interactions with him, to enable him to develop a positive self image, with a sense of self worth.

- Support John in a positive, calm environment.

- Model appropriate behaviour: 'be the person they wanted him to become'.

- They had to first change what they were doing to change a child's behaviour. 'If I always do as I have always done, I will always get what I have always got'.

- Advocate for John by giving positive information about him to others. Focus on what he can do and was developing, rather than difficulties he was experiencing.

- Make clear what was expected. State the behaviour they wanted such as 'Walk inside' as opposed to 'Don't run inside'.

- Make clear what the rules are and what the consequences would be.

- Be consistent in implementing the consequences – not as a punishment but to provide certainty for the child.

- Make a daily chart with photographs and words on Velcro dots so John could see what was going to happen next and the sequence of the day's events.

- The planning and evaluation process would better meet John's interests.

Outcomes of the interventions

The day after the actions were put in place they could see differences in John and within two weeks he was a visibly altered child. The teachers described him as

becoming 'radiant', 'contented', 'happy', 'friendly most of the time', 'asks for support to settle' and 'is getting involved in his chosen activities'.

The key that teachers identified was the mantra 'I love him no matter what'. They saw that John began to trust them to be there for him. The atmosphere for everyone in the centre was improved. Teachers were spending much less time dealing with issues and conflicts, not just involving John, and children more involved for longer periods of time in chosen activities. They commented on a much more relaxed atmosphere. Children settled to sleep in less time. John was happy to 'rest' in the sleep room and more often than not he would sleep and wake more relaxed.

John told a teacher that as he was drawing a picture of his family 'I used to be like my Dad, all kinda angry'. He told another teacher 'You love me, eh Mary.'

John's story shows that when the teachers are committed to creating a supportive environment for children and warmly and consistently meet the holistic needs of the children, this can compensate for violence and neglect children have endured. This requires a focus on establishing an accepting and inclusive culture in the centre where children learn new ways of 'being' and 'doing'. This enables them to have a strong sense of belonging where it is possible to learn to have self worth.

The teaching team at John's centre discovered this eliminates the focus on managing children's inappropriate behaviour. They see guiding positive behaviour and social inclusion more holistically as part of children's learning about who they are as a member of the human race.

According to Vachss (1994, cited by Perry, 1997, p. 2) 'some of the most destructive violence does not break bones, it breaks minds. Emotional violence does not result in the death of the body, it results in death of the soul.' Perry argues that our job as teachers is to ensure that children's minds, bodies and souls are intact as they leave our care.

> Ultimately, what determines how children survive trauma, physically, emotionally or psychologically, is whether the people around them – particularly the adults they should be able to trust and rely on – stand by them with love, support and encouragement (Perry, 1997, p. 5).

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Crafting history

Politics in the playground: The world of early childhood' (2009, *revised edition) by Helen May*

Otago University Press, available from: http://www.otago.ac.nz/press

Cost: $49.95

Reviewed by Sue Stover

Helen May has done more than any one person to sew together events and memories into the backstory so necessary for the early childhood sector's self identity. I remember hungrily reading *Discovery of early childhood* **when it first came out in 1997 and savouring the in-depth research, deft analysis and skilful writing. At its conclusion, the history of e.c.e. was hanging in the mid-20th century. There must be another book coming, surely! And there was. In 2001 her next book** *Politics in the playground: The world of early childhood in postwar New Zealand* **pulled threads of e.c.e. history through from the second half of the 20th century into the politics of the early 21st century. When it was published 'Te Huarahi Arataki – the 10 year strategic plan' was just becoming visible, so the book inevitably lost currency as events unfolded over the ensuing years.**

I purchased a copy of *Politics in the playground* in 2002, and since then I've read it cover to cover twice, used it in my teaching, referred to it regularly in my own research. So it was with great curiosity that I picked up the new 'updated and revised' edition of *Politics in the playground* that appeared in early 2009.

What I found is that this new edition is basically the 'old' book plus a new section on the radical changes of the 'blue skies' period of the Helen Clark's Labour-Coalition government. Its text concludes with early days of the new National government in late 2008.

What is new?

*   *A different (and somewhat hyperbolic) subtitle:* The world of early childhood in New Zealand', plus a new cover design based on the 'old' cover and still using, but showing more detail from, the photo documenting a playground encounter between Helen May's infant daughter Nell and then Prime Minister David Lange. Surprisingly – neither of these people are now identified inside the book,

although many who will read this book will not recognise either of them. This is a pity as the photo is a clear illustration of the book's title.

*   *A 'where we've got to' account of pay parity and a useful section on the rise of corporate services.* Helen May provides insight into the local and international dealings of 'ABC Learning' whose momentous downfall is still sending shudders through childcare services on both sides of the Tasman.

*   *A blog-like reflection on the convoluted political knitting together, unravelling and reconstructing of the '20 free hours' project.*

*   *Two illustrations in the new section* that illustrate clearly the lack of illustrations in the rest of the book. This has always puzzled me because as a lecturer Helen May uses visuals to good effect.

What is the same?

*   *About 250 pages of identical text.* In the 'old' edition, there was an acknowledgements section which predicts that Helen May's students will recognise sections. The book does sometimes have the feel of a series of lecture notes. In a face-to-face setting, there is opportunity to ask questions, to encourage the expert to 'digest further' or to 'spin more finely'. That clarity of storyline is sometimes missing in this book.

*   *The same patchwork quilt style of composing a narrative:* Helen May continues to use 'selective scenarios from the spectrum of early childhood services' that 'detail experiments, curricula, campaigns, issues, research and ideas; highlight children, politicians, teachers, mothers and researchers; and comment on centres, the workplace, home, schools and government' (p. 10).

What this means is that virtually any page shows the liberal use of quotes. Her style is inclusive of those 'voices' that
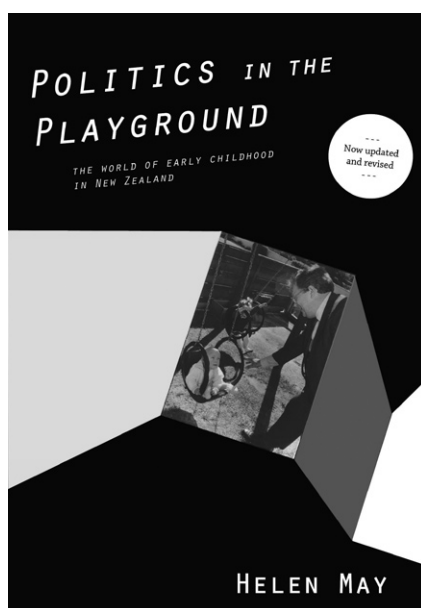
offer experience to support and add depth her narrative. Her works are explicitly inclusive where she gracious acknowledges that there are many more stories to tell.

But her style is also exclusive in that the novice reader can reel with confusion as to why this or that person's story has been introduced. Prior knowledge helps but shouldn't be necessary. While it is a relief to see that this new section has nearly all its 'voices' identified (such as explaining that Alan Prout is a 'United Kingdom sociologist' on p. 298), the previous 250+ pages are peppered with persons introduced with no explanation as why the reader should be taking them seriously. There are several examples on p. 15.

• *The same sense of valedictory – of writing on behalf of a successful group – continues.* There are recurring examples of clear in-groups and out-groups; 'spats' within the e.c.e. research community are given prominence. While the politics of parent-led services gets some space in the new section, the focus is exclusively on te kohanga reo. Playcentre, which is the butt of casual (and not always

substantiated) criticism in the 'old' book (see page 24) doesn't warrant a mention in the new section.

• *The same revelling in storyline and sources; the same cascade of footnotes* that require the serious reader to hold one finger in the back of the book to keep checking sources.

• *A recurring sense of speedy production.* There is a litany of proofreading problems (especially incomplete or inaccurate referencing information in the footnotes) and in the new section there are formatting errors. Try looking up 'early childhood education' in the index and then note what follows.

As a whole, *Politics in the playground* is still the book that defines the historic politicking in and around e.c.e. It's good to see the updated version covering the years of relative warmth from central government. But I suspect that when the time comes for the next history of e.c.e., the ec community will be ready for truly revised book – or even a new book; not the same book with another 'basted-on' section.

Contributors

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Joy Cullen was formerly Professor of Early Years Education at Massey University College of Education, Palmerston North. Following retirement, in Australia, she continues to write on early childhood education. Recent publications are: *Early childhood education*: *Society and culture* (2nd ed.) (co-edited with Angela Anning and Marilyn Fleer), and *Teacher-researchers promoting cultural learning in an intercultural kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand* (co-authored with Penny Haworth, Heather Simmons and the Wycliffe Nga Tamariki COI team) in *Language, Culture and Curriculum*.

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