

Early Education

Volume 55 Autumn / Winter 2014



- Democracy •
- Multiculturalism •
- Schemas •
- Teacher education •
- Resilience •
- Home-based e.c.e. •

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Kerry Bethell, Carmen Dalli, Lyn Foote, Lesieli McIntyre, Jenny Ritchie.

Editors

Claire McLachlan, Massey University
Sue Stover, AUT University

Design and layout:

Ben Watts

Our thanks to:

Nicky de Lautour and Tara McLaughlin

The covers:

Photos courtesy of Greerton Early Childhood Centre, Tauranga.

Front cover: Millie and Cleo constructed this birthday party from resources gathered in the garden, for the guest of honour, the doll. As is the way with parties, other children wanted to join in, so more chairs were gathered and the party goers were welcomed. Kindness is about opening doors rather than closing them.

Back photo: Team work is the order of the day and shared leadership the process. The learning here is complex. It can be tracked over weeks, from the initial construction of the dog house together, to its transformation to stables, based on one child's love of horses and his ability to motivate his friends.

Contributions

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

Contributions can be sent to:

Claire McLachlan
Professor of Childhood Education
Massey University Institute of Education
Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North
New Zealand
Phone (64 6) 356 9099, Ext 84390
Mobile (64 6) 021 555 862
Email: c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz

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Special Issue

The next issue of Early Education (#56) is a special issue with Dr. Judith Duncan as Guest Editor. Its content will have a Canterbury focus and featuring the work of new and emerging e.c.e. researchers.



Celebrating two new early childhood education professors

Professor Claire McLachlan, Massey University

Professor Judith Duncan, Canterbury University

To locate Claire's Inaugural Professorial Address 'Children's learning and development in New Zealand: Physical, cognitive and socio-emotional perspectives', visit <http://tinyurl.com/nj9fprc>

To locate Judith's Inaugural Professorial Address 'The ECE Three Ps: Parents, Participation, and Partnership', visit:

Part One at <http://youtu.be/VLvGTNk94>

Part Two at: <http://youtu.be/ADb1pJCKhr0>

Living in interesting times

Remember the Chinese curse: “*May you live in interesting times*”? The issues and challenges reported in this volume are without doubt interesting, but many are ones that the sector would rather not have faced or in some cases revisited. However as Winston Churchill once said, “*Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts*”. This is particularly evident in Helen May’s account of the ongoing negotiations aimed at maintaining the status of early childhood teacher education which is a reminder to continue to fight the cause, even if it has been fought, won or lost before.

As Helen explains, change in teacher education is a constant – we no sooner get used to one form and the next is upon us and most of us have witnessed rapid change in the last 20 years or so. However in this case, it took considerable effort on the part of members of the sector to draw the Ministry’s attention to the fact that they had secured funding through cabinet for postgraduate initial teacher education for primary and secondary and had completely ignored the needs of early childhood and total immersion Maori. As this volume goes to print, we wait to see if the promised remedy to this situation is announced.

This volume also includes two articles based on keynote presentations at NZARE’s early childhood Special Interest Group (SIG) hui. Alex Gunn presents the history of the SIG and the challenges of getting discussion, debate and research disseminated to the sector. In part this volume is dedicated to remedying the situation that Alex identifies. Linda Mitchell’s summary of her keynote identified another challenge – that of big business and the impact on the early childhood sector. She argues that there needs to be ongoing debate about values for children and childhood underpinning early childhood education rather than blatant profit motive or increasing regulatory requirements and compliance.

Lyn Wright’s letter to the e.c. sector challenges centre-centric thinking while also challenging home-based providers to not only work for quality outcomes for children and family, but also to articulate how this happens. Deepa Ramalin takes us inside an ethnically diverse e.c. centre committed to moving beyond a ‘tourist’ approach to exploring multiculturalism. Tatjana Ilic draws us into the Piagetian world of ‘schema’ which she maintains has rich pedagogical potential as well as openings for collaborative relationships with parents.

Denise Heald presents an issue that is too often in the “not talked about” basket – that of discriminatory employment practices. Denise situates a somewhat painful vignette from a recent graduate in relation to her own M.Ed research documenting the post-graduation experiences of Chinese immigrants looking for work in Auckland. There are layers of ethical issues here, including the dilemma evident in choosing not to challenge or remedy unprofessional practices for fear of not only losing a job, but also losing the trajectory towards larger goals such as permanent residency in this country.

The collection of articles rounds off with Monica Cameron’s consideration of the history and purpose of learning stories and asks some provocative questions about where to next in assessment.

The volume concludes with reviews of three recent books that will be of interest to our readers. Each book comprises contributions by a range of authors considering aspects of a key topic in early childhood education: collaborative research (reviewer is Judith Loveridge); transformative teaching practices (reviewer is Sue Cherrington); and creativity and the arts (reviewer is Jo Dean).

Thanks to all our contributors to this volume, which provide plenty of food for thought and some agendas for action. Our next volume will be a specially themed volume of research from new and emerging researchers, edited by Judith Duncan, which promises to provide further rich and interesting reading.

Yes, we live in interesting times.

**Claire McLachlan and
Sue Stover**

Editors, *Early Education*

Letter from... Wellington

Dear friends in e.c.e.,

I wonder what is your experience of home-based education and care? I'm guessing that many readers will have only a limited understanding of home-based e.c.e. and would be hard pressed to discuss it confidently with, for example, a family member who was considering using it. They would find it more difficult to defend it from some of the major challenges thrown at it by, for example, the EC Taskforce (2011). Yet home-based e.c.e. is the fastest growing form of e.c.e. (percentage wise), so it clearly meets a demand from families, especially for those with children under three years of age. I have a long term interest in home-based e.c.e. and see it as potentially being marginalised because of attempts to normalise children's learning within centre-based approaches.

The availability of appropriately qualified staff is one case in point. The *EC Taskforce Report 2011* raised concerns about the quality of home-based service e.c.e. because children have limited access to adults with higher-level e.c.e. teaching qualifications. I think this statement reflects a centre-based lens on quality. In a centre-based model e.c.e., teachers are the ones in daily contact with the children. They use their professional learning to support children's learning and to ensure that their settings are ones where the aspirations of *Te Whāriki* are upheld. In some cases, all the e.c.e. teachers in daily contact with the children will be qualified; in others only a percentage are. Just to be clear, I'm certainly not arguing with the validity of this interpretation of quality provision.

In the structure of a home-based model, the fully qualified person (often called co-ordinator' or 'visiting teacher') oversees the learning and teaching. Immediately it is apparent that in home-based e.c.e., the role of the qualified person is different to that of the centre-based teacher. Rather than judging home-based e.c.e. with a centre-based lens, and suggesting that quality cannot be provided if the qualified teacher is not in direct daily contact with the children, why not ask "How can this structure support quality outcomes for children?", "What else does it support?", "What might quality look like in a home-based context?"

The professional leadership and mentoring component of the co-ordinator job is critical to ensuring children receive quality e.c.e. experiences. But inasmuch as coordinators are ensuring that children's learning and development is supported, they are also monitoring and supporting the growth of the educators in their role. This is a major function of the role and a key mechanism for ensuring the delivery of quality home-based e.c.e.

in a high quality home-based e.c.e. service, I would expect that service providers (and others such as Ministry of Education, or Education Review Office) would be asking questions like:

- How are co-ordinators influencing the quality of educator-child interactions?
- How are co-ordinators supporting educators to take advantage of the learning resources available to them in the home and wider community in ways that truly engage children?
- How are co-ordinators assessing children's and educators' learning, and evaluating their own and educators' practices?

I believe that the home-based sector still faces the challenge of making clear what, and how, teaching and learning occurs within the context of the home-based environment, and how quality e.c.e. provision can be articulated in this context. Concerns about aspects of compliance with, or interpretations of, home-based e.c.e. regulatory requirements should not muddy considerations about the pedagogical possibilities of the model.

We need to be able to separate the conversations about the teaching and learning possibilities of home-based e.c.e. from regulatory issues such as whether *au pairs* and nanny services should be able to access e.c.e. funding, or the ineffectiveness of some personnel management practices. They are linked, of course, but regulatory requirements need to reflect and support the provision of quality home-based e.c.e., and this I believe still needs to be better understood.

New Zealand is proud of the diverse e.c.e. options available to parents, but diversity requires flexible and open thinking. As a colleague recently said to me "You can't ask for, or invite diversity, and then expect it to fit".

It seems timely to be raising the spotlight on 'the fit' of home-based e.c.e. once more.

Yours in pondering,

Lyn Wright

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Alternatives to the market model

*Reclaiming collective democracy in early childhood education and care*¹

Linda Mitchell

This article analyses the state of ECEC in New Zealand and critiques the increasing dominance of discourses of commercialisation, marketisation and managerialism around provision of ECEC (early childhood education and care) services and curriculum. My main argument is that we need an alternative discourse founded on an understanding of 'the child as citizen; and ECEC as a public good and a child's right'. The conclusion discusses some ways in which we might reclaim collective democracy in generating ECEC provision that supports such understanding.

In New Zealand, like other countries that share a mixed market economy 'the state, private-for-profit and community-based providers all play a role in the provision, and influence funding and regulation of ECEC' (Lloyd, 2012, p. 4). Over time, successive New Zealand governments have assumed that the community or private sector will provide ECEC and apart from the Correspondence School, the government is not a direct provider. Nevertheless, in terms of property, the government does offer funding grants for capital works. Until 2009, these were discretionary grants that were only for community-based services - it was assumed that private providers had access to commercial funding arrangements (Lange, 1988). From 2010, distinctions by type were removed and private services became eligible for the new Targeted Assistance for Provision grants on the same basis as community-based services. In effect, private services can now receive government funding for buildings, making it even more possible for the private sector compared to the community-based sector to provide new services. In addition, private services can later be sold for a profit or changed in their use. It is no surprise therefore that the private ECEC sector has grown at three times the rate of the community-based sector in the last decade. ECEC is big business.

So why is the market approach and reliance on privatised provision cause for concern? Recently Eva Lloyd and Helen Penn (2012) brought together analyses of impacts

and outcomes of market-based childcare on quality and access from around the world, including New Zealand. A common message across all countries is that 'marketisation and privatisation risk deepening, consolidating or widening inequalities of access to ECEC provision and driving qualitative differences between types of provider' (Lloyd, 2012, p. 8).

According to Michael Apple (2005) educational reforms that have centred around a commitment to the market have 'marked a dangerous shift in our very idea of democracy ... from 'thick' collective forms to 'thin' consumer-driven and overly individualistic forms (p. 11). In individualistic forms, staff allegiance to collective public values begins to shift to an allegiance to owners' values. The parent is portrayed as a "consumer of a product," making choices on the basis of advertising. Apple argues:

In the process as well, there is a very strong tendency for needs and values that were originally generated out of collective deliberations, struggles and compromises, and which led to the creation of state services, to be marginalised and ultimately abandoned (Apple, 2005, p. 13).

We see many examples of these features in New Zealand's ECEC world:

- ABC staff being encouraged to buy shares (before ABC sold its services) and so having an interest in profits for themselves, perhaps in conflict to collective values;
- Another corporate chain Kidicorp advertising two weeks free fees (conditions apply), presumably as a monetary incentive for parents to enrol their child;
- ECEC services enforcing minimum enrolment hours or days with the consequence that parents have to pay fees beyond the 20 Hours ECE, even if they do not want additional hours (Mitchell et al., 2013).

1. This is a summarised and updated version of a keynote presentation at the NZARE Early Childhood Special Interest Group hui, December, 2012. For a fuller version, see Mitchell (2013).

The government is not willing to intervene in the operation of ECEC enrolment policies despite giving significant funding amounts. Yet one reasonable way to prevent the charges that some ECEC service managers are making would be for the government to require, as a condition of funding, that providers do offer free ECE or cap fees at a certain level, beyond which they cannot charge. Free ECE for older preschool children is an entitlement in many countries and fee capping is widespread (Eurydice network, 2009; Penn, 2014).

Concurrent with market influences on provision of ECEC services, an increasing state control is being exerted over curriculum. Bradley Hannigan (2013) argues that a scientific management approach in which teachers are portrayed as implementers of curriculum defined by scientific managers is embedded in the schooling sector. The approach is visible, for example, in National Standards reporting in mathematics, reading and writing, where outcomes are prescribed, a theory of control from governance to management and into teaching practice is made explicit, and a system is used to audit outcomes. Hannigan argues that the unambiguous outcomes measures for ECEC recommended in the *EC Taskforce* (2011) and supported by the 2012 *ECE Sector Advisory Report on Sector-wide Quality* are symptomatic of entrenchment of scientific management in ECEC.

Recently, too, Sophie Alcock and Maggie Haggerty (2013) examined the Ministry of Education's framing of ECEC, arguing that policy initiatives are 'part of wider economically driven and globally referenced agendas that in turn position ECCE as preparation for school and the workforce' (p. 21). Their article explored the way this situation has arisen despite the aspirations of openness and plurality in the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, and a tradition of viewing the early years of childhood as a time of life rather than mere preparation for life. In each of these articles, authors raise questions about values and aspirations for children, and the power of beliefs, both silent and overt, to influence policy and pedagogy.

Alongside these trends, challenges emerging from globalisation are particularly urgent for ECEC services to understand and address. In New Zealand, these include:

1. Greater ethnic and racial diversity from the number of immigrants coming to New Zealand. Fastest growing is New Zealand's Asian population projected to increase by 3.4 percent a year to 2026 over the 2006 estimate (Statistics New Zealand, 2010);
2. Children spending more hours in ECEC from younger age – an average of 13.5 hours in 2000 to 21.7 hours in 2013 (Education Counts, 2014). A high proportion of children living in poverty. Charles Waldegrave, at a recent TRCC conference in Hamilton (Waldegrave, 13 April, 2014), presented the statistic that 23% of children in New Zealand live in households below the poverty threshold – around 240,000 children;
3. Concerns about global warming and the environment (Ritchie, 2013).

ECEC teachers/ educators have potential to play a key role in offering opportunity for inclusion, in ensuring children's experiences in ECEC are beneficial not harmful, and in supporting collective values such as of participating, taking responsibility and acting in collaboration. National and local policy can offer framing conditions to support such practice.

Peter Moss asks the question 'Need markets be the only show in town?' (Moss, 2012). Like Peter, I believe there are alternatives. Maxine Greene (1999) argues for a public dialogue:

The public school should no longer be designed by people, even like us, by experts or academics. It should be emergent from a public dialogue. . . . The inherent diversity in a public school should render it impossible to impose uniformity from above. We are charged with developing a school sensitive to all those voices, those diverse needs, and a school that will create something in common that is prized (n.p.).

Many writers (Brostrom, 2003; Mitchell, 2007; Moss, 2009; Moss & Petrie, 1997, 2002; Prout, 2005) have argued that we need to debate values about children and childhood as a basis for ECEC provision. And that citizenry rights and living in a democracy is a good place to start.

One way forward is a serious effort to reclaim collective democracy in ECEC (Fielding & Moss, 2012). John Dewey put forward a view of democracy as something that is never achieved once and for all - 'democracy needs to be born anew every generation and education is its midwife' (Dewey, 1916/1976, p. 15).

New Zealand's ECEC activists and academics have a long history of acting collectively to progress policy directions. Clare Wells (1999) described the report *Future Directions* (Early Childhood Education Project, 1996), initiated by the union NZEI Te Riu Roa with a consortium of community-based organisations from each sector of early childhood, as 'a major piece of collaborative work which unified the sector to identify, state and strive towards structural and funding arrangements to support quality early childhood education' (p. 58). As an upshot of collective thinking and action, many of the report recommendations were enacted, including the call for a long term strategic plan for early childhood. More recently, a coalition of nine community-based organisations developed a shared vision for ECEC in New Zealand and proposals for strengthening community-based provision (May & Mitchell, 2009). It argued that:

- The service is seen as a community asset and the children, parents, families and community benefit from it;
- Collectivity, partnership, and participation are hallmarks of decision-making;
- The full funding from government resources goes into educating the child and supporting their family (p. 4).

It recommended a shift from a market approach to

“a partnership model”, with a planned and coherent network of ECEC provision in every community.

In educational practice, the Centres of Innovation have offered many examples of teachers/ educators engaged in democratic practice: debating their values, researching their practice, and seeking and listening to the views of their wider communities. Assessment exemplars within *Kei tua o te pae* and *Te whatu pōkeka* (Ministry of Education, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2009b) show the integration of learning dispositions and skills/ knowledge through children’s active democratic participation and the recognition of the funds of knowledge the child brings. Findings from the evaluation of the ECE strategic plan suggest that the combination of policy focus and support for teacher qualifications, professional development, and assessment and curriculum resourcing, combined with 20 hours free ECE opened up opportunities for access and advanced democratic goals for education. As I wrote in 2011:

This coherent set of initiatives was key to the shifts that have occurred in New Zealand’s ECE pedagogical landscape towards more open and democratic ECE provision. Benefits came from policies that were universally available and coherently organised around an understanding of children, families and communities as participants (Mitchell, 2011, p. 10).

There are currently signs of further entrenchment of marketisation in schooling with the first charter schools opening their doors in 2014. ECEC is under the gaze within the media, with this week a one-sided article in the New Zealand Listener (Woulfe, 2014) that seemed to be focusing on much more control of teachers/ educators and narrower outcomes of literacy and numeracy than is encompassed by New Zealand’s holistic curriculum emphasis on learning dispositions that enable children to keep on learning and are integrated with knowledge and skills.

The challenge is for us in early childhood education to unite as a force to influence policy change – towards democratic provision – as we have done in the past.



ECEC teachers/ educators have potential to play a key role in offering opportunity for collective values such as of participating, taking responsibility and acting in collaboration.

Photo courtesy of Greerton Early Childhood Centre

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The ECE SIG

A personal history of its origins, intentions and necessity¹

Alexandra C. Gunn

I had long been interested and involved in the former early childhood education interest group of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE). That group had started in December 1997 with an inaugural symposium in Auckland. As a beginning academic I possessed neither the confidence nor research trajectory to attend the hui; nor were there any funds to lend support. Nevertheless, as an NZARE member, I recognised the value of the development, and managed to get myself onto a mailing list so I could keep up.

The group, the NZ Early Childhood Research Network, was coordinated by Dr. Sarah Farquhar a member of the NZARE Council. A pattern of an early childhood research hui the day prior to the NZARE annual meeting quickly established. A major output of the network was a journal that reported some of the hui presentations: *The New Zealand Research in ECE Journal*. At the time, the network day and journal were major indicators of the growing strength of early childhood education and research in NZ, and a sign as far as I was concerned, of the NZARE's commitment to these fields.

The NZARE underwrote the network's hui and the costs associated with publishing its first volume. This was a pattern that followed but by 2002, the journal's front matter made no mention of the NZARE Interest Group's hui as the source for its papers. Nor did it make mention any more of NZARE's relationship with the journal.

This omission publically marked a shift away from the Association – a move that left NZARE members with no formal opportunity to caucus and promote our early childhood education interests within house. As a long time Association member, I felt the loss of the hui and journal greatly. Troubled not only by the loss of the network as a public forum for disseminating early childhood research, I was astounded that the NZARE could let it go.

During a conversation with colleagues in 2007, we mused on the loss to NZARE of the journal and research hui. That year the NZARE conference was to be held in Christchurch and I was on the organising committee. I managed to establish in the conference programme, a lunchtime slot of 'interest groups', which members could organise themselves,

and which could be used for the purposes of caucusing around areas of research interest. An early childhood meeting occurred and strong support was lent to the idea of once more formalising an early childhood education group within NZARE. I committed to pursue the idea the following year.

In June 2008 I entered into an email discussion with senior colleagues in universities around the country. With supportive critique from Judith Duncan and Carmen Dalli, I drafted a paper about establishing an early childhood caucus within NZARE. I planned to send the paper to people who had attended the Christchurch meeting and also to NZARE Council to gauge their initial responses. I would then take the paper to the 2008 conference in Palmerston North for discussion. If agreement on its content could be reached, remits to the association's AGM would go forth. The plan was realised and seven remits about the establishment of a SIG² were put and passed at the AGM. Subsequent to this, the first SIG hui was planned for 2009.

The original intentions of the SIG were expressed in that 2008 position paper (Gunn & Dalli, 2008) and in the set of remits that went to the Association's AGM that year (Early childhood interest group, 2008). They described a vision for the functioning of the SIG that was based upon it being public, collectively minded, and democratic. We purposefully connected the SIG to the formal structures of the NZARE – a public and membership-driven association. It meant that this iteration of a NZ-based early childhood research network could not drift off into the private sector as the former had. For me, this was justification enough for the structure, but it also served the SIG and Association's interests in other ways: it preserved a deliberate commitment to early childhood research within the Association and it made the organisation and its members partly responsible for supporting quality early childhood education research.

Furthermore, SIG members as part of the larger collective of education researchers in Aotearoa would contribute to NZARE's broader remit by way of leading discussions, building capacity for, and offering perspectives about quality

1. This paper is an updated version of the keynote presented to the Early Childhood Special Interest Group (SIG) hui at New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE) in Hamilton in 2012 (see Gunn, 2012).

2. The change from Caucus to SIG was made on the advice of Council. NZARE's constitution allows for three caucuses, each with membership rights and responsibilities to Council. The constitution of the early childhood group as a SIG was to later result in an entire SIG development within the Association.

education research in New Zealand. The mutual benefits and binds of the structure were, and continue to be, a nod toward the SIGs public, collective and democratic origins.

A second feature of the establishment and intentions of the SIG concerns its role in developing research and researcher capacity in Aotearoa. Like the original NZARE research network did, the current SIG provides a forum through which novice researchers and practitioners of early childhood education can join in conversation with established researchers and policy makers. It has become a place within which people can step outside their institutional boundaries and listen to, contribute to, and critique current research and policy. I have been to many presentations over these last six years where lively debate and robust questioning of methods, findings, implications of research and policy has occurred. But equally as much, I have listened to and learned from practitioners who are researching daily practice, masters and doctoral students whose enthusiasm about their studies and methods abounds, and seasoned presenters with old challenges and novel insights to share. Members of the SIG have urged that hui attend to both developmental and research quality agendas.

As a consequence there has been a strong thread of discussions about ethics, methodology and practices of research. This came to fruition particularly well in 2013, I thought, when the conveners urged well-established researchers to submit their papers for consideration to the main NZARE conference programme and new researchers to use the SIG as a forum to present. The strategy freed up hui time for workshops on aspects of research practice and publishing. I am hopeful this will continue in years to come and that in future we (in the broadest sense of educators, researchers and policy makers) might even use the SIG to launch a collective project or two. Such a move would truly see the intentions of public, collective and democratic research and scholarship realised.

Some thoughts on present and future directions

These first six years of the NZARE early childhood SIG have been an exciting and important time. Not only have they shown how a bit of collective organising, vision and time can result in the reclamation and sustainable development of a group like this; they also demonstrate that it is possible to exceed this current historical impulse towards privatisation and individualism which we are increasingly challenged to bear. I find this a very hopeful reality spurred on by the fact that the SIG is attached to and afforded some protection from a broader community of educationalists, researchers and scholars.

The SIG continues to operate on two levels: first as the hui but also as a formally constituted group within the NZARE and involving therefore a business meeting, annual plan, and reporting responsibilities to members. Our initial major goals, to establish the SIG as a regular feature of the New Zealand educational research community, to publish from the SIG, and to build capacity are all being realised.

These are significant achievements in the current context and emerge proudly from membership-led initiatives which have been collectively, publically, and democratically inclined. Table 1 gives an account of the depth and breadth of research and scholarship activities that have been occurring.

A future next step for the SIG will involve, I hope, some research collaborations (national and international) and the active bringing into our network of more educators who work with children and families. I don't want to force my colleagues who teach with children and families blindly onto the evidence-based practice bandwagon, but I do believe in theory making a difference to how we think and thereafter, for what we think possible, as well as what we do.

A major objective of the NZARE is to advocate a high standard of practice within educational research in Aotearoa. For me this involves strengthening the relationships between research, scholarship and teaching practice. This is a goal that will be advanced by growing the community of scholars, research practitioners, educators, and policy makers within the SIG. The group is a public asset – it should benefit the early childhood communities in whose interests it serves. Collective decision-making, partnership and participation have been key features of the SIG in these early years – long may they remain. I am looking forward to the next six years of SIG activities with great anticipation.

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Table.1: An overview of the first six years of the NZARE early childhood SIG hui and goals.

Year/Location/ Convenors	Theme	Hui	Business Meeting
2009, Rotorua: Alex Gunn with, Barbara Allan, Mary-Liz Broadley, Carmen Dalli, Judith Duncan, Fiona Ellis, Lyn Foote, Claire McLachlan, and Lia de Vocht.	Research for the field	<p>45 minute critical discussion, workshop or round table sessions and 90 minute symposia on selected current issues: infant and toddler care, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment, professional development.</p> <p>Keynotes: Anne Smith on ‘implementing UNCRC’ and Sarah Te One on ‘do babies have needs or rights?’</p> <p>13 content sessions involving 32 presenters and 96 attendees.</p>	<p>Discussed: development of SIG webpage and desire for the role of the convenor to rotate each year.</p> <p>Decided: Keryn Davis to convene the SIG in 2010.</p>
2010, Auckland: Keryn Davis with Alex Gunn	21 st Century Research	<p>45 minute critical/roundtable discussions about research methods or 45 minute paper presentations on completed or in-progress studies.</p> <p>Keynotes: Anne Meade on ‘filling gaps in early childhood research’ and Lesley Rameka on ‘kaupapa Māori assessment in early childhood education’.</p> <p>15 content sessions involving 29 presenters and 110 attendees.</p>	<p>Discussed: lack of progress with webpage development, publishing opportunities, maintaining a presence in the main NZARE conference, future collaborative projects, and responding publically to early childhood education policy developments.</p> <p>Decided: Request to Council to support journal initiative, joint convenorship of SIG with one person remaining for a second year to induct new convenor, and Sonja Arndt/Sarah Te One endorsed as 2011 convenors.</p>
2011, Tauranga, Sarah Te One and Sonja Arndt	Politics, practices and research: Keeping it real.	<p>Round table or paper presentations of 45 minutes duration.</p> <p>Keynotes: Janis Carol-Lind on ‘politics, practice and research for infants and toddlers attending early childhood services’ and Jenny Ritchie on ‘ethics of care as foundations for pedagogies of relationality’.</p> <p>25 content sessions involving 34 presenters.</p>	<p>Discussed: Prospect of a joint NZARE/AARE SIG event in 2012, publishing goal (as yet unrealised), webpage maintenance.</p> <p>Decided: Sonja Arndt, Claire Davison & Janita Craw co-convenors 2012. Investigate a stand-alone publication that would publish the SIG keynotes and history to date.</p>
2012, Hamilton, Sonja Arndt, Claire Davison, and Janita Craw.	Making knowledge matter and early childhood education.	<p>90-minute symposia or 30-minute paper presentations.</p> <p>Keynotes: Linda Mitchell on ‘reclaiming collective democracy in early childhood education’, Alex Gunn on ‘the SIG development and history to date’, and members of the MOE Early Childhood Learning Outcomes Working Group: Anne Meade, Margaret Carr, Linda Mitchell & Lesley Rameka on ‘a framework for strengthening learning’.</p> <p>25 sessions involving 51 presenters and around 100 attendees.</p>	<p>Discussed: publishing goals, early childhood memberships of NZARE, currency of webpage.</p> <p>Decided: Approach to Early Education editors re: publishing goal and endorsed Claire Davison, Janita Craw and Lyn Foote as co-convenors for 2013.</p>
2013, Dunedin, Claire Davison, Janita Craw & Lyn Foote.	‘Outing’ creative research inside-outside early childhood education.	<p>40-minute methodology workshops and 20 minute paper presentations.</p> <p>Keynote: Anne Smith on ‘what kind of theory and research is relevant to the wellbeing and rights of children?’</p> <p>12 sessions involving 14 presenters and around 60 attendees.</p>	<p>Discussed: continuation of publishing goals and webpage</p> <p>Decided: Co-convenors for 2014, Lyn Foote, Sara Murray & Tara McLaughlin.</p>

Going beyond cultural celebrations

Co-constructing learning in a multicultural setting

Deepa Ramalin

A child has migrated from Syria and enrolled in an early childhood centre. Aotearoa is his new home. He speaks Arabic. He is unsettled, confused and uncertain about his new home. As educators, do we see a potential of nurturing the child into our world or do we enter into his world?

A rapidly changing cultural tapestry of Aotearoa poses challenges for the educators, in supporting the cultural identity. Often, children are required to choose the world in which they will belong and are forced to navigate between the two identities (Henning & Kirova, 2012). These enforced choices by the environment, where children are reared in one way in their families, exposed to their cultural tools and being educated in another, creates tension, impacting their identity and thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2006). A child's culture is central to the development of their thinking. As Vygotsky (1978) describes the development of concepts, language, memory and attention all have their roots in culture and the culture itself creates tools for thinking.

In the context of multiculturalism, a variety of cultural tools are dealt with such as languages, artefacts and relationships. Culture conditions thinking. Hence, if the child's culture is ignored, their learning context is marginalised, impacting on identity formation (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Fleer, 2006).

Aotearoa's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* supports the cultural identity of all children. It aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures by emphasising the inclusion of the culturally sensitive and responsive practices (Ministry of Education, 1996). However, at the implementation level, monocultural lens shuts down the opportunity to see the world through multiple lenses and to develop critical thinking. Celebrating Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Polyfests are the emerging new norm. However, these cultural experiences remain at a superficial level, ignoring the issue of educational equity and impacting identity formation (May & Sleeter, 2010).

This paper discusses multiculturalism from dual positions; one from the position of the learner to create the context and the other from the position of others' to develop the lens of multiplicity and critical thinking. These dual positions co-exist and learning often mediates between these two

positions. The paper includes conversations amongst teachers and children at Play and Learn, a Papatoetoe-based early childhood centre. They illustrate implementation of critical multicultural approach in developing thinking. These were written by the author who is a senior teacher at the centre. Permission was given by parents and staff for this material to be shared with changed names for the children.

Background information in the context of multiculturalism

Play and Learn is an ethnically mixed early childhood centre whose teaching staff practise socio-cultural and liberal multiculturalism. The practices are based on socio-cultural theories such as Lev Vygotsky's *social constructivism* and Urie Bronfenbrenner's *ecological systems of development* (see Pound, 2011). These theories challenge the universal image of a child and are viewed as culturally responsive theories, supporting the diverse cultural background to create a learning context (Pound, 2011). Henning and Kirova (2012) describe liberal multiculturalism as the 4-D approach: dance, dress, diet and dialect. The 4-D approach celebrates a tourist view of the cultures of others with a tokenistic value. Examples evident at Play and Learn include celebrating Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Pasifika week. The children regularly bring food from their homes and having their cultural food is a norm at the centre. Cooking fried rice, noodles, chop suey, rotis, and hummus are usual features of the centre. Cultural dress-ups and songs are a part of the multicultural curriculum.

However, at Play and Learn, our teaching team and management recognised that rich multicultural learning requires more than the 4-D approach. At Play and Learn, despite having a multicultural team, English remains the most spoken language. Hence, it is crucial to examine the attitudes towards other languages and cultures within the centre. The existing power relation needs to be addressed by implementing critical multiculturalism to create multiple contexts and multiple perspectives to foster thinking. The children are viewed as capable learners and the children organise regular planning meetings to discuss their ideas. However, the participation of non-English speaking children and the families need to be examined. Critical multicultural approach has often been criticised as unable to

translate its theoretical concerns into actual pedagogy and practices (Cannella, 1997; May & Sleeter, 2010). This paper explores the journey of Play and Learn in implementing critical multiculturalism.

Critical multiculturalism builds on co-constructive pedagogies

Play and Learn has implemented the principle of co-construction into their practice. In a multicultural context, having a traditional approach of educator viewed as a subject expert is challenged and calls for multiple facilitators to co-construct the knowledge. The knowledge is co-constructed based on 'different people know different truths' (Pound, 2011, p. 146). The very process of co-constructing knowledge is democratic and embedded in educational equity. Learners share the power of creating their own learning context and educators interact with the learners in such a way that knowledge is co-created (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

Dialogic-based practices are integral element of critical multiculturalism. Dunn (2004) emphasizes the value of everyday contexts to how young children make sense of the world. Moreover, the children as co-authors in conversations about their learning can contribute to their developing views about how they learn (Carr, 2011). At Play and Learn, through critical conversation and multicultural stories became evident through multiple lenses.

This paper includes vignettes which illustrate our work to more critically engage with multiculturalism. Four vignettes provide verbal snapshots of conversations and observations.

Vignette one: Discussing ethnicities and languages and sharing our world

Viliami: *You know my dad is Samoan so I am Samoan.*

Amadi: *My mum is Fijian and my dad is Samoan, so I am Fijian and Samoan.*

Teacher: *Do you know what am I?*

Viliami and Amadi: *You are Indian.*

Teacher: *Yes, I am Indian and I can speak Indian languages. (Teacher speaks in Hindi.) Kaise ho?*

Amadi: *You speak like Shanti.*

Teacher: *Yes, Shanti is Indian too like me but she speaks different language. India has many languages. How do you speak Fijian and Samoan?*

Amadi: *I can say Bula. My mum and nana can speak lots of words.*

Viliami: *I can count in Samoan, tasi, lua,.... (He counts in Samoan).*

(Kate, a New Zealander of European descent is listening to this conversation attentively).

Teacher: *What about you, Kate?*

Kate: *I am Samoan, but I am different Samoan, I can speak like this (drawing attention to her spoken words) like everyone else.*

Teacher: *Yes, in New Zealand most people can speak English but in other places like Samoa, China, India people talk different languages."*

(The teacher shows some videos on YouTube illustrating how different countries look and how different people speak different languages.)

This vignette illustrates how the children were comfortable to talk about their ethnicities and the languages spoken at home. They were aware of existence of different languages and were able to share their prior knowledge creating their learning context. Prior knowledge forms the foundation for further conceptual developments (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). For Kate, it was a new experience of talking about different languages and to talk about her ethnicity. Also Viliami introduced Samoan counting to the teacher and to other children. Thus the roles of facilitator and learner are flexible. Kate was still developing her concept on ethnicity but she knew she was different. YouTube videos showed them the different worlds. Such conversations bring forth the opportunities to develop multiple contexts and multiple lens to see the world. Seeing similarities and differences between different worlds facilitate critical thinking.

Despite acknowledging different languages at the centre, other languages were scarcely heard. Our children and teachers did not speak their home languages at the centre. The teachers decided to actively support the first language and spoke home languages where possible. Consequently, some Samoan, Hindi, Chinese and Punjabi were spoken at the centre and also the children from monolingual backgrounds were getting opportunities to develop other languages.

Vignette two: From acknowledgement to promotion of home languages

Angela: *Say something in Chinese.*

Teacher: *Tā de yīge yàngguāng cànlan de rizi.*

Angela: *What does it mean?*

Teacher: *It is a sunny day.*

(Angela goes to a teacher who can speak Samoan and asks her to translate into her language.)

Teacher: *E la le aso.*

(Angela goes to Indian teacher and asks her to translate in her language)

Teacher: *Aaj dhoop hey.*

Angela was more interested in hearing the sounds and rhythm of each language. She was aware of different

languages existing in the centre. In this context, Angela is using metacognitive strategies. Pramling (1988) defines metacognition as a conscious awareness of one's own learning and thinking. Within the discourse of differences, metacognitive strategies are natural course of learning.

Parents' and whānau support was sought in supporting the child's first language. At the centre, the multiculturalism was not merely seen but also heard. The parents' have been encouraged to write their stories in their home languages. At Play and Learn, parents have begun to share their stories in their languages, share their home videos and photos on the face book page. Centre-whānau face book page reflects multiculturalism through the posting of home videos and photos for example, Surirut could count in English and Thai which was posted and celebrated. Through such multilingual initiatives a new multicultural environment has begun to emerge and exchanging of stories in different languages is an emerging norm, nurturing holistic thinking.

Vignette three: Multilingualism to multiculturalism

The children were choosing books of different languages. The children chose a Chinese book, which the teacher could not read. The group decided to guess the story from its pictures. The children were actively engaged in reading the pictures and the teacher drew their attention towards the illustrations of houses, clothes, trees and the street. To decode the story, the group also paid attention to the backdrop.

In this vignette, the teacher is a co-learner with the children and they co-constructed the story. The critical discussion on Chinese lifestyle based on the illustrations facilitated the multiple perspectives. Pramling (1988) emphasises the value of adult-child joint problem solving to support meta-cognition. The teacher and children were trying to decode the illustrations to interpret the story.

Multilingual books are crucial as children from diverse population also deserve access to mentors, roles that writers and illustrators from their own backgrounds portray (Gangi, 2008). All children need to be exposed to positive images that represent their culture and themselves in the literature that they are hearing and reading. Reading to young children from culturally diverse, family-centered literature benefits children of all backgrounds (Brinson, 2005). In this vignette, the teacher is role modelling border crossing by actively engaging in the world of others. Dispositions of taking risks, venturing into unfamiliar zone act like a springboard of the learning journey allowing the participants to extend their thinking.

Vignette four: Challenging stereotypes

John saw a new marble game in the centre. He chose to unpack the new game. He saw some English script and started reading the instructions (he read based on his prior experience) to his friend, explaining how to play the game. As he saw the Chinese script, he paused and said, 'I can't

read Chinese; this game is from the \$2 shop.'

The teacher showed the price tag; the child read 1 and 5 and not 2.

Teacher: *It is Chinese writing but is it from the \$2 shop?*

John: *No, it is from \$1 and \$5 shop.*

John and the teacher got the iPad and researched some of the Chinese shops and shopping malls around the world. They discussed how not all Chinese shops are \$2 shop and not all \$2 shops are Chinese.

Educators need to work from a multiple standpoints to fully empower the children and make opportunities for stressing similarities and differences to develop critical thinking (Siraj-Blatchford, 2006). The adult in a child's environment has the crucial role of developing attitudes and values.

Discussion

The vignettes are woven from everyday's experiences exemplifying the power of interactions, whānau input and the use of technology in implementing critical multiculturalism to foster holistic and critical thinking.

Conversations have emerged as powerful pedagogies to bring forth the critical multiculturalism to develop multiple lenses. The multilingualism and the multiculturalism have been brought into the foreground to develop the context and multiple perspectives. Meaningful contexts foster holistic thinking that is embedded in identity formation and offer the opportunities to develop critical thinking and metacognitive strategies. This is further explained by Pramling (1988); metacognitive understanding is best supported by a focus on the relationship of the child to their world.

The above vignettes expound that children could be encouraged to explore and make creative connections that push the boundaries of their everyday experiences and knowledge (May & Sleeter, 2010). Through everyday experiences and conversations, children co-construct the knowledge and curriculum. Hence supporting children to use their cultural tools is critical. The value of home language is further stressed as the loss of children's home language may lead to the loss of intergenerational wisdom; damaging individual and community esteem and impacting identity formation (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Thus multicultural curriculum is critical in connecting the different ethnic groups and intergenerational culture to foster holistic thinking.

Parents and whānau partnership is the lifeline of the critical multiculturalism. Relationships based on trust and which steward reciprocity invite parents and whānau to share their cultural knowledge and resources to develop a context and nurture holistic thinking.

The child's cultural legacies and languages are seen as powerful resources for teaching and learning embedded

in social context and relationships (Simon, 2011). These initiatives have begun to deconstruct the power-based relationship existing in the educational space and created confidence to express in ones' own language. Such genuine proactive partnership rooted in democracy and self esteem, enhances thinking for expressing rather than for conformity. Critical multiculturalism is just not the approach for the children but also for the parents, teachers and the community.

Technologies have emerged as an empowering tool for strengthening the connections to further develop perspectives and thinking. At Play and Learn, teachers and children have been using ICT for researching multilingual songs, stories and videos to develop multiple perspectives. Nixon and Gutierrez (2008) explain that new technologies of digital story telling contribute to non-dominant children's identity and literacy supporting both academic achievement and identities as productive learners and meaning makers.

ICT has a potential to create an intercultural space where stories are unfolded, communicated and recreated. ICT offers the ownership in creating, representing and sharing own stories in a personalised way. Websites such as YouTube and Google bring forth the stories from the world. Social media sites offer personalised sites to get connected and share stories at community level. Children's thinking is supported by such ICT networking creating connections, contexts.

Also use of ICT facilitates access to different worlds and triggers dialogue to resist ethnocentric lens to interpret various social realities. Such a self-reflective individual can often suspend judgement and "try-on" a new perspective in an effort to broaden one's own understanding about a particular condition or circumstances (Mcshay, 2010). ICT has the potential to emerge as a multicultural tool.

Conclusion

The implementation of a critical multicultural approach embedded in co-construction facilitates educational equity. Through insightful conversations and daily interactions, multiple contexts are co-constructed, supporting holistic thinking and multiple perspectives. Such perspectives are developed to facilitate critical thinking and metacognitive strategies. ICT has emerged as an effective multicultural aid in strengthening connections and accessing different worlds. Thus critical multicultural approach is a powerful cultural tool and also can be accessed as a thinking tool for children and for the community.

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Extending children's thinking through schemas

A professional responsibility?

Tatjana Ilic

Babies are design to learn.

Gopnik (2010, p. 81)

A baby's brain is flexible, changing constantly. Providing supportive, quality and stimulating environments and experiences is crucial for children's brain development and long term development as they are born predisposed, willing and prepared to learn (Gallagher, 2005; McCaleb & Mikaere-Wallis, 2005; Nutbrown & Page, 2008).

Within schema theory, very young children are recognised as having recurring patterns of thinking and behaviour which are evident in the child's actions (Meade & Cubey, 2008). Highlighting patterns and consistency as attributes of children's development, Nutbrown (1999), says that 'children's schemas are their motivation for learning, their insatiable drive to move, represent, discuss, question, find out' (p. 114).

In this paper, I propose that early childhood teachers have a responsibility to understand schema development at a deep level. Drawing on the literature as well as on my own experience as an early childhood teacher, I argue that understanding how schemas develop not only opens up pedagogical possibilities for children and teachers, but also can positively influence relationships with parents. However I also argue that professional learning for early childhood (e.c.) teachers is at best problematic because of a range of factors, including poor teacher:child ratios and inadequate resourcing for teachers' professional learning.

Schema learning theory and sociocultural approaches to e.c.e.

Stemming from the work of Jean Piaget (1951), schema theory has been widely used to identify and explore children's recurring patterns of inquiry and dispositional characteristics (Nutbrown, 2006; Athey, 1990; Athey, 2013). According to New Zealand researchers (e.g. Van Wijk, 2008), 'schema development theory' is highly compatible with the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). While *Te Whāriki* positions the child within its social context, schema theory adds in the Piagetian concept of the child exploring the world using recurring and observable strategies in which children's working theories become evident.

Critiquing the schema theory, Meade (2000) highlights that although it helps us recognise and comprehend how children's working theories develop, it does not describe how children discover about other parts of their lives. Additionally, Dahlin (2001) disputes the 'explanatory value' (p.298) of schemas critiquing its narrow approach, highlighting the significance of holistic approach, looking at the complete person who is investigating and experiencing schemas.

However, it is well recognised that socio-cultural aspects, together with the predetermined, biological one, influence and shape the development of schemas (Athey, 1990; Bruce, 2005). Cultural influences on schematic development are visible through the provision of content and experiences that the child is immersed in daily (Athey, 1990; Bruce, 2005). Relevant content, as well as joint engagement and sustained conversations are invaluable for the development of schemas (Meade et al., 2013).

Space for play is a key aspect of this. According to Vygotsky (cited in Siraj-Blatchford, 2009), play allows children opportunities to extend their curiosity, get to know and rework the complicated world around them rather than just simply reproducing it. While stressing the importance of social interactions and culture, he emphasised the teacher's role in 'instructing the child and honouring the child's individual learning' (cited by Mooney, 2000, p. 94).

Recognising schemas in children's play

In her seminal book, *Extending thought in early childhood*, Chris Athey (1990) labelled schemas (or patterns of exploration) in children's spontaneous behaviour and thought. She maintained that although children construct their thinking during self-directed experiences, social construction, educators and parents play a crucial role in the development of children's cognition and thinking.

According to Bruce (2005), schematic thinking develops in clusters as an outcome of 'biological (form) and socio-cultural (content)' (p. 73). This influences children's development and makes each child's schemas distinctive. By identifying and responding to children's schemas, adults assist children in engaging with complex descriptions



In a quiet space, a child creates. What is evident here suggests a schema of ‘containment’.

and ideas, helping them become aware of their schemas, positively contributing to children’s thinking and schematic development (Bruce, 2005; Meade & Cubey, 2008; Nutbrown, 1999).

Schematic thinking positions children as each having natural tendency to explore activities and provocations of their interest, in turn, enriching and reinforcing their evolving schemas (Nutbrown, 2006). Observing children engaged in free play, Athey (1990) identified schematic figural representation (space orders, curves and lines) that is visible in children’s drawing, building with three dimensional objects and painting; and dynamic schematic behavior that is visible in children’s actions. These provide two key subdivisions of schema development: action and dynamic schemas.

While exploring their schematic interests, children assimilate and coordinate their cognitive experiences into schemas broadening their schematic understanding and cognitive development (Athey, 1990). Moreover, Fonagy highlights the role schema behaviour plays in ‘enabling each child to ‘mentalise’ or ‘reflect’ on earlier or forthcoming events’ (cited in Arnold & Pen Green Team, 2010, p.141). It seems that children are using schemas that interest them to help interpret, comprehend and deal with emotionally complicated, confusing happenings and information in their lives (Arnold, 2009).

Arising from New Zealand research, the most commonly observed schemas amongst your children were:

- transporting,
- transforming,
- trajectory,
- rotation and circulatory,
- enclosure and enveloping, and
- connecting and disconnecting (Van Wijk, 2008; Van Wijk et al., 2006)

Dispositional behaviours of persistence, flow and involvement are characteristics of schematic explorations discoveries (Van Wijk et. al, 2006). Being fully engrossed in activity while attentive and focused, alert and ready to respond, showing great satisfaction enthusiasm and perseverance are, according to Laever’s scale of involvement attributes of involvement that children are showing while engaged in schema exploration (cited by Van Wijk et al., 2006). This can be easily recognised, according to Arnold et al. (2010) because when a person is encouraged to ‘follow their deep interests, they literally light up and the satisfaction they demonstrate is obvious to others’ (p. 147).

Intense concentration, evident in children's play and their schema development, can be understood as evidence of 'flow'. 'Flow' is defined as an 'optimal state of immersed concentration in which attention is centred, distractions are minimised, and the person attains an enjoyable give-and-take with his or her activity' (Csikszentmihalyi, cited in Whalen, 1999, p. 161).

These dispositional behaviours, together with recurrent nature of schematic behaviour, are characteristic for schematic investigation and exploration. Parents and educators should be looking for and recognizing these dispositional behaviours, while striving to recognise and 'label' schematic interests in children (Wijk, 2008; Wijk et al., 2006).

Educators and parents role in extending schema development

When schematic interest and learning is acknowledged by adults, opportunities to engage in sustainable and relevant conversations with children open, hence, extending children's thinking and development (Meade et al., 2013; Van Wijk, 2008). Language is a key to this. According to Vygotsky (1978), language, joint engagement with competent people, and social interactions deepen and extend children's cognitive development. Dialogues that are aspiring to extend children's ideas are deemed crucial in the scaffolding of a child's thinking (Jordan, 1999).

This is evident when children experience:

- meaningful conversations;
- stimulating language;
- open ended questions;
- participatorial engagement;
- time for children to process information, to dialogue and respond;
- adults who use language that supports and extends schematic interest;
- adults who are attuned to children's interests and are available to actively explore children's initiatives; and
- adults who co-construct learning and schema development (Nutbrown, 1999; Van Wijk, 2006).

In-depth knowledge about schema development can help educators and parents unpack and understand children's behaviour and exploration, especially the one 'that causes issues, either for adults or between children' (Wijk, 2008, p. 72). This contributes to positive child guidance in early childhood services.

By recognising the schematic interest behind a challenging behaviour, adults are able to work creatively with the child. So for example:

- throwing an object (*trajectory*);



Why do children love trains? When considered schematically, playing with trains can show overlapping schemas, including 'transporting', 'connecting', 'trajectory', and 'enclosure'.

- carrying inside toys outside (transporting);
- covering themselves with paint (transforming).

Educators and parents can use schematic interest for positive guidance offering a variety of schematic provocations that are within the 'boundaries of acceptable behaviour' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 62).

Reciprocal partnership with parents

Educators and parents play a pivotal role in observing, recognizing and extending children's schema interests. When working in partnership, they open immense opportunities for ongoing development and learning, linking children's home context and culture with early childhood services environment (Meade & Cubey, 2008; Nutbrown, 1999).

Athey (1981, 1990) concluded that close partnership with parents and continuous learning about schemas resulted in ongoing involvement and support of children's interests and schemas, both from educators and parents, consequently resulting in outstanding gains and learning for children as a result of this intervention.

This was particularly evident in the research done in New Zealand by Van Wijk et al. (2006). That research foregrounded the importance of parent-educator partnership and continuous learning about schemas concluding: 'parents can literally see what it is that their child is learning and thinking about' (p. 103). Or as Athey (1990) proposed, 'Nothing gets under a parent's skin more quickly and more permanently than the illumination of his or her own child's behaviour' (p. 66).

Comparably, through my teaching in an early childhood centre, I daily witness the power and value of parent-teacher reciprocal partnership. When schema learning theory is shared and communicated with parents, it empowers and motivates them to understand, support and actively engage

in children's exploration and schematic discoveries allowing for 'consistency and continuity of experiences' (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 46) between the home and the early childhood centre.

Effective, respectful two-way communication and collaboration between parents and teacher empowers parents to take an active role in their children's education (Athey, 1981, 1990; Nutbrown, 1999). Athey (1990) further highlights the importance of parent-teacher partnership and partnership between parents through discussion, support groups and ongoing communication in endeavours to challenge ethnic and sex stereotypes as they may restrict schema development.

Educators' capacity to identify and support children's schema can extend parent-teacher partnership as they, through joint understanding, strive to support and deepen children's repeated schema explorations (Van Wijk et al., 2006).

Schemas and the professional early childhood teacher

From their earliest years, children in New Zealand are spending extended periods of time in early childhood centres. According to the Children's Commissioner, infants and toddlers are increasingly attending early childhood services which are profit-driven (Angus, 2010). Moreover, as a result of 20 hours ECE programme in the years between 2000 and 2013, hours of attendance for children aged 3-5 years rose by 56% (Education Counts, 2013). This is in line with the New Zealand Government's goal that, by 2016, 98% of children starting school will have participated in e.c.e. (Ministry of Education, 2013).

However, it is important to look beyond participation levels and to recognise that the quality of care, environment and experiences that children encounter in early childhood services in early years are crucial for their growth and development (Margetts, 2005; McCaleb & Mikaere-Wallis, 2005). *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) upholds this emphasising that the 'relationships and the environments that children experience have a direct impact on their learning and development' (p. 7).

In spite the well-documented importance of meaningful conversations and dialogue for advancing children's cognition and schema development (Athey, 1990; Bruce, 2005; Jordan, 1999; Meade et al., 2013; Nutbrown, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978), Meade (2000) found teachers to be willing to add materials and resources to stimulate children's curiosity, cognitive development and schema interest but reluctant to engage in listening and conversations with children. Similarly in more recent research, Meade et al. (2013) found alarmingly low rates of sustained shared thinking episodes in early childhood services, particularly amongst untrained educators.

This draws attention to the government's 2010 decision to cut quality funding for centres with more than 80%. The centres worst hit were the centres who had reached



A preferred schema of 'enveloping'? A child who has carefully wrapped playdough around a giraffe – until it disappears – now starts on enveloping a lion.

the previous target of 100% fully qualified teaching teams (Stover, 2010). How are untrained teachers to encounter important pedagogical approaches, such as working insightfully with schema development?

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) highlights the importance of educators' ongoing development and continuous learning as pivotal in providing quality learning outcomes. With a same goal, Ministry of Education (2011), in its licensing criteria, stresses, 'all reasonable steps are taken to provide staff employed or engaged in the service with adequate professional support, professional development opportunities, and resources' (p.24).

Although schemas and *Te Whāriki* 'fit like a glove' (Wijk, 2008, p. 79), more research is needed to evaluate the use of the schema learning theory in the contemporary, day to day teaching context. Without ongoing professional learning educators can't keep ahead of what is happening in their profession. According to my teaching experience it seems that, due to educators' busy schedules, lack of dialogue and ongoing communication, lack of continuous professional learning and development, teachers often misrecognise schema learning, failing to account for their recurrent pattern and dispositional attributes. As a result, children are 'labelled' by educators as schematic learners based on isolated episodes.

Qualifications, up-skilling and continuous professional learning are pivotal for the provision of quality experiences and schematic development in early childhood as educators should be, according to Nutbrown (1999) 'sufficiently informed about theories of learning to make use of them in their own work' (p.23).

Photographer: Tatanja Ilic

All photos taken at Sunnynook Community Centre Crèche, North Shore, Auckland.

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A flurry of advocacy

The incomplete story of a proposal for an exemplary PG ITE for ECE¹

Helen May

Introduction

At the time of writing in March 2014, the outcome to this story is unknown. Advice from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to the Minister of Education, Hon. Hekia Parata setting out support for the trial of a National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 8 Postgraduate Initial Teacher Education qualification for Early Childhood Education (ECE) is officially still ‘under consideration’ on the Minister’s desk. There are signs of a positive response.²

This is a background story describing a flurry of activity in 2013, initially from university early childhood academics, but culminating in support from other tertiary providers of ECE qualifications, the Early Childhood Federation and ECE organisations represented on the MOE’s Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC). In the event, the MOE was persuaded to present advice to the Minister of Education outlining the ECE sector’s collective position that ECE should not be excluded from the proposed exemplary for PG ITE programmes for primary and secondary school. Programmes for a 180 point Master of Learning and Teaching (MTchl) began in two universities in 2014 with the other universities starting in mid 2014 and 2015.

The early childhood sector stance was not without debate and controversy. There had been no intention by the MOE or the Minister that the policy initiative, intended to raise the quality and status of ITE, would include ECE. There was little interest across much of the ECE sector and non-university Independent Training Providers (ITPs) to shift the goalposts of ECE qualifications into the PG domain.

The sector was still reeling from the government’s 2011 funding cuts to centres with over 80% qualified staff, and the frequently expressed political rhetoric that ECE centres did not need 100% qualified staff (May, 2014). Most ITPs offering ECE qualifications had only recently shed their NQF Level

6 teaching diplomas to offer a degree at NQF Level 7. But overriding these divisions there was, at stake for the ECE sector, the issue of the equitable status of ITE qualifications within the education sector. The Minister’s interests in advancing ITE qualifications for primary and secondary sectors but not ECE was a cause for alarm. It is timely to record, the issues, the arguments and the strategies to get a proposal to include ECE in the exemplary PG ITE programmes to the Minister’s desk for consideration.³

Historical background

The history of ECE qualifications is broadly a long story of advocacy for recognition, funding and status alongside primary teacher education. This was a hard won battle and sufficiently recent in the memory of senior academic staff, to create concerns when it appeared that primary and secondary qualifications were poised to head in a new direction that excluded ECE. It is only since the development of a 3-year Diploma of Teaching (ECE) qualification, phased in between 1988-1990, that former colleges of education (since merged with their local university) have offered equivalent teacher education qualifications across both the ECE and schools sector. Prior to the 1988 policy, kindergarten teachers undertook a 2-year kindergarten teaching diploma programme in a college of education. This was endorsed by the NZ Free Kindergarten Union which, prior to 1975, delivered the qualification itself situated within the four city kindergarten associations. For those who worked in childcare in the 1980s, there were few qualifications excepting a one-year certificate in the four city colleges of education or a field-based certificate with the New Zealand Childcare Association.

The new Diploma of Teaching (ECE) not only integrated the separate kindergarten and childcare strands and expanded the age range of ECE to include infants, but brought parity of qualification across the ECE sector and primary schools. In the 1990s, 3 and 4-year degree programmes in colleges and/

1 See the guide to acronyms at the end of this article.

2 Report from Karl Le Quesne, MOE Group Manager ECE to Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC). Email communication to Helen May from Clare Wells, ECAC member, 14th February 2014; Report from MOE to ITE Sector Forum, 19th February, 2014; Report from Karl Le Quesne to the ECE Policy Research Forum, 7th March, 2014; Informal comments from the Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, 8th March 2014, at a meeting attended by the author.

3 Sections of this paper are culled from submissions and papers prepared for this process and involve the collective pens of many ECE academics.

or universities (when the mergers started) were established for both ECE and primary and similarly, the 1 to 1.3-year NQF Level 7 graduate Diplomas of Teaching, as was the tradition for secondary teaching, were established across all sectors.

Outside of the college-university sector the situation for ECE was somewhat messy, with a raft of private training providers and polytechnic institutions gaining approval for lower NQF level qualifications particularly for nanny and childcare work. It was not until the Labour Government's ECE 10 year strategic plan, *Pathways to the future: Ngā huarahi arataki 2002–2012* (Ministry of Education, 2002), that the benchmark qualification for the ECE sector became the 3-year Level 6 Diploma of Teaching. By 2012, however, almost all ECE ITE providers were offering a NQF Level 7 degree qualification.

The Strategic Plan policy was also intended to achieve 100% qualified teachers across the ECE teacher-led services by 2012. This policy was halted by the National government in 2010 and in 2011 funding was cut to centres that had more than 80% qualified staff. By 2012, 71.3% of all ECE staff held a teaching qualification with a further 12% of staff studying for the qualification (Education Counts, 2013).⁴ These developments, albeit still incomplete, had created a huge shift in the status and quality across the ECE sector. While there is still a catch-up to the school sector for all ECE staff to be registered teachers, the broad concern across ECE sector institutions and organisations was that the exclusion of ECE from the proposed policy for PG ITE would demote the status of teachers in ECE and undermine the hard won structures of a unified teaching profession.

Political background for PG ITE qualifications

The Education Workforce Advisory Group Report to the Minister of Education, *A vision for the teaching profession* (April 2010), proposed a new model of ITE in New Zealand. Adopting international models, students would enter an ITE programme post degree and at a PG level. The overall aim of the recommendation was to strengthen both the quality of graduates as well as leadership in the profession, and consequently improve the outcomes of teaching and learning. The Advisory Group proposed a model of ITE, leading to a masters qualification, that strengthened the links between students and beginning teachers, teacher education providers and schools. Research-led practice would be a central ingredient of the process. This model was intended to replace the existing, and still current, ITE pathways of a 3 or 4 year Level 7 degree, or a 1 to 1.3-year Level 7 graduate Diploma of Teaching for students with a degree qualification.

There was concern from the start that ECE was not considered in *A Vision for the Teaching Profession*. However, in the preface to the Advisory Group's *Discussion document* (Education Workforce Advisory Group, June 2010), the then Minister of Education, Anne Tolley noted that, 'these proposals have implications for the way we develop and manage the teacher workforce, and early childhood sector' (preface). She

called for 'feedback and 'engagement', to which key ECE sector groups responded. In 2011, the Minister convened the Education Workforce Sector Forum to discuss the Advisory Group's proposals, and included ECE representation. One of the three recommendations in the Sector Forum report was to 'ensure that that the work programme provided for ongoing productive engagement with the schooling and early childhood sectors'. This was the result of strong advocacy from ECE organisations and ITE providers, including the NZ Teachers Council and NZEI Te Riu Rou. At the forum itself there was a unified position amongst representatives of ECE organisations and training institutions that early childhood be part of the future 'conversation'. This did not happen.

University Submission to the Minister of Education

In June 2013, the MOE released a Request for Proposals (RFP) from University ITE providers for an initial cohort trial for 60 students for the *Provision of Exemplary Post Graduate Initial Teacher Education Programmes*. The timeframe was tight with the trial cohorts to start the new qualification in 2014. The university providers offering the graduate Diploma of Teaching (ECE) were sufficiently concerned to take some action.

A collective submission (May and ECE academics, June 13, 2013) to the Minister of Tertiary Education and the Minister of Education set out concerns about the exclusion of ECE from the trial. One hundred and sixteen early childhood academic staff signed the submission across the six universities, including all the Pro Vice Chancellors/Deans and Directors/Associate Deans of Teacher Education. UNITEC also asked to be included. The submission received supportive endorsement from the NZ Council of Deans of Education (Letter to MOE, 12 June, 2013). It would have been opportune to canvas the views of ITPs that offered ECE qualifications, but the timeframe was tight with universities having only a matter of weeks to collate their RFP. In the event these bids proceeded. A University of Waikato and University of Otago joint bid for the PG ITE trial was successful, and was inclusive of ECE if at a later point approval came. This did not happen.

The university-led submission acknowledged the particular situation of the ECE sector that was still in catch-up mode to the school sector regarding qualifications, and endorsed the existing ECE degree qualification. There was no intention (as recommended for schools) that PG ITE programmes replace the existing ECE degree and graduate diploma pathways.

It is useful to present in summary the arguments presented in the university-led submission:

Risks

Parity of qualifications for ECE with the school sector has been hard fought for and difficult to align, given the diverse mix of community and private ownership of ECE services in New Zealand. The proposed exclusion undermines the current parity.

If qualification parity were to be lost, three significant risks

⁴ By 2013 75% of staff in teacher-led ECE services had a teaching qualification (as reported to the ECE Policy Research Forum, 7th March, 2014).

for the future of early childhood teaching are:

1. The current number of around 250 ECE students enrolled in one-year graduate diploma programmes would decline. This is because, if given a choice, graduates contemplating a teaching career are likely to be attracted by the prospect of advanced study that leads to a master's degree qualification rather than a graduate diploma at the same level of their undergraduate degree (Level 7). Losing such candidates from the ECE teaching workforce would diminish the breadth and depth of skills, knowledge and expertise that graduates currently bring to the early childhood workforce.
2. A second risk is the loss of innovative programmes of ITE, especially those that involve cross sectors. In some instances, university providers of ITE have developed programmes that support a closer alignment between the early childhood and schools sector. The exclusion of early childhood from the current qualification initiatives would undermine such innovation.
3. The growth of post-graduate research and engagement in higher-degree qualifications by early childhood teachers would also be negatively impacted thus restricting the potential for innovative research and practice and putting at risk our considerable international reputation for world-leading early childhood education policy, research and pedagogy.
4. And at a broader level, the issue is about equity for all young children and their families and ensuring the highest quality care and education for the sector and its stakeholders. This depends on highly trained professionals who implement the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, but also supported by a rich infrastructure of research, teacher education and professional development. This cohesion will be undermined.

Other considerations

Three further points are worth noting:

1. *There exists a misconception amongst officials that 'ECE does not want PG ITE'.*

In the process of composing this submission it has been reported by many that when asked why ECE is not included in the PG ITE initiative, MOE officials have replied that, "ECE do not want it". We note that (i) the issue is not reported in any meeting minutes of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) to the MOE or the MOE's Early Childhood Research Policy Forum; (ii) ITE providers have not been consulted over it; and (iii) the sector has not had a discussion about it. We recommend that this misconception be halted and corrected.

2. *There is a perception that PG EC qualifications will be too costly for employers.*

However, the history of early childhood qualifications shows that when early childhood ITE qualification levels have exceeded regulated standards (for example, when Level 6 diplomas were developed in the 1980s and Level 7 degrees in the 1990s), employers did not shun employing graduates

with those qualifications. The reality is that a number of early childhood teachers already hold post-graduate and masters qualifications without prejudice to their employability. The inclusion of a Level 8 PG qualification for ECE would simply expand the options for entry into early childhood teaching and build upon existing undergraduate qualifications to enhance eligible students' engagements with practice, thinking, and research and ensure that professional standards are maintained across the sectors.

3. *There is a perception that a Level 8 qualification will lead to 'university-qualification-capture'.*

Given that there is no plan to abandon Level 7 early childhood ITE degree qualifications and that it is only candidates with existing degrees, and who meet the higher entry standards to PG study within individual university programmes, who will be eligible to apply for entry into level 8 ECE ITE, there is no threat to the breadth of ITE provision.

There was no immediate response to the submission, excepting from the Office of the Minister of Tertiary Education, Steven Joyce, stating he had referred the concern to the Office of the Minister of Education. It was opportune that on the 19th July 2013, the Minister of Education, Hekia Parata spoke at the 50th Jubilee Conference of Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa – NZCA, itself a longstanding provider of ECE qualifications. Nancy Bell, CEO of NZCA suggested I ask the Minister a question from the floor concerning the fate the submission. The Minister was clearly primed that such a question might be coming and after a hasty conversation on stage with her officials responded that she had instructed her officials in the MOE to 'engage in a conversation' over the issue.

It was also opportune that a newspaper article by reporter Jody O'Callaghan headlined 'UNIS UNITE ON EARLY EDUCATION' (15th July 2013) had clearly captured some political attention. I was reported as being concerned that the policy indicates the early childhood sector as the underdog again:

"We're campaigning and deeply concerned that early childhood education is excluded and we don't want that as a signal that early childhood education is losing status. We have gone to extraordinary lengths to position early childhood education in its rightful place in the sector.We see no reason why early childhood should not be part of this move."

Ben O'Meara, Group Manager, Schooling Policy and Student Achievement in the MOE, explained that the number of registered teachers in the ECE sector had increased from 6432 to 15287 in the past ten years, but that the government's priority focus was on increasing child participation to 98%.

Galvanising broader support for the proposal

On 7 August 2013, the MOE's ECE and Schooling Group Managers convened a meeting with Professor Carmen Dalli and myself to listen to our concerns and to discuss the possibility of a way forward. Attending too, at my suggestion,

were Clare Wells, Chair of the New Zealand Teachers Council Early Childhood Advisory Committee, and Nancy Bell, who was also a Member of the Ministerial Advisory Group concerning the reform of the NZ Teachers Council. There was discussion concerning the immediate benefits of ECE being included in the trial, but also the potential benefits to the ECE sector of raising the Level 7 graduate Diploma of Teaching to a Level 8 PG qualification.

MOE officials acknowledged that there had been no formal consultation with the ECE sector, but the officials were lukewarm to the idea that the ECE sector would benefit from PG ITE (May, circulated meeting notes, Aug 2013). This was not unexpected when both the Prime Minister and a previous Minister of Education publicly questioned the need for all staff working in ECE to be qualified teachers (May, 2014).

Nevertheless, the tenor of the meeting was positive in seeking a way forward to at least establish a forum for testing the views of the sector. Firstly, working with Liz Everiss, Head of School, Education Studies at the Open Polytechnic there was consultation with the ITPs of ECE ITE. This group, which did not offer graduate diplomas or PG qualifications, (some of which had only recently upgraded to degree level qualifications), were concerned at a potential university –‘breakaway’ to PG qualifications. With assurances that the universities continued to support the Level 7 degree qualification, and agreement that the ITPs should be part of future discussions on early childhood qualifications (email communication: Liz Everiss to Helen May, 23 August 2013), ITP support was communicated to the MOE, for the broader principle ‘of equitable opportunities/pathways’ for ECE, although all ITE providers acknowledged that there were ‘fishhooks’ to sort out downstream if an exemplary PG ITE programme for ECE eventuated. Secondly, support was given from the Early Childhood Federation, a national umbrella group of ECE organisations. A letter of collective support for including ECE was sent to the Minister of Education (10 September, 2013). Thirdly, there was consultation with ECAC, due to meet on 5 September 2013. There were no ITE providers represented on ECAC and there were also ECE services that were not teacher led. More particularly there was the Early Childhood Council (ECC) whose large membership of mainly privately owned education and care centres, would be wary of the costs of postgraduate qualified staff. The ECC had not been supportive of the Strategic Plan policies for 100% qualified staff (NZ Institute of Economic Research, 2005).

Potential benefits for children and the ECE sector

In preparation for the ECAC meeting a brief paper setting out the benefits for children of an exemplary PG ITE programme for ECE was developed (May and ECE academics, 18 August, 2013). Staff from across the universities collated ideas (e.g. Gibbons, 2013). MOE officials, including Karl Le Quesne, Group Manager ECE, advised that such arguments would be the crux for getting any ministerial support. Some excerpts follow:

1. *Enhancing the learning of children through inquiry based teaching*

It is complex and demanding cognitively and socially for teachers to realise the outcomes for ECE (see Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008). Graduate students have honed their cognitive skills over at least three years:

- writing (eg. for documentation in ECE),
- conceptualising (eg. assisting young children to ‘see the wood for the trees’),
- arguing a case (a cognitive and social skill requiring the ability to read and take on board quickly the literature on early childhood which is now complex (eg. the many curriculum documents, including Te Whāriki and the NZ Curriculum, incorporate learning dispositions/competencies).

Recent National Reports by ERO (ERO, 2013a; 2013b) indicate that a worrying proportion of teachers/staff in the EC centres/programmes are not engaging with children in sufficient depth, or with purposeful intent and knowledge to make the most of each child’s early childhood experience.

From this proposal the sector potentially gains a group of teacher education candidates who bring subject expertise, interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and experience to their teaching. The PG level programme provides the knowledge and skills for research led practice and enquiry-based teaching. This would provide an opportunity to educate teachers in research methods where they can identify and address problems of practice through systematic inquiry.

2. *Pedagogical and professional leadership to improve curriculum implementation and research-led practice*

A key tenet of the Education Workforce Advisory Group Report to the Minister of Education (2010) is the need for improved professional leadership and ongoing professional development, if research knowledge is to be translated into practices that enhance the learning of children. This is a view that is a view shared by Hekia Parata, Minister of Education, who stated in 2012: “A future-oriented learning system requires that all those involved in education are involved in continuous learning” (p. iii). The issue of professional leadership is a cross sector concern. The *Final Report of the ECE Taskforce* (2011) noted the need for the sector ‘to develop a strong national programme of leadership education and professional development’ (p.150).

Several EC initiatives have seeded work on professional leadership in the sector clarifying how professional leadership can be enacted in settings rather differently to the school sector. The opportunity of a connected ITE postgraduate pathway across the sectors has valuable outcomes for quality teaching. It is clear that stronger professional and pedagogical leadership is important if the curriculum is to be fully implemented, and its goals for children and aspirations of the community are to be fully realised. A postgraduate cohort of early childhood teachers, while remaining small in numbers can contribute to this.

3. Cross sector conversations concerning pedagogy and practice

The inclusion of ECE in the discussions and development of the PG ITE are consistent with the Government's strategic visions for an inclusive education sector that provides choice for prospective students and for graduates.

The Minister of Education's vision of 'Achievement for All Children' frames current education policy initiatives in the ECE and school sectors (Parata, 2012). Such initiatives have involved cross sector engagement to debate the issues and plan the way forward. ECE has been an integral part of the debate and its contribution is integral to realising the vision. As the Government seeks to improve the quality of ITE, as a key tenet of realising its vision, there are benefits for teachers across the sectors to share the same pedagogical language and understandings and to collaborate better on the transitions. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) sets out a framework for this, yet to be realised.

Early childhood education scholarship and professional practice can make an important contribution to the future of primary and secondary teacher education. This contribution will be diminished by a separation of teacher education pathways. Much current policy acknowledges the importance of Aotearoa NZ teacher education continuing to grow in its focus on: involvement of community and whānau in learning partnerships that encourage multiple voices; emergent curriculum; place-based learning; distributed leadership; bicultural practice; educational transitions; assessment for learning; and inclusive practice. All of these elements for all student teachers will be enhanced by the continuance of teacher education partnerships between, in particular, primary and ECE and also secondary and ECE. It is important to note that the strong connections that the ECE sector maintains through partnership with all the communities of Aotearoa NZ are a key element of this contribution and will support the Government in its strategic aims for educational outcomes of targeted communities.

Professor Claire McLachlan from Massey University and Dr Mary Jane Shuker from Victoria University represented the universities at the ECAC meeting (Shuker and McLachlan, 4 September 2013). It was clear from this meeting that, excepting Peter Reynolds the CEO of ECC who cited his members' concerns (email communication from Claire McLachlan to the author), the majority of representatives supported 'the notion of equity of opportunity for ECE students' and the idea of including ECE. The outcome of the meeting was that Karl Le Quesne would report to the Minister that ECAC was broadly in support of ECE being included in the PG ITE trial. However, Le Quesne cautioned against expectations that this would mean inclusion in the second round RFPs already in process (Claire McLachlan email communication to ECE academics, 5 September 2013). As a result of some post ECAC meeting negotiation, Peter Reynolds, joined with Clare Wells, on behalf of ECAC members, in a statement of support to the MOE (email communication to the MOE, 10th September, 2013) for the inclusion of ECE.

Further considerations

The communication from Peter Reynolds and Claire Wells to the MOE, while supporting the PG ITE trial for ECE also cited, 'a need for the sector to work through some critical issues and discuss the wider implications of a post-graduate teacher education qualification,' and 'regretted that ECE had been excluded from earlier discussion'. ECAC was mindful that there were still many unresolved issues concerning qualifications in an ECE sector and the funding costs of salaries. Only kindergarten teachers had employment conditions protected under the State Sector Act. Reynolds and Wells proposed that a sector forum be set up – one at least in Wellington and Auckland – to start the conversation on the implications of a PG ITE qualification in ECE. The discussion would cover such issues as:

- the efficacy of the qualification (what difference does it make to a child's learning?);
- funding implications (short and long-term);
- how will the academic approach meet the needs of the sector?
- the impact on regulatory requirements

(email communication to MOE 10 September 2013).

These are issues and concerns that will need future discussion and resolution across a sector where there is a history of acrimony and division concerning the level, coverage and costs of qualifications of staff. However, the flurries and progress of this campaign reveal that consensus across ECE organisations and institutions could still be achieved over broad principles.

On 4 October 2013, Karl Le Quesne reported to the Early Childhood Federation that MOE officials were developing advice to Ministers regarding the inclusion of ECE in the exemplary PG ITE teacher education programme (Karl Le Quesne to Helen Baxter, 4 October 2013). The exact date that this advice was sent to the Minister of Education and the tone and content of that advice is not known. And as stated at the start of this article, the outcome is not known.

The intent of this article has been to document a story illustrative of the vigilance required by the ECE sector to uphold the principle of equal status with the school sector. The Minister's initiative to improve the quality and status of ITE in the schools sector but exclude ECE is such an example. The story is also illustrative of the networks across the ECE sector that can galvanise into collective and cohesive action. And finally, the story demonstrates the increasingly powerful presence of the ECE academia within the tertiary sector, when indeed the 'UNIs' did 'UNITE ON EARLY EDUCATION.'

A Postscript – 17 April 2014:

In response to a request from Clare Wells (NZ Kindergartens) for an update on the selection of providers for the second round of exemplary postgraduate programmes for English-medium primary and secondary schooling, Ministry of Education official Karin Dalglish wrote that the Minister of Education has indicated that she is 'keen for exemplary

qualifications to take place for both the ECE and Māori-medium sector. However, the Minister also indicated that as there is no funding immediately available for these programmes, funding is going to need to be reprioritised from elsewhere. We will advise the sector on the outcome as soon as a decision has been made on how the programmes can be funded’.

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Guide to education-ese

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ECAC	Early Childhood Advisory Council
ECC	Early Childhood Council
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ERO	Education Review Office
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITP	Independent Training Providers
Level	‘Levels’ refers to NZQA progressions; Levels 5-7 usually refer to undergraduate programmes. Level 8 refers to a postgraduate programme (masters degree)
MOE	Ministry of Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
PG	Postgraduate
RFP	Request for Proposal

No one saw...

Resilience in the face of unethical practices

Denise Heald

Let me introduce Faith. That's not her real name, of course, but that's the name she has chosen in order to tell her story. After nearly a decade of studying and then working as an early childhood teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand, she was encouraged to bring her story into this public space. Faith's story suggests that while unethical practices occur, adversity need not lead to cynicism or despair.

Faith's story:

While I was a student teacher on practicum, I was asked to do things such as cleaning. Although I understand that there are always cleaning chores to do in centres, I failed to see how this would enhance my teaching practice. Interestingly, I was always asked to do this when my Associate Tutor and the Centre Supervisor were not around. This created a dilemma because I wanted to pass the practicum without conflict, yet I also wanted to report this, but wondered how I could do this diplomatically. I felt that my goodwill was being abused by one particular teacher. No one saw the way this teacher treated me. If I reported this, I wondered if I would be believed.

Fortunately, my Associate Tutor saw me cleaning the adult toilet and said that it was not my task. I explained what had happened, and she told this teacher that I was not there to do this sort of cleaning. My AT and the Centre Supervisor were fair and professional. Afterwards however, I felt uncomfortable around this teacher and I could see from her body language that she was uncomfortable around me. I really struggled to manage my feelings.

Towards the end of my study, I faced a challenging situation as an international student. In 2010 the Ministry of Education abandoned its policy goal of 100% qualified early childhood teachers. This resulted in a significant reduction in funding for some early childhood services and reduced the pressure on services to hire qualified teachers, who until then had been in fairly short supply. Another consequence of this was that 'Early Childhood Teacher' was removed from Immigration New Zealand skills shortage list due to the drop in demand. I graduated in 2011 and started to look for a job as an e.c.e. teacher. This unfortunate timing meant that there was a significant reduction of early childhood teaching positions available and this made it difficult for me to find full-time employment.

To at least gain some teaching experience, I became a volunteer at a centre but I was disconcerted when they decided upon my hours and I felt that they treated me as a 'helper' rather than

as a qualified teacher. However I went along with this because I wanted to make a good impression. After my second day I received a job offer from a centre manager that I'd met on practicum – I was so happy! However, I did not pay attention to the contract and a few days later I was called into the office and told that as a new graduate, my full contract was still 'in-progress'. In the meantime, I would be paid minimum wage which was lower than the relief teacher rate. I was shown an electronic copy of the contract that needed to be signed by the centre owner (who was sick at that time). I believed this and said "OK". However, sometime later I was called to the office again and was told they could not hire me as a full-time teacher because I was not a New Zealand resident. I was shocked! There was no legal reason why I could not be employed and the Centre Manager was informed of my Immigration status at the interview and she said this was OK. I felt that they had used me – paying me minimum wage on the promise of a fulltime job, while effectively I was a reliever.

No words can describe my broken heart at that time! I was angry at their treatment of me. I had no written proof as the contract had never been signed by the Centre Owner. Returning home to my country was not an option as it was peak season for airfares. Thanks be to God, I was surrounded by a superb support group who are my true friends, who kept me sane as I struggled through the financial pressure of living without pay.

Then I saw that there was a vacancy at a centre where I had previously volunteered, and although my experience at that centre had not been great, I had to be realistic and felt that I could not afford to be picky, so I applied for this job. I thought that if management bullied me, I would put up with it because I really wanted to be an early childhood teacher. The interview was thorough and after a few days, I was offered the job. Instead of being happy, I cried because I could already imagine the kind of future I would experience. I was initially offered a 90 day position – the sort of appointment where I could have been let go after 90 days without the employer having to give a reason. I was told that the 90 days would be calculated as the number of days worked – so the trial period would last for over four months. My inquiries told me that this was illegal – that the 90 days are 90 calendar days. Should I tell my employer that she had got it wrong? I chose not to say anything – I didn't want any trouble.

I have been asked about why I didn't involve the teachers' union in my problems. I initially joined NZEI, because I heard there were benefits but I did not maintain my membership

because I did not use any of the benefits and because I felt I should do my best to deal with the situation. I believe that through education, we can solve problems with dignity. I am a teacher and I should do the best I can to be a role-model to the children I teach. If I asked the union to mediate, it would probably create conflict and I wondered how I could continue working at this centre once these unethical practices were made 'public'. I would feel even more uncomfortable. I also thought that this issue would impact on children's well-being and this concerned me a lot.

Another issue I faced was regarding my New Zealand Residency. I was told that if I signed a contract stating that I would remain at this centre for two years after gaining residency, they would support my application to Immigration New Zealand. I signed it – permanent residency opens up many affordable opportunities for me. However, I felt that my need for residency made me easy to pressure. About a year into my teacher registration when my mentor teacher resigned from the centre, I was asked to again sign a contract that I would stay on as a teacher for even longer (I was never given a timeframe) if she was to continue to support my registration. I did not say anything at that time, but, there was an incident that prompted me to tell the Principal that I did not want this person to mentor me anymore. Consequently, I paid for my Teacher's Registration myself and a teacher from another centre agreed to be my mentor teacher. This was a godsend as she provided me with an outside perspective of what was happening in the centre.

At this centre I was also asked to falsify documentation and pedagogical artefacts. This included adding to or 'finishing' children's artwork. The reasons for this was that it was quicker if teachers did this; there was less mess and the artwork needed to look 'pretty', 'cute' and 'colourful' but I was told to ensure that it still looked like the child's work. If a child only chose one particular colour, whoever was working in the art area had to add other colours.

My first experience regarding this falsification of children's artwork was when my lead teacher asked me to make a collage for an absent child. When I questioned her about this, she said that the boy would arrive on Monday and would feel sad that he had no collage. I did not agree with this, the child could do this himself if he wanted to. But, she was the head-teacher, and I was only a newcomer, so I did it as she requested. On completion, I showed it to her but she said it was too pretty and that a four year-old could not make such a nice collage. I said that I thought it was for the child to take home so I wanted to make it as pretty as possible. She asked me to redo it as if it was the boy's own work. She even showed me how to do it.

In addition to this, learning story templates were used at this centre so that teachers only needed to change the name of the child and the photos. Sometimes, photos were taken in advance (for example at the beginning of the term), and then teachers just chose a date within the term to add to the learning story. I felt this was unethical but did what I was expected to do.

I completed my teacher registration while teaching at the centre, and I gained permanent residency. Reaching these goals has enabled me to move on with my professional life. However, the main reason I stayed teaching at the centre was because I

had an attachment to the children. I also thought that if I moved somewhere else it may not be any better. At least I knew who my friends were and who were not. I remembered two quotes from Sun Tzu, in the *Art of War*, "Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak" and "The greatest victory is that which requires no battle."

My support network encouraged me to share this story, so hopefully others will never experience what I have as an international student and immigrant to New Zealand. I was not in a position where I could influence educational policy. The only thing I could do was to change my attitude towards life; towards the challenges I faced. I believe my faith in God and my goals enabled me to persevere. My support group and family kept me going and were a blessing, especially during the tough times. This experience taught me some valuable things: persevere and forgive.

For me, Faith's story is a familiar one as it resonates with research I did amongst Chinese international e.c.e. level 5 certificate graduates looking for work in Auckland (Heald, 2006). Their stories highlighted many unethical employment practices, and while this is not exclusive to early childhood education, (Henderson, 2003; Watts, et al., 2002) there is arguably an idealistic perception that early childhood education ought to be above all that sort of thing, that we hold the moral high ground on ethics, that people should be treated fairly and with respect. After all, isn't that what *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), our internationally renowned curriculum document, purports?

However, the newly graduated teachers that contributed to my study shared stories similar to that of Faith's: of being told to do the bulk of the cleaning; being left in sole charge of 32 children outside while other teachers talked inside; being asked to work without pay as a prerequisite to an employment contract; and then instead of being offered employment, being told they are no longer needed (unbeknown to each other, two graduates had the same experience at the same centre). These teachers shared their bewilderment, stating they had done everything that was asked of them, so why were they treated this way?

Despite the challenges faced, most participants eventually achieved successful employment, either in early childhood education or other professions. They, like Faith, had to work through unpleasant and unethical experiences in order to reach their goals – experiences more likely to happen to 'international' graduates (Berno & Ward, 2002)

Their experiences also illustrate aspects of resilience which Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) define as 'the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances' (cited in Howard, Dryden & Johnston, 1999, p. 310).

In a metastudy of longitudinal findings, Werner (2013) considered the protective processes and attributes of immigrant children who identified as resilient. These children were likely to have a strong religious faith, and personal support networks. Although Faith is an adult, her story includes these protective features. And while her

story includes many tears, she also reported coping with the unpleasant situations she found herself in because she had a strong network of friends who supported her. She also had goals that she was determined to achieve and her sense of purpose was maintained through the relationships that she established with the children in the centre. Finally, she also had religious faith that gave meaning to her life.

There is also a somewhat political edge to what Faith identified. She is critical that the reality of the workplace does not align with professional aspirations for early childhood teachers, such as those described by Dalli (2008) for a 'working environment that is democratic, respectful and pleasant' (p. 181). In addition, Faith expressed concern for how children are affected by not only unethical practices, but a focus on the personal and commercial at the expense of the humane. She says:

As a teacher, I am terribly terrified that this system will create robots in the future, individuals with high functioning brain but who lack of empathy.

Faith's own story indicates how and why she missed opportunities for professional advice on her employment contract. Her story also illustrates a common mindset amongst new graduates at the point of being offered a job – gratitude – which can cloud over the need for a careful professional consideration of a contract. But she felt very keenly that, given her need for steady employment, she was vulnerable and not in a position to bargain. However, union membership opens opportunity for scrutiny of employment contracts prior to signing.

Faith's story also illustrates how the teacher registration process can be problematic when entwined within the politics of a particular centre. In her case, looking to an outside mentor teacher helped her keep a professional perspective on events affecting her teaching practice.

As Faith has now moved on from a difficult workplace, her sense of purpose now includes encouraging others, like the graduates I studied, to be aware that they are not alone in their navigating of sometimes unethical practices from a position of vulnerability. For those in a similar situation to hers, Faith's advice, which follows, is to focus on the goals and adapt rather than give up:

If you have similar experiences to mine, know that you can get through it. Be wise. Be strong. Look to your priorities. The world is not a perfect place. Therefore, we are the ones who must strive for perfection.

For those of us who are aware of the challenges in our professional community, the message is also clear: keep communicating with those who are at risk of exploitation, and try to bring into reality our professional aspirations for democratic and ethical workplaces for all of our teachers.

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Keeping learning stories complex

A call for ongoing critique

Monica Cameron

Learning stories are widely used in early childhood services as the preferred form of assessing children's learning. But how well do teachers understand the complexity of creating and using learning stories? Effective utilisation of learning stories for assessing and planning for children's learning is a challenging task and not one that is easily understood and implemented by all teachers (Education Review Office, 2013).

It is therefore very important that those working in and with the sector fully understand not only what assessment and planning means in early childhood education, but also why learning stories are seen to be the preferred assessment and planning method. Assessment and planning play a powerful and important role in teachers' practice and the assessment decisions which they make impact on children's future learning and development (McLachlan, Edwards, Margrain & McLean, 2013).

This article gives a brief historic overview of learning stories as an outcome of the introduction of *Te Whāriki*. It also considers how learning stories have become normalised in early childhood education which problematises critical reconsideration of both their purpose and implementation. Are we as an early childhood community open to critiquing learning stories?

Assessment and Te Whāriki

As early childhood teachers began putting *Te Whāriki* into practice in the late 1990s, it quickly became evident that there was a significant gap between existing assessment strategies and the intent and purpose of the curriculum. Existing strategies at the time focused on more developmental models of learning and the child as an individual, which did not easily align with contemporary theories of learning, in particular sociocultural approaches. Learning stories were developed as a narrative and richly descriptive assessment tool which allows for and promotes the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the assessment documentation. The perspectives of the child, their family and teachers, along with the context in which the learning is taking place, is prioritised alongside the relationships between children and the wider learning environment. For this reason the learning stories approach to assessment sits

very much apart from pre-existing assessment tools such as checklists, standardised tests and rating scales.

Sociocultural approaches to assessment challenge teachers to develop their understandings of children's strengths and interests and use the information gathered to enrich, strengthen and deepen children's learning. Mary Jane Drummond (1993, p.13) defines assessment as "the ways in which, in our everyday practice, we observe children's learning, strive to understand it and then put our understanding to good use" and this definition has been very influential in the New Zealand context. Drummond's definition underpins learning stories as they particular attention to the fact that children's learning takes place within the responsive and reciprocal relationships they have with the people, places and things in their environments.

Developing professional use of learning stories

To support teachers understandings of learning stories, the resource *Kei tua o te pae* (Ministry of Education, 2004; 2007; 2009) was developed alongside significant funding to support centres to reconsider their assessment practices (Perkins, 2013). This resource includes a significant number of examples of learning stories which have been written by teachers in the sector. Its explanatory text highlights and clarifies aspects of each of these stories which are particularly important for teachers to understand and to include within their own assessment documentation. 'Notice, recognise, respond' were identified as three basic steps which allowed a learning story to move from description, to significance, to planning. However, despite the introduction of this resource almost ten years ago, the question remains as to why teachers in the sector are still grappling with the effective use of learning stories as an approach to assessment and planning (ERO, 2013).

ERO found in 2007 that the quality of assessment practice was variable both across and within services, noting that approximately half of the services involved in the evaluation needed to improve practice around how assessment data was being used to inform learning, and for children and their families to be more involved in the process (Education Review Office, 2007). These aspects of

assessment and planning practice are not being consistently implemented to a high standard currently by teachers. For this reason it is important that further investigation of teachers' understandings and use of learning stories be carried out.

Despite Learning Stories being acknowledged both nationally and overseas as an exciting, positive and relevant method for assessing young children's learning, critique of the approach has been limited. Ken Blaiklock (2008; 2010) has raised a number of concerns regarding the use of learning stories to effectively assess and document children's learning effectively, including the validity and reliability of the strategy. Other researchers, such as Emma Buchannan (2011), Emma Loggenberg (2011) and Jayne White (2009), have explored assessment practices in the sector, though their work is not yet widely known. There is therefore a strong need for ongoing sector engagement with critiquing learning stories and in the intention of ensuring inclusive, robust and insightful assessment and planning practices.

Without questioning what we do and why we do things the way we do, we create large spaces in which the dominant practices become privileged. The French philosopher Michael Foucault talks about the need for us to question 'taken for granted' assumptions: the ways in which some ideas and knowledge are privileged over others and to examine why this is so and the other voices which are being silenced as a result (Foucault, 1984 as cited in Walshaw, 2007).

Similarly Carmen Dalli (2010) called for teachers to engage critically in their professional contexts. Following this argument, it then becomes essential that teachers reflect on and critique their practice, including the strategies and approaches that they use to assess and plan for children's learning. The use of learning stories as the primary tool for the assessment of and planning for young children's learning in the New Zealand early childhood sector is an example of what Foucault recognised as a 'regime of truth': learning stories have become the dominant method of assessment. Dominant methods tend to marginalise other perspectives. What voices are privileged through learning stories? What shortcuts are taken in pursuit of documentation, rather than insight? Learning stories need to be open to critique and to improvement.

Conclusion: How do we critique learning stories?

If learning stories are indeed the soundest approach to early childhood assessment, steps must be taken to ensure that all teachers fully understand the approach and are able to implement it to its full effect. While funding is limited for professional learning programmes for early childhood settings, leaders and managers need to take greater responsibility and utilise the opportunities that do exist for critical consideration of learning stories and assessment practices (Sapworth, 2013). Self-review is one way for teachers to reconsider how the assess children's learning and how assessment impacts on planning (Ministry of Education, 2006). Working with other centres in clusters,

using the critiques that do exist is another option. Resting on our collective laurels should not be an option.

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Translated in partnership

Research partnerships in early childhood education: Teachers and researchers in collaboration

By Judith Duncan and Lindsey Conner, editors

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Reviewer: Judith Loveridge

As I read through the chapters of *Research partnerships in early childhood education* and reflected on the research partnerships forged between teachers, researchers, families, whanau, agencies and children, I thought that Cook-Sather's concept of translation was also highly relevant to the work of the authors and collaborators in this volume; they have all translated and been translated by the research partnerships that they present in these chapters. Furthermore, in these chapters the authors have been willing to make visible and interrogate the ways that they have been translated, in the spirit of making a difference for children, educators and researchers.

Each of the chapters within this volume presents complex challenges and struggles with which the authors and their research partners engaged. In a short book review, it is not possible to do justice to those challenges and the way that those involved responded to them. Hence, rather than talk about the content of individual chapters, I have focussed more on the collection as a whole and my experience of reading it.

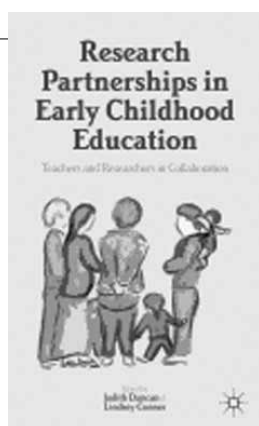
Judith Duncan and Lindsey Conner have thoughtfully brought together an engaging mosaic of chapters which present diverse theoretical concepts and findings from a range of research partnerships. One of the chapters reports on three research-school intervention projects and the others report on various projects concerned with partnership research in early childhood education contexts. The chapters, in different ways, talk about the way that partnerships are shaped by the complex social, political, cultural and environmental contexts in which educational partnership research takes place. All of the chapters are

concerned with the nature of relationships and many stress the importance of establishing a genuinely shared focus or common research goal.

Many of the chapters also examine the ways that the authors have tried to rethink taken-for-granted ways of working and to challenge received ways of knowing and writing about what is known. The authors present concepts and metaphors that have been used for both conceptualising and building ethical research partnerships and for informing the research projects presented in the chapters. Many of the chapters also interrogate details of the mundane aspects of research practices to consider the extent to which the partnerships have reflected the espoused theoretical concepts. I really appreciated the way that the authors have connected the theoretical concepts to data about the partnerships and processes of the research as well as to the data relating to the focus of the research. As they do this, they illustrate and bring to life the complex theoretical concepts on which they have drawn.

If I am honest, I started at the beginning of the book and after reading the Forewords and Introduction, I stalled as I encountered the chapter by Pacinini and Nxumalo on *Regenerating research partnerships in early childhood education*. I reminded myself that any literature that I have found really useful for academic work, I have had to read multiple times. Their chapter starts by arguing that research partnerships inherit troubles and struggles and they advocate for a non-idealised vision of research partnerships. These are important points to reflect on as we embark on reading about various research partnerships in the other chapters, and it is probably why this chapter was placed at the beginning of the book. However, I would suggest that if readers find it difficult to grasp some of the other points made in this chapter on the first read through, as I did, that they just choose any chapter that captures their attention, start reading and they will be rewarded. I do not think it really matters in what order the chapters are read.

For some, the concluding chapter by Duncan and Conner may even be a fruitful place to commence. It starts with a brief account of changes in the way that teachers' involvement in research and research partnerships between academics and teachers have operated and changed over time. This background information helps to make sense of some of the struggles and challenges that are alluded to in the writings of the earlier chapters. Importantly, the chapters in this edited volume represent a shift in the interpretive frame of those working in research partnerships in early childhood education. The details provided in the chapters demonstrate that there have also been changes in the approaches used and the collaborations built within the new frame. The chapters foreground the challenges and possibilities of such a shift in the interpretive frame. Duncan and Conner's conclusion also provides an excellent analysis of some of the identifying 'cautions and encouragers' (p.159) that emerged across and between the chapters. I found it really rewarding to go back to all of the chapters and read them, or sections of them, again after I had read the conclusion.



Cook-Sather (2007) argues “Translation’.... describes how we engage actively in learning to see, understand, and interact differently, how we represent that seeing, understanding, and interaction differently, and how we become new versions of ourselves through these processes’ (p. 831). This concept of ‘translation’ speaks to the generative, provocative and reconceptualist work that is inherent in all of the chapters. As the authors document processes of change, they have deepened and complicated the concept of research partnerships, drawing on former ideas and practices that have been valued, while making new ideas and practices accessible and comprehensible. This edited volume contains much of a value both for those interested in research partnerships in early childhood education and in educational contexts in general.

Reference

Cook-Sather, A. (2007). Translating researchers: Re-imagining the work of investigating students’ experiences in school. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School* (pp. 829–872). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

The complexity and connectedness of e.c. teaching

Ngā hurihanga ako kōhungahunga: Transformative teaching practices in early childhood education.

Editors: Anne Grey and Beverley Clark

Publisher: Pearson, 2013

Cost (approx.): \$74.99

Reviewer: Sue Cherrington

In *Ngā hurihanga ako kōhungahunga: Transformative teaching practices in early childhood education*, the editors – Anne Grey and Beverley Clark – have brought together 12 chapters written by early childhood teachers, professional

development facilitators and teacher educators that individually address aspects of early childhood teaching practice. Whilst each chapter stands independently of the others, collectively they illustrate the complexity and interconnectedness of teaching within early childhood contexts.

In the preface to *Ngā hurihanga ako kōhungahunga*, the editors suggest that transformative teaching practices are those that ‘have the potential to change the thinking of all who participate to bring about deep, rich learning’ (p. xii). Thus, transformative teaching practices may influence how teachers, children, parents and wider whānau engage with and learn from each other in early childhood contexts.

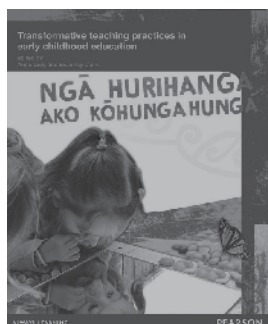
Whilst the first and final chapters each have a specific focus – *on becoming a teacher*, and *reflecting on and reviewing practice* respectively – that allows them to stand alone, they also provide a degree of positioning for the content of the other chapters.

Considered together, they seem to highlight the two audiences that I think the book is aiming at: the first chapter appears to speak mostly to student teachers whilst the final chapter has a strong team focus in its discussion on reflection and self review. Addressing these audiences varies over the chapters, although both student teachers and practising teachers will find much of interest across the chapter themes, which range from relational caregiving and sustainability to involving parents and leadership.

Whilst the focus and content of each chapter is applicable to individual local contexts and all address specific aspects of teachers’ practice, there are differences in the framing of chapters. For example, some offer more of a commentary or discussion of literature relevant to the chapter focus; for example, the chapter on inclusion traces shifts in understandings about inclusion internationally and here in Aotearoa New Zealand, highlights the role of language in conveying both implicit and explicit messages about inclusion, and offers alternative voices to broaden our understandings of the concept. Similarly, the chapter on leadership explores different understandings, including distributed and pedagogical leadership, and Māori views on leadership.

In contrast, a number of chapters are framed very specifically around pedagogical interactions, including relational caregiving, understanding and supporting the development of children’s working theories, the playful teacher, and children and adults as both teachers and learners. Within each of these chapters the philosophical framing is one that positions children as significant contributors to their own and others’ learning and it is in the context of this image of children that the authors pose challenges to our pedagogical practices.

Still other chapters aim to disrupt our worldviews. The chapter exploring perspectives of quality within Tongan early childhood centres directly challenges constructs of quality that are taken for granted by many within the early childhood community in Aotearoa New Zealand, and



offers an alternative lens that will be unfamiliar to many early childhood teachers. In doing so, this chapter offers an introduction into a number of Tongan concepts that will be particularly valuable for palangi teachers working with Tongan children and families in their centres.

As would be expected in a volume focused on transforming practice, all of the chapters offer challenges to early childhood teachers. I especially liked the challenge encapsulated in the title of one chapter: 'Just do it'. In this chapter, the authors draw on the whakatouaki: *Nāku te rourou te rouroua ka ora ai te iwi* (With your basket and my basket the people will live) to suggest that collectively the early childhood sector can be supported to 'just do it... just *be* bicultural' (p. 12, italics in original), especially when we apply a credit-based perspective and start from what is already working well. Working as a team and the influence of leaders are highlighted as key enablers in supporting teachers to make progress towards being bicultural.

The chapter on sustainability adds to our basket of knowledge in the way it weaves together international and indigenous perspectives on sustainability, including the concept of kaitiakitanga, and links these to our ethical responsibilities to enable children to engage with the natural world on a daily basis.

As I read *Ngā hurihanga ako kōhunga hunga*, those chapters that worked particularly well for me incorporated reflective questions, possible other activities to build on the chapter discussion, or vignettes that illustrated the key ideas the authors were offering. My sense of these vignettes – that share examples of teachers' experiences drawn from research projects – is that they will help readers to connect with and to move forward in their thinking about how to engage with and address the challenges posed.

There are some limitations with this book. Whilst the emphasis on teacher-led centre-based EC services means that it will connect with and appeal to student teachers and teachers in kindergartens and education and care settings, it is less inclusive of those in home-based or parent-led services. There is also the sense that it is directed at Pākehā teachers and centres – only one chapter expressly reflected Pasifika perspectives, with its focus on Tongan early childhood education, and there was little that reflected Māori Immersion early childhood services. Whilst I appreciate that it can be difficult to write to multiple audiences, many (if not all) of the issues and challenges explored are just as relevant to home-based, parent-led and immersion services.

A slightly didactic tone also permeates many of the chapters, which is something I found somewhat incongruous given its focus on transformative practice and that the editors 'offer this book as a basis for reflection and professional dialogue' (p. xiii).

From my teacher educator perspective, many of the chapters would make a useful contribution to course readings. The length of each chapter and accessible writing style makes it possible for busy teachers and students to

read a chapter in preparation for a team discussion or tutorial. Thus, overall, there is much for teachers and student teachers to draw on as they engage in professional dialogue and reflection, whether they dip in and out of different chapters or consider the book in its entirety.

Teachers thinking in, with and through the Arts

Kia tipu te wairua - Fostering the creative spirit: The arts in early childhood education.

Editors: Beverley Clark, Anne Grey and Lisa Terreni

Publisher: Pearson

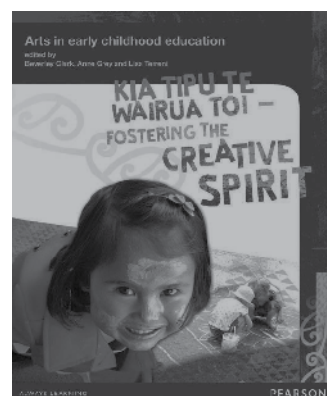
Cost: (approx.) \$74.99

Reviewer: Jo Dean

The arts enrich our lives in meaningful ways not only as adults but for children too. The arts offer a way of knowing and thinking about the world around us. It has become well established that the arts do matter as they enhance all areas of children's learning and development (McArdle, 2012; Schirmacher & Fox, 2009; Wright, 2003).

This new book – *Kia tipu te wairua - Fostering the creative spirit: The arts in early childhood education* – identifies the importance of the arts and how this enhances children's learning and the value it holds for life-long learning. Visual arts, drama, dance and music are identified as the four art disciplines. However, the dominant discipline visible within this book is visual arts, with the wider arts advocated as being distinct entities and of equal importance.

This book has been crafted by multiple experienced researchers and educators who all care deeply about the arts and are obviously dedicated, energetic and passionate arts leaders within early childhood education. As each chapter progresses, the reader hears the voices of the authors as they convey a rich understanding of the arts and knowledge within their specialised areas of research. The eleven chapters reveal a wide range of topics ranging from *Positioning the arts*, *Māori visual arts*, *Provision for infant and toddlers*, *Caring for the environment*, *Living an art-full*



life, Dance with connections and Listening and understanding music.

Chapter three reaches out to the diverse Pasifika cultures and provides a deeper understanding of Pasifika values to inform visual art practices and expression of cultural identity. Throughout the chapter, the reader gains valuable insights to understanding the cultural knowledge. Pasifika cultural knowledge and beliefs are displayed through different medium such as screen printed tapa cloths and woven designs which embrace a spiritual value.

Chapter seven was extremely moving, as well as inspiring. The essence of the chapter captures the traumatic events that unfolded from the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. The author relives the experience of working with those teachers and young children in the months following the earthquake. Through an art-based project, emotions and expression were heard through the voices of children. 'The broken cloth of dreams' was explored through the discipline of drama conventions and elements. Visual art and dance were entwined through this project as well as meaningful literacy and numeracy concepts. The arts project allowed children to make sense, to understand and to represent their world through meaningful questions. There were no wrong answers, and each answer took the children down an unknown pathway, focusing on finding hope-filled possibilities and building intensity until they reached the 'teaspoon of light'.

The book is written within a New Zealand context with biculturalism embedded throughout the discussions. Glossaries can be found at the back of some chapters to elaborate on Te Reo Māori. The authors suggest that teachers should not only embrace the explicit features of culture, such as food, art and clothing but also to consider the implicit beliefs held by Māori, such as the history, values and the natural world within the arts.

There is an insistence that the e.c. teacher's role is more than just setting out resources for the children to explore; e.c. teachers are required to think in, through and within the arts. Contested views of the teacher's role are frequently evident: do teachers intervene by teaching skills and techniques? or should children be given freedom to express themselves with little intervention? The authors provoke the reader to recognise the teachers' attitude, knowledge, skills and dispositions, as well as reconsider how these all influence the teaching of the arts. The challenge to embrace ourselves in living an art-filled life can be a daunting thought for some. But what does this mean for our children?

Some of the key underlying principles of the Reggio Emilia approach can be recognised in the New Zealand context and in particular to our own early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). Teachers that recognise 'visible listening' through all the senses will gain multiple perspectives in listening to the way children engage and interact. Children involved in the arts can communicate in profound ways.

The book is beautifully presented with many aesthetically attractive graphics such as rich Learning Stories and case studies, children's drawings and representations. These visuals provide a balance to complement the theory and discussion points and to entice the reader to want to find out more.

Overall I would highly recommend this book for any early childhood educator. This would also be a great resource for primary school teachers as it provides a meaningful context of early childhood, showing how integrated arts can enhance all learning areas as well as sparking children's curiosity and imaginative minds. Useful little tips for resources and further publications are embedded within the discussions. Provocations and reflective questions have been posed at the end of each chapter. These would make great team starters or prompts for discussions particularly if this was a focus within an e.c. service.

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Te Iti Kaburangi

Te Iti Kaburangi School of Education e-Journal is a free online journal published once a year by Manukau Institute of Technology, based in Manukau, Auckland. The focus of this e-Journal is primarily around practice based research in early childhood education with contributions from staff and students in the School, and also those interested in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This first edition includes invited papers arising from the 9th MIT Early Childhood Education Research Symposium held in May 2012.

Contact us:

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Email: edjournal@manukau.ac.nz
Phone: 09 968 8000

Contributors

Monica Cameron is a former kindergarten teacher and professional development facilitator who now teaches' in the Institute of Education at Massey University. She is very interested in the ways assessment is carried out in early childhood education and teacher's understandings of assessment and planning and has recently begun doctoral study which will focus on this area.

Dr Sue Cherrington is the Associate Dean (Students) in the Faculty of Education at Victoria University of Wellington. Initially a kindergarten teacher, Sue has been lecturing in early childhood teacher education for more than 20 years. Her research interests are focused on aspects of early childhood teachers' professional practice including teacher thinking and reflection, professional learning and development, professionalism and ethics, and diversity.

Jo Dean currently teaches in the Institute of Education at Massey University, Palmerston North. Jo teaches in a range of arts papers, building students' knowledge and understanding around the importance of the arts as well as developing confidence within oneself are key components of these papers. Jo has formerly been a kindergarten teacher. Recently Jo has begun her doctoral study at University of Melbourne with Professor Susan Wright and will be exploring visual arts within early childhood and the teacher's role.

Alex Gunn works as a senior lecturer in early childhood education at the University of Otago. She has interests in early childhood education, inclusive education and social justice (particularly queer concerns and gender studies), educational assessment: sociocultural and narrative approaches, and teacher education.

Denise Heald is a qualified early childhood teacher and holds a Master of Education degree. She has worked in early childhood education for 32 years, both in New Zealand and Asian countries such as Taiwan and Hong Kong. She is currently self-employed as a freelance educational consultant and offers professional learning opportunities to early childhood centres. She is inspired by the educational projects of Reggio Emilia and is a founding member and Trustee of Reggio Emilia Aotearoa New Zealand (REANZ).

Tatjana Ilic graduated from New Zealand Tertiary College with Bachelor of Education in 2010. She has been working across all age groups in a variety of early childhood settings as an unqualified, in training and as a qualified teacher, allowing her to understand the profession through different lenses. She is passionate about the value of relationships and quality in E.C.E. She is currently working towards the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Education with AUT. Her dissertation will be focusing on extending children's thinking in contemporary New Zealand.

Judith Loveridge is a Senior Lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington. Her major on-going area of research has been concerned with the ways in which children and adults learn and develop through their experiences of implicit cultural practices as well as through the experiences they have as a result of explicitly stated educational goals and pedagogical philosophies and practices. A related research interest is the question of how to ethically and authentically involve children and young people in research. She has published internationally and nationally in the areas of children's learning, teachers responses to diversity, student voice and research ethics. She teaches courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels about development and learning and research methods.

Helen May is a Professor of Education, and the former Dean of the University of Otago College of Education (2006-2011). She has been involved in advocacy work and advisory roles regarding a range of policy initiatives in both New Zealand and international settings and is the author of a number of books on the history and politics of early years education.

Linda Mitchell is an Associate Professor and Associate Director of the Early Years Research Centre at the University of Waikato. She has led several longitudinal evaluations of national early childhood education policies, and undertaken research on continuity of early learning, on multimodal literacies and parent aspirations and involvement in early childhood education.

Deepa Ramalingam is a senior teacher at the Play and Learn Early Education Centre in Papatoetoe, South Auckland where she is also involved in nature kindergarten. She is a post-graduate student in Early Childhood Education at AUT University and also holds a Masters degree in Education majoring in Special Education from Mumbai, India. Having made New Zealand her home and as a mother of two teenage girls, she has a keen research interest on multicultural education. Deepa also manages a community based multi-cultural fitness initiative called 'BollyworX' in Central Auckland for the past six years.

Lyn Wright has been involved in early childhood education for more than 30 years, in a range of roles and across a variety of service types. She has been a parent, teacher, home-based ece co-ordinator and trainer, professional development facilitator, pre-service teacher educator, student, researcher, Ministry of Education official, and is currently employed as a senior teacher for the Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association. Lyn's thesis for her Master of Education degree explored the lived experiences of children in two home-based settings as a starting point for deepening understandings of home-based settings as early childhood education curriculum sites.

