

# Early Education

Volume 63 Autumn / Winter 2018



- Finding our way as a sector
- Self regulation and play
- Prac - an invited space
- Naming the profession
- 'Our code' reflections



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*Early Education* vol. 63 Autumn / Winter 2018

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ISSN 11729112

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

## Advisory Board

Carmen Dalli, Lia deVocht, Andrew Gibbons,  
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## Editors

Dr Sue Stover, Auckland University of Technology  
Prof Claire McLachlan, University of Waikato

## Design and layout:

Ben Watts

## Our thanks to our reviewers

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## Our thanks for the photos

Thank you to Central Kids Kindergartens who generously  
supplied the photos. A special thanks to Anne-Marie  
McAllister.

**Front cover photo** was taken at Central Kids Kindergarten  
Ngongotahā. What is happening in the photo? "Tamariki  
have had a fantastic time managing and balancing on the  
wood heap, carting the smaller pieces around in the trolleys,  
building fires and fairy nests. Initially we wondered if the  
play was safe, however we checked the wood often to make  
sure it was stable and the children have really managed the  
risk and challenge well. The play has been a great extension  
of our loose parts play and fits in beautifully with our  
natural environment."

**Back cover:** What is happening in the photo? "A group of  
older tamariki at Central Kids Kindergarten Tairua were  
invited to join the new entrant class at Hikua School to go  
on a bush walk at Broken Hill reserve. The highlight was  
exploring the caves with torches to look for weta."

**Photo on page 21.** Photo taken at Central Kids Ngā Ririki  
ELC, Kawerau. What is the story behind the photo? "Te  
Waiarani collected leaves from the garden at Central Kids  
Ngā Ririki in Kawerau and had sorted them into sets, she  
came the next day ready to paint. The staff anticipated this  
and planned the environment to support her interest for  
when she arrived the next day."

## Contributions

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

*Contributions can be sent to the editors:*

Sue Stover

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

Claire McLachlan:

Email: c.mclachlan@waikato.ac.nz;  
phone: 07 838 4466 ext. 9452

**Deadline** for contributions to volume #63 is 15 March 2018.

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# Open for change

## *New directions pending for early childhood sector and for Early Education*

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**It is not often in education that we can see specific times and places in which the future of education has been shaped, but recently we have had glimpses of possibilities for change that we arguably haven't had for many years. This current chapter of change opened with the decision by the previous government to update *Te Whāriki*, a process that was kickstarted in July 2016. However, funding for early childhood services remained stalled and while participation in early childhood services was promoted, concerns have also grown about the quality of children's experiences. Despite the refreshed curriculum, the early childhood sector has been treading water in increasingly choppy seas.**

So the expectations of the new government have been high, and its first budget has included a small increase in funding for early childhood services after a decade of underfunding. More was hoped for, however, with some commentators describing the 1.65% increase as 'underwhelming' (Early Childhood Council, 2018), and a 'bandage' (ChildForum, 2018).

Policy changes had also become static under the previous government; attempts to chart new directions – *The agenda for amazing children* – were largely ineffective (ECE Taskforce, 2011). So the announcement of a new strategic plan for early childhood is welcome, as part of a larger national conversation about education, which has already included two large national summits.

In policy terms, there is a strong argument that the early childhood sector has found the limits of the market models of provision and it is time to look again for new directions. The Minister of Education has also announced a review specifically into home-based care (Hipkins, 2018). The Minister says in a press release that the home-based sector has expanded rapidly but not necessarily keeping up quality standards. The review looks to include funding, ratios, working conditions, qualifications, regulations and transparency rules regarding expenditure of government subsidies. To continue the watery metaphor – the Minister has clearly understood that it is time to make sure the children in early childhood services are not lost in deep choppy waters of services – home-based or centre-based – struggling to stay afloat, or to meet complex, sometimes conflicting, expectations.

This volume of Early Education has a decidedly political and philosophical edge and is one which asks more questions than it answers. The volume starts with a letter

from Sweden by a New Zealander, Valerie Margrain, who was on leave from Australian Catholic University and working at the University of Karlstad, in addition to visiting with her Sweden-based mother. Valerie's comments on the pace of academic life and the values espoused are reflective of other contributions to this volume, which question the language, identity and culture of early childhood education.

Research by Carina Naude and Paula Cown draws on the long tradition of observing children at play, while also making use of contemporary recording technology and ensuring that the children in the research also contribute to the analysis. Their focus is on how children's sociodramatic play encourages self-regulation. Drawing on the Vygotsky's theory, they argue that children learn the rules of play as they join the social situation of socio-dramatic play. This encourages the self-regulation skills that the Dunedin Multidisciplinary study has identified to be so important to learning and development. Weaving theory around a series of vignettes of children engaged in shared sociodramatic play, Naude and Cown illustrate how "Through accepting the rules of the scenario, a child moves into potentially unfamiliar ways of behaving. Controlling impulses is a key to this, and self-regulation can become evident as children try to keep the scenario alive".

Andrew Gibbons' contribution on the nature of early childhood education, and what it means to be a professional is very timely, given our current focus on a strategic plan for the next 10 years, with its implications for teacher qualifications, ratios, funding and a move away from privatisation of the early childhood sector. As Gibbons comments "Rhetoric, policy, and experience are in constant tension".

In a related vein, Jo Perry draws on that open-ended reflective tool – the personal/professional journal – to explore her teaching practice through "narrative fragments" as she engages with the Education Council's new Code and Standards for the Teaching Profession. Perry similarly identifies the tensions of inquiring into her own practice, and recognises the challenge of attempting continuous improvement: "I start well, but life and all those other events that I wasn't expecting take over my time and my plans get lost in the middle."

Still with the theme of what it means to be a professional, Clare Wilson reports on her M.Ed thesis research, in which she examined "the invited space" of the practicum experience and the ways in which student teachers are

enculturated into effective teaching practices within low socioeconomic settings. Although Wilson says that she has found “these particular teaching opportunities to be the most rewarding, stimulating and inspiring teaching posts”, in contrast, student teachers often struggle in low socioeconomic early childhood settings, “despite being confident and competent in their practice – in other settings”. This research, which won Wilson an emerging researcher award at last year’s NZARE conference, is a particularly useful explanation of how novice teachers are supported by their Associate Teachers to become effective teachers of young children.

A book review by Gail Pierce and Tristan Wallace on Helen May and Kerry Bethell’s new history of the kindergarten movement continues this theme of looking at the political framing of what counts as early childhood education. As these reviewers from Central Kids Kindertartens comment, the impact on the kindergarten movement by the bigger political agenda has been profound. It also draws briefly into focus an ‘elephant in the room’ which is that historic divisions in the kindergarten movement remain and which have sadly impacted on the content of this historic retrospective. The review itself highlights the value of the book to what we know about the social and political history of early childhood, and the issues that we need to be concerned about as we form a strategic plan for early childhood later this year.

Advocating for quality experiences for all children – regardless of what service they are enrolled in – remains as big a challenge as ever. Some of these issues of what it means to be a professional in the early childhood sector are reflected in the contributions from a range of writers who were prepared to put their ‘where are we going?’ thoughts in a series of ‘messages’ to the Minister of Education. Although the letters take different stances and highlight a range of things that the Minister needs to think about, many echo the concerns about the neoliberal theorising around early childhood that were foreshadowed by Andrew Gibbons. ‘Consumer choice’ is a key component of neoliberal logic and ‘choice’ is at the centre of the commercial provision of early childhood education. However the choice to participate in non-commercial services, especially parent-led early childhood services such as Playcentre is jeopardised within a marketplace (and policy) environment which has privileged the commercial operators, in part because of their close alliance to labour market policy that assumes that long day childcare is what parents want.

No doubt our readers will have their own concerns and may have contributed to the national “education conversation” about the future of education. We hope you also prepare to contribute to the specific consultation on the draft strategic plan for early childhood that will be released for consultation in October of this year.

We hope that you enjoy the provocations to the profession and to the sector that this volume includes. We also hope that the contributions will provide you with considerable food for thought as we work towards a plan for the sector for the next ten years.

To conclude – there are also changes afoot as regards *Early Education*. After 12 years at Auckland University of Technology, the editorial responsibility will in 2019 be moving to University of Waikato. More food for thought as we look at how the conversations within the early childhood community are to continue in the years to come.

Hei konā mai

**Claire McLachlan and Sue Stover**

Editors

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The Minister’s Advisory Group on Early Childhood Education consists of Professor Carmen Dalli (chair), Professor Margie Hohepa, Associate Professor Alex Gunn, Professor Stuart McNaughton, and Dr Tanya Wendt Samu.

For more information about the review of ECE, including members of the Advisory Committee’s Reference Group, see <https://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/consultations-and-reviews/early-learning-strategic-plan/>

# Letter from... Sweden

*Kia Ora and Hallå*

**In 2017 I had the great privilege of being a Guest Researcher in Sweden and a Guest Professor in Germany. This letter shares how the Swedish opportunity came about, some reflections and highlights in a year that was a personal and career highlight.**

Sometimes life brings unexpected challenges or opportunities that shape our lives. Gagnè (2015), a researcher in gifted education, refers to *catalysts* in his model of talent development. Way back around 1975, a key family-oriented catalyst occurred in my life when my mother moved from New Zealand to Sweden to start a new life with her beloved Viking. That decision in turn led to me spending a formative year of my life living in Sweden in 1983 during which I attended *gymnasiet* high school. Challenges in my life both before and after that year have all shaped who I am as an educator, researcher, advocate and colleague. Amongst everything has always been a desire to one day return to Sweden, further my language skills and engage in Swedish society.

In 2010 I plucked up the courage to write to a leading professor in Sweden asking if she knew of a colleague at my level (emergent researcher) with whom I could do some research. That led to the privilege of working with my dear friend and colleague Elisabeth Mellgren, some early childhood literacy research, meetings on both sides of the world, new learning and insights. In 2015 we co-presented some work at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) conference in Barcelona. I had dreamed of making it to EECERA for many years so self-funded this travel as a career catalyst. On my way to that conference I got to meet new colleagues from Karlstad University.

In January 2017, I fulfilled a yearning to experience a Swedish winter, which I had not done for 35 years, so booked a holiday to see my parents. While in Karlstad I contacted the Karlstad University professor, whom I had met in 2015, to ask if we could have coffee and discuss early childhood research. That led to lunch, other meetings, and the opportunity to work for nearly five months as a paid guest researcher (*gästforskare*) for the University of Karlstad. This was an unexpected 'chance' catalyst – there just happened to be a funding line needing to be spent and sheer good luck that I was in the right place at the right time. I have never had a 'sabbatical', so what a dream come true!



**Valerie gets her wish: winter in Sweden.**

My guest researcher 'home' was the Centre for Child and Childhood Studies, known as UBB (*Utbildningsvetenskapliga studier av barn och barndom*). This research centre focuses on young children, including their early childhood learning and contexts, and is home to both established researchers and doctoral students. Readers might be interested to learn that doctoral students in Sweden (*doctorand*) are employed on a full wage, with the rights of other employees such as maternity leave, sick leave and holiday pay. The doctorate is a 4-year degree in Sweden, with a half-way qualification being the *licenciate*.

Karlstad University supported me to travel to a Spring meeting of UBB, where the idea arose of an edited contribution to the Springer series *International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development*, with a focus on challenging democracy in early childhood education. This publication provides an opportunity for UBB doctoral students and staff to share their scholarly work, connections with wider research colleagues across five continents, and the editing gave a focus for my contribution as UBB guest



researcher across the Swedish summer and autumn. The proposal was subsequently accepted, and on-track for submission in 2018.

Another area that I was privileged to engage with was with student learning. I had the chance to observe doctoral student presentations, research supervision meetings and undergraduate student lectures, tutorials and online meetings. These opportunities helped me reflect on what was different and similar between Sweden, New Zealand and Australian doctorates and preservice teacher education, and helped me immensely with my Swedish language skills. One of the most helpful linguistic experiences, for me, was being an observer for a day in which student teachers gave group presentations. After several presentations I was recognising key professional vocabulary, for example: *lederskap* (leadership) and *miljö* (environment). My return contribution was being able to connect these Swedish students to *The International Project (IPC)* in which preservice student teachers from seven countries met online to discuss educational issues and practices (see <http://www.internationalproject-ipc.com/en/9-english-version>). I'd also been privileged in 2017 with the chance to be an invited Guest Professor to Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt in Germany in the European summer, which had led to me being able to connect Australian and Swedish students to the IPC project for the first time.

It is easy to find things in common with colleagues – we all work hard, share a commitment to our profession and are advocates. But many of the small differences in working practices led me to reflect on my personal work-life balance and values. I discovered that the weekend (*helgen*) really can be a genuine weekend on the day that someone in Sweden opened their laptop on Monday morning and said 'oh, I see you sent me an email Friday evening.' While I didn't expect that they should have read it on the weekend, it was excellent to see that they hadn't, because it meant they'd had a 'genuine' weekend. It is a long time since I have had a workload that didn't spill into most evenings and weekends, and some "all-nighters." My Swedish colleagues quickly, and often, told me to "*ta det lugnt*" (relax, take it easy). Swedish workers and employers take staff wellbeing and potential burnout very seriously, and the unions play a strong role in supporting staff conditions. For example, parental leave in Sweden is 480 days of paid leave. Staff take the time at morning tea to *fika* (share food and drink) with one another, and it seemed that they mostly did not talk work matters at *fika* time, instead they built relationships by talking about things like family, their homes and gardens. These conversations inspired me to take more time to enjoy Swedish nature across the seasons, with walks in the forest, smelling freshly picked wildflowers and mushrooms, tasting newly picked berries and crunching ice underfoot.

Swedish children learn English in schools from the age of about 7 or 8 years old, and English is a common working language for EU and wider international projects. Thus, all my Swedish colleagues could speak excellent English. Yet they gave me the great honour of patiently attempting to understand my awkward efforts to speak some Swedish. It

is 35 years since I could say that I was fluent (and even back then, in 1983, I only had a year in Sweden). In my work, I tried to talk, email and text to some degree in Swedish – sometimes it worked out, and sometimes not; *för!åt* (sorry!). My grammar is often poor, for example one day I shared in conversation that a colleague was going to sleep *with* another, when I had meant to say was that she was going to sleep *at* the other's house! And I learned that "*fyi*" (for your information) is not a good phrase to write in an email in Sweden as it looks too much like the expletive "*fyi*!"

Multi-modal approaches were key for me: I heard speech, I saw the words written, I wrote myself a vocabulary list, and I practiced using these key words in conversation (But it was still hard!). Most helpful were situations with multiple cues, for example attending the student presentation in which they spoke, had text written on the powerpoint, and then discussed applied examples. Reflection on my own language learning made me think about my communication as a higher education teacher, and the language-learning of children, migrants and refugee families.

These issues are increasingly to the fore in Sweden with a rapidly increasing migrant population, now at 17%. Sweden accepted the largest per capita number of Syrian asylum-seeking refugees of any European nation in 2015.

As teachers, academics, parents and advocates it can be overwhelming that there is always more to do, never enough time, increasing accountability, incessant demand and unattainable standards of 'quality' ranking. This wonderful chance for me to work as a *gästforskare* came at a time in my life when I was at professional and personal burnout. It allowed me to time to *do*, to *reflect*, to *connect*, and to *be*.

I felt affirmed as a researcher, and energised as a teacher-learner. I relished that I had time to do a good job of my work, and time for myself – I've reflected that filling the 'me' helps me to do a better job of being a connector, facilitator, mentor, colleague, mother and daughter.

My reflection on my time in Sweden has highlighted several things in my mind. Firstly, there must to be some attention to work-life balance. Secondly, one must be in a climate of positivity. Thirdly, is the space for new learning. And finally, that there are many different but valuable ways to make an academic contribution.

While I am also a realist, these reflections will shape the next step in my career and wider life.

*Med vänliga hälsningar / kind regards*

**Valerie Margrain**

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# "Otherwise he would have stopped playing"

## *How children support self-regulation during sociodramatic play*

Carina Naude and Paula Cown

**Within children's sociodramatic play, there are frequently opportunities for children to self-regulate (Whitebread, 2012). But how do children encourage self-regulation in each other? This is an area of particular interest to us and once we started to look into this topic in more detail, it became clear that there was relatively little published research on this topic.**

In order to gain a better understanding of how children support each other's self-regulation within their sociodramatic play, we completed a research project that involved sociocultural analysis of videoed observations in an early childhood centre. In this paper, we explore the four broad ways in which we found children encouraging each other to self-regulate, in order to enter or maintain a play scenario.

### Literature review

Although it is difficult to find one uncontested definition for play, the importance of it remains clear, and play is even described as momentous to the child's cognitive, physical, emotional and social development (Hurwitz, cited by Lillard, Lerner, Hopkins, Dore, Smith & Palmquist, 2013). Children's play takes on many forms, from the exploration of sensory properties of objects, simple repetitive play, interactive and constructive play, to play that is symbolic in nature, such as sociodramatic play (Kelly & Hammond, 2011).

The literature on two key themes of *self-regulation* and *sociodramatic play* reinforces the idea that self-regulation and sociodramatic play go hand in hand. Sociodramatic play involves specific scenarios, rules and problems and it is self-regulation that enables children to sustain and uphold this important part of their social, emotional and physical development (Galyer, 2001).

Self-regulation is described as the ability to manage one's thinking, feelings and behaviour and is thus an essential component of a child's personal and social

growth. Thompson (2009) compares self-regulation with a traffic control system, explaining that as adults, we have gained the abilities to manage many different demands on our attention, whilst still being able to reach our goals. This includes being able to anticipate situations, ignore distractions and to respond appropriately to change. Young children lack these abilities, yet are exposed to situations throughout the day which require self-regulation skills in order for them to build and maintain positive relationships, pay attention, follow instructions and control impulses (McClelland & Tominey, 2016). Without self-regulation, children are prone to distractibility, under-controlled emotions and a lack of self-initiated and focussed behaviours in socially challenging situations (Thompson, 2009; Meyers & Berk, 2014). Thus, just as in a traffic control system, children will benefit from being able to implement ways to 'stop and think' about how to regulate their emotions and behaviours, in order to overcome self-regulatory limitations.

A term that is closely linked to self-regulation is "executive functions". Executive functions comprise three components:

- cognitive flexibility,
- working memory, and
- inhibitory control (Thompson, 2009).

In order for children to successfully adapt to changes, make decisions and therefore self-regulate, all three of these components must be integrated. McClelland & Tominey (2016) explain that in order for a child to be able to use inhibitory control, the child needs working memory to be able to remember alternative and more appropriate responses instead of an impulse, as well as cognitive flexibility to be able to stay focussed on the specific task at hand.

Self-regulation may thus be defined as the ability to initiate, control, inhibit and adapt one's behaviour, emotions



and attention based on responses from internal and external cues, as well as from feedback from others (Meyers & Berk, 2014; Lerner, Lerner, Bowers, Lewin-Bizan, Gestsdottir & Urban, 2011).

During the process of sociodramatic play, children create a play scenario, take on and re-enact specific roles, and follow the rules they associate with those roles (Bodrova, Germeroth & Leong, 2013; Karpov, 2014). Through accepting the rules of the scenario, a child moves into potentially unfamiliar ways of behaving. Controlling impulses is a key to this, and self-regulation can become evident as children try to keep the scenario alive, as well as their own part within it. Self-regulation is thus an important learning which children can learn through sociodramatic play.

When a child is engaged in sociodramatic play scenarios, observers can recognise the child as making meaning – trying to make sense – out of their experiences. Feelings and behaviours can be explored and connections made between the outer world of shared experience and the inner mental world of senses and emotions (Blom, 2004). From a Vygotskian point of view, sociodramatic play is important as this is an avenue for children to explore adult roles and relationships and their continual interest in the adult world (Karpov, 2014).

It is through joint role play that children are provided with opportunities to re-enact certain aspects of social scenarios and distribute roles to achieve a certain plot within specific play settings linked to the adult world. Through this joint attention, the need of the children involved to share an experience with each other are strengthened and provides them with the opportunity to organise emotional and social experiences (Gavrilov, Rotem, Ofek & Geva, 2012). A zone of proximal development (ZPD) can be evident when joint attention to a play scenario involves more experienced children supporting and encouraging less experienced children (Karpov, 2014). As children continue to move in and out of play, they become more and more able to transfer knowledge from the ‘real world’ into other areas of their lives (Worthington, 2010).

## Research Methodology and Findings

This research was undertaken as a component in completing a Masters degree in Teaching Early Childhood Education at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. The research involved documenting children’s sociodramatic play in an early childhood centre, located in a semi-urban area on the periphery of Rotorua. Observations were undertaken through note taking and video recordings. The children involved were aware of the study and, together with their parents, gave signed consent to take part in the study. In line with the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2005), video recordings were viewed by us, as well as the children involved, as a way of capturing the child’s voice. In this, children’s perceptions, interests and concerns were emphasised. Children were thus seen as experts in their own lives and had the opportunity to become active contributors to the research project.

Comments from children’s opinions of the video recordings were recorded through note taking by us.

The effect of gaining children’s commentary on recordings of their sociodramatic play, allowed for a better *understanding* of why children acted and reacted in ways that they did, rather than *explaining* their perspectives (Bouma, 2000).

Four themes were generated from collected data:

- children finding new ways to problem-solve within the play scenario;
- children reminding each other of the rules and roles of the play scenario;
- following an interruption, children remembering and continuing the storyline of the play scenario, and
- children reminding each other to stop and think before reacting to conflict.

### ***Children finding new ways to problem solve within the play scenario, in order to keep the play active***

It was observed that throughout their play scenarios, children came across problems or obstacles that threatened the continuation of play. In such situations, we recognised that children were supporting each other’s self-regulation. One example of such a solution was a child’s ability to change the play when one or more children started to feel frustrated thus opening the possibility of the play coming to an end.

*For instance, in a game of hide and seek between three children, Child A became frustrated with not being able to find his friends. Child B then started making bird sounds in order to get the seeker’s attention and to give him a clue about where he could look.*

It is clear in this example that as soon as Child B became aware of Child A’s frustration with what was expected of him, he was able to alter his thinking and actions in order to help Child A to be able to still continue with the play. Upon replaying the recording of this observation to the children, Child B commented, “Otherwise he would have been upset and stopped playing”. Making use of his more developed cognitive flexibility thus put Child B in a position to be able to support Child A’s self-regulation within a ZPD created between the two children in that moment.

Being able to switch their thinking from one aspect of the play to another when conflict arose (Deak & Wiseheart, 2015) was another example of how children problem-solved in order to keep play active and to support self-regulation. An observation of two children using sticks as guns and swords in a game of play fighting showed how one child used this ability of cognitive flexibility very effectively:

*About a minute into the play Child D became upset as he was not winning their pretend fights and withdrew from the play scenario. Child C realized this and ran up to Child D saying “(child’s name), I know you will win this time because you have*

a bigger stick. Anyway, where did you find it?" Child D pointed to where he found his bigger stick and so the play continued again.

Having insight into Child D's unhappiness and recognising a possible solution to this discontent allowed Child C to create a new scenario within his ZPD, assisting Child D to successfully regulate strong emotions, and the play continued.

### ***Children reminding each other of the rules and roles of the play scenario.***

All sociodramatic play scenarios observed involved specific rules and roles, whether spoken and agreed on, or not. Needless to say, this also proved to be a major source of conflict in all scenarios. By utilising joint attention to specific scenarios, children reminded each other of the rules and roles showed to be an effective way for children to support each other's self-regulation and to keep play active.

*An example of this was a group of children re-enacting a book that had been read to them earlier in the day. The group was engrossed in a play scenario pretending that they were collecting peanuts for their elephants. Walking around with a little basket collecting pinecones (peanuts) and in deep discussion about how their elephants would like the peanuts, Children F and G put more pinecones in the basket. Child H (who was not part of the play at this time) ran over and threw the pinecones out of the basket. Child F got a fright and ran away while Child G explained to Child H: "(child's name) stop! We are collecting peanuts for our elephants over there! Look, over there (points to an area on the playground). If you do this we can't work together to feed the elephants". Child H looked up to where Child G was pointing, thought about it and said "Oh, okay". He then also started to collect pinecones and all the previously involved children joined the play again.*

After viewing the video recording, Child H commented "I didn't know what they were doing". It seems that this child wanted to be a part of the play but did not know how to articulate this and thus was not able to self-regulate this uncertainty. Child G responded in a way that created a ZPD where Child H's self-regulation was scaffolded and supported, providing for play to continue.

### ***Following an interruption, children remembering and continuing the storyline of the play scenario***

Observations showed that children had the ability to recall the conditions of a play scenario, even after being interrupted for short periods. It showed that children were able to hold previous information while, at the same time, processing new information. Working memory thus played a significant part in children supporting each other's self-regulation.

*In one scenario, Children I and J were pretending to be squirrels cooking dinner. After collecting some sticks and leaves in a basket, they put the basket aside to continue with another part of their cooking. After a few minutes, Child K came over and took the basket. Child I exclaimed: "No that's our basket!" Child K then responded with "No, no, it's our basket!" and turning*

*to Child J said: "(Child's name), can we please have our basket back?" Child J responded with "Okay but can you please tip all of that in here?" pointing to a bowl. Child I was clearly not happy about this exchange and turned to Child J "But (child's name), that's our basket!" Child J replied "That's okay (child's name), we can use this one" picking up another basket. Child K grabbed the basket with a "thank you!" to which Child J responded "We are squirrels!" "Thank you, squirrels" said Child K and off she went. Child I and J continued with their play, pretending to be squirrels.*

In this example, Child I responded positively to Child J's concerns about another child taking their basket by explaining to him that they could still use another basket. Child I's level of cognitive flexibility allowed for a ZPD to be created between the two children in which Child J was supported and guided with his own feelings of frustration. Together with this, making use of working memory and in this zone of proximal development, Child I initiated a process where the play scenario was picked up again where it ended when the two children were interrupted by Child K. An interesting observation in this scenario is the fact that Child K was made part of the imaginary play of the other two children when Child I announced "We are squirrels" after the conflict was resolved. Even more interesting is Child K accepting this invitation responding with "Thank you squirrels" before running off to join her own group of friends again. For that brief moment, Child K's levels of cognitive flexibility and working memory allowed her to transition in and out of this play scenario whilst still being deeply engrossed in the play scenario with her own group of friends.

### ***Children reminding each other to stop and think before reacting to conflict***

One important aspect of self-regulation is inhibitory control (Thompson, 2009). The data revealed that children can demonstrate an ability to think about appropriate reactions to conflict. It was thus observed that children have the ability to suppress their immediate desires in order to keep the play scenario active.

*In one scenario, Child N was standing on a big rock when Child O approached her and hit her with a dinosaur toy. Child N reacted with "Stop it (child's name)!" Child O stood back, thought for a few seconds and then said "Can I poke you with it then?" Child N responded "No!" Child O stood back again and then made another suggestion "Can I hug you then?" "No!" responded Child N. Child O repeated this stop think process, narrowing down the possibilities of what he was allowed to do to Child N. Her reaction to each one being "No!" The last suggestion that Child O made was "Can I play with you then?" Child N responded with a "Yes!" and they walked off to play together.*

Although there were many suggestions from Child O as to how to interact with Child N, there was an awareness on his part as to what behaviours were appropriate or not. Child N guided Child O in this process of narrowing down his possibilities in a very patient way, almost as if she knew

that Child O would eventually come to the right conclusion. Within this ZPD, Child N understood what Child O wanted to achieve, and the stop and think process that Child O was implementing as a strategy of self-control. It is in this process that Child N supported Child O's self-regulation, allowing for him to come up with an acceptable solution (Thompson, 2009; McClelland & Cameron, 2011).

## Conclusion

As teachers in an early childhood setting, a big part of our daily work with children involves extending on their social and emotional learning.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory places emphasis on the importance of play as a means for children to learn about social roles and rules as they interact with others (Karpov, 2014). This skill of self-regulation is vital for children to be able to form healthy relationships, adapt to change and have a successful life (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). This makes it important for early childhood educators in New Zealand to have a thorough understanding of the relationship between sociodramatic play and self-regulation.

For us, this research project has led to the belief that early childhood teachers have a responsibility to extend on their own learning of children's executive functions and to recognise the ZPDs created in play scenarios to support self-regulation. The study further revealed the importance for teachers to be more able to observe, and less quick to intervene. This allows for children to make use and develop their own self-regulation skills.

As was applied in this study, observation is a tool that can be applied by teachers in any early childhood setting, at any time. Combining this with video recordings and note taking not only adds to assessment and planning processes, but also makes it possible to revisit those moments of self-regulation that can so easily be missed in a busy environment. As teachers we can even take this learning to a deeper level by sharing our observations and recordings with children. In this, the child becomes aware of his/her own emotions and behaviours, and we are able to use the child's voice to inform our practice.

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# Anchoring an invited space on prac

## *Learning to teach in low socioeconomic EC settings*

Claire Wilson

**The teaching practicum boasts a space that is generally uncertain and unknown for both Associate Teachers and Student Teachers. Add to the practicum a teaching and learning climate that is sharply different from the Student Teacher's own knowledge, upbringing, and morals/values. The result is that Associate Teachers have a tricky sea to navigate.**

In such a situation, not only does the Associate Teacher need to anchor important relational links with their Student Teacher, but they also need to be able to articulate the crucial and authentic practices needed for working effectively alongside the tamariki, whānau, and the learning community that feeds into this learning and teaching setting. These can involve growing and developing new teaching strategies. A successful teaching practicum in this setting relies on complex aspects becoming interlinked, and on a mutuality of trust and respect that is created between the Associate Teacher and the Student Teacher.

This paper draws on my Masters research that involved in-depth interviews with six seasoned early childhood teachers working in low socioeconomic settings who regularly act as Associate Teachers, mentoring Student Teachers. In line with international research (see for example Apsfors & Bondas, 2013), many of the Associate Teachers involved in this study found it was challenging to work with Student Teachers to expand their perspectives about teaching and learning in such settings.

There is little current literature in New Zealand around specific teaching practices for and within low socioeconomic early education settings, but what we do know is that early childhood settings are diverse (Clarkin-Phillips & Carr, 2012). Socioeconomic inequality within New Zealand is also becoming deeply entrenched, and much of what goes on outside of the educational setting is of critical importance to what goes on inside it (Carpenter & Osborne, 2014). Cultural heritage, family traditions, and the way in which everyone 'walks' their life can colour the way in which they see and do things.

Therefore, teachers who actively practice with a higher sense of cultural awareness and responsiveness are vital for making fundamental and sensitive connections with their learning communities. Associate Teachers who are aware of

this aspect and can make their implicit practices explicit, can work to anchor a solid platform for Student Teachers who are coming to grips with these potentially challenging situations or environments during practicum, in which they may see or be 'opened up to', for the very first time.

The focus of this research reflects my background of extensive teaching in low socioeconomic settings. I found these particular teaching opportunities to be the most rewarding, stimulating and inspiring teaching posts. I was very curious to explore and understand why when placed in such settings, Student Teachers often struggle despite being confident and competent in their practice – in other settings.

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews, lasting anywhere from two to four hours in length, with six Associate Teachers, who taught in areas identified as low socioeconomic in the lower North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. Each Associate Teacher has been given a pseudonym.

I felt very privileged to be in a position where these Associate Teachers shared their practices with me, including strategies they employ in working within their learning communities on a daily basis. Most of them expressed how they did not often get the opportunities to sit, think and talk about their practice with others. This highlights an important aspect for practitioners to reflect on and consider as they go about their busy teaching agendas every day.

The findings from my study highlighted particular areas that could lead to a recognisable space – the Invited Space – within the student teaching practicum. If this space is to become evident, it normally grows when nurtured and fostered initially by the Associate Teacher, and then reciprocated by the Student Teacher. In this article, I have focused on several of the foundational aspects of an Invited Space within the student teaching practicum.

### An Invited Space

An Invited Space is where the Student Teacher and the Associate Teacher can work in a fluid collaborative sense, uninhibited by bias or judgement. This Invited Space is anchored solidly by both the Associate Teacher and the Student Teacher actively working towards linking particular dispositions and practices together to create a stronger awareness of cultural and contextual responsiveness within that

respective learning and teaching setting. From this, further understandings grow and develop during the practicum.

Framed by Barbara Rogoff's 'Planes of analysis' (1998), the visual model shows the areas in which an Invited Space can be created (See Figure 1). As teachers we constantly move in and out, and through the three different planes of activity, through the personal, the interpersonal, and the institutional plane. The interpersonal relationships we create and negotiate as teachers within the teaching and learning setting, and within these three planes, are complex and intricately woven or linked.

## Exploring the model:

### The institutional plane:

#### The Waves - Tensions and Expectations

Like the sea lapping tirelessly and relentlessly against the side of the buoy, the metaphoric waves of tensions and expectations buffet the early childhood teacher – both Associate Teacher and Student Teacher, impacting on their personal identity, values and beliefs.

Many expectations and tensions come for teachers from their learning communities and whānau, as well as from the tamariki. Teachers also have expectations from other work colleagues. In addition, Student Teachers who are left in vulnerable positions and with a lack of understanding of the teaching setting also create tensions for Associate Teachers (Patrick, 2013).

In my study, one of the Associate Teachers, Cindy, said that:

*Some Student Teachers only get to see and experience learning in practice during teaching practica .... It can be challenging for both myself and the Student Teacher. I can change my expectations of them after seeing them in practice or discussing a scenario with them about how we would both deal with a particular situation, both offering ideas and solutions.... It can't help but change your views and practice.*

Associate Teachers that are actively growing understandings and acknowledgement of this aspect of continual tension and expectation help to ease the 'choppy waters' during practicum for Student Teachers.

### The personal plan:

#### The Buoy – Personal Identity, Values and Beliefs

One of the most critical factors of the student teaching practicum is that both the Associate Teacher and Student Teacher share a relationship that is time bound. From this limited time allocation both the associate and the student must join forces and get to know each other quickly and effectively for setting up a foundation for having a successful practicum. Associate Teacher Alice stated that: "An awareness of your own



Figure 1: Reaching the Invited Space in student teaching practicum Adapted from Rogoff (1998).

*values and beliefs helps you to know and be confident with others".*

A reciprocal responsibility is highlighted here for both Associate Teachers and Student Teachers in terms of actively working to create this effective trusting space during practica. This trust is built through the mutual sharing of identities, beliefs and values.

### The Interpersonal Plane:

#### The Chain Links - Trust, and Articulating Practice

For the Associate-Student Teacher relationship to take shape effectively, it must first be nurtured through a trusting relationship (Kabilian, 2013). My study confirmed that the Associate Teacher's role is pivotal in growing and supporting Student Teachers' culturally responsive practice. However, creating a space that invites this growth and learning relies heavily on the development of trust between the Associate Teacher and the Student Teacher.

One Associate Teacher, Valerie, commented that: "trust and respect builds confidence for Student Teachers". The Associate Teachers talked about how the Student Teacher may encounter attitudes and experiences or situations that may challenge them

in the low socioeconomic area, so they believed that giving them the skills to deal with this was important for a successful teaching placement.

Associate Teacher Cindy has found students may find themselves unintentionally revealing more than what is appropriate. For example:

*In the past we've had some Student Teachers that have been bailed up by some families in supermarkets, and inadvertently families have elicited information out of them.*

Another Associate Teacher, Tania, also explained how trust is crucial:

*Telling [Student Teachers] the back story is crucial to the deeper understandings of our children, whānau and community. We have a lot going on in our day to day running here, so trusting the Student Teacher with this information is important.*

These insights suggest that there are many different teaching approaches being used by the teaching teams in low socioeconomic settings to support the children and their whānau, and that a professional manner and confidentiality is a 'must' if Student Teachers in these situations are to gain trust during the teaching practicum.

The findings from my study also drew attention to the way in which teachers clearly articulated their practice, or what I call, 'Sharing the intimacies of their setting' with Student Teachers. Associate Teachers who are clear in talking about 'What and why they do what they do' in their setting are better able to share with the Student Teacher important and ultimately crucial for understandings.

This moves Student Teachers into spaces where they were afforded specific knowledge about each setting. For example, some of the teaching approaches and strategies that the Associate Teachers shared could be considered as unorthodox ways of teaching in early childhood settings.

When Associate Teacher Valerie described her teaching approach, she emphasised how important it is to:

*Teach straight, tell the children as it is, don't coat it over with 'lovey dovey' words.*

A facial expression, an eyebrow raise, or a short sharp "Oi" could be far more effective in behaviour management and building social and emotional competence, than 'flowery' phrases words such as 'use your words', which are often heard elsewhere.

Similarly, Associate Teacher Cindy said that in her setting,



**"Learning to be strong in your persona identity and willing to share this with others..."**

*Children get spoken to quite strongly, and very minimal words because at home they come from an environment that is huge, loud, unpredictable, and the children have learnt to turn off... We know the culture of the child's home life and sometimes they only respond to a certain tone of voice, and you've got to catch that in order for them [children] to listen to you. Once we get their [children's] attention then we can move forward, it's like working in reverse.*

The Associate Teachers reported that, with this knowledge, the Student Teachers created a stronger sense of belonging and understanding, connected with the children and whānau more easily, and went on to be more competent and confident in noticing, recognising and responding in the environment during their teaching practicum.

### **The Anchor – Cultural Awareness**

In the visual model of the Invited Space, the anchor of cultural and contextual awareness represents the cementing or the engagement of Associate Teacher and Student Teacher in creating and maintaining the Invited Space. In this space, Student Teachers have opportunities to learn culturally responsive skill sets, and to develop new teaching behaviours and competencies that are specific to that setting, alongside the guidance and influence of the Associate Teacher during practicum (Anderson & Stillman, 2013).

All of the Associate Teachers I spoke to expressed that becoming culturally and contextually aware involves experiencing the 'feeling' and the 'being'. The unique, distinctive and intimate ways in which each setting works every day; from the structure of the day, to the routines, to the interactions, to the way in which the teaching and learning is delivered is akin to the heart of the setting, and that understanding this moves Student Teachers into becoming more culturally aware.

When Associate Teacher Cindy, shared that "creating equitable mana is important", she referred to this being the case



for both working with Student Teachers and with her teaching and learning community. She noted that a level of respect was shown in her setting to ensure equitable outcomes for all.

Associate Teacher Valerie, also maintained that:

*Respect for legacy and being receptive to this is important; it is important to honour our own and our bi-cultural heritage in Aotearoa.*

These reflections highlight that in the Associate Teachers' respective teaching settings, there is a strong focus on the awareness of the value and importance placed on identity building and culturally intelligent practices. Concurrently, they also reflected that it was an area where they could see significant relational changes occurring. Student Teachers who wanted to learn more about the social and cultural aspects within the teaching/learning setting appeared to show more empathy and openness.

Associate Teacher Cindy said that she tells Student teachers that: "because we are in a low socioeconomic environment, you've got to have an open mind", adding that she "can see the student teachers' evolving practices in relational connections, which normally appear towards the end of their time".

These Student Teachers in turn displayed more skills in being able to make deeper connecting and relational links with the learning community, and in turn had a more successful teaching practicum.

## Discussion

The Invited Space model highlights the importance of relational practices, and the emphasis on the reciprocal responsibility that ultimately allows Student Teachers to successfully navigate teaching practica, and in particular settings that they may find to be challenging.

As teachers, we are reminded by the Invited Space model of the importance daily practices, and the importance of ensuring:

- that we are constantly 'in-tune' with our ever-changing learning communities;
- that we strive to be culturally responsive and culturally aware;
- that we set high expectations for *all* learners; and
- that we remain open, non-biased and non-judgemental in continually developing our active teaching practices; both as experienced and non-experienced teachers.

Through such practices, teachers will be more inclined and confident to make solid interlocking links that will contribute to growing a new generation of dynamic and culturally aware teachers who are equipped to work successfully within challenging low socioeconomic early education settings. Being strong in personal identity and being willing to share this with others help to anchor an openness to welcoming, understanding, and celebrating identities that are different from that of our own.

## Conclusion

*Kua takoto te mānuka, hiki ake, karwea!*

The wero (challenge) should normally be laid down at the beginning, however, I think it is important to place this at the end, to remind teachers that the challenge begins here. I hope my study will assist in continuing to grow culturally competent teachers within low socioeconomic education settings, who are strong and flexible to move with the changing tides of our young generations, and to cope with the ever-changing 'ebb and flow' of new and old teaching and learning strategies, in which there is a need to be fluid and open in how we nurture, foster and grow to teach and learn with and alongside others. Teachers that continue to show a reciprocal responsibility for the benefit of our mokopuna will encourage, promote and provide safe spaces for both learning and growth.

If we invest in our Student Teachers now, and ensure that we teach, share, and articulate our practices clearly, then we can be hopeful that the future generations of our mokopuna will be culturally nurtured throughout and within the many diverse and different early education settings that we have in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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# Narrative fragments and the Code

## *One teacher's reflective work*

Jo Perry

**In his song, *Beautiful Boy*, John Lennon described life as “what happens when you are busy making other plans” (1980).**

What he was referring to are the day-to-day lived events that often pass unnoticed but subconsciously enable connections – often later on. These anecdotes, conversations, fleeting thoughts and memories produce a fascinating backdrop subtly re-colouring and re-imaging such events.

A good description of these bits of memory is “narrative fragments” – a term coined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to describe snippets of teacher experiences: stories from practice, thinking, interaction, engagement and reflection. They describe life as being “filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of unities and discontinuities...” (p.17). Narrative fragments can include many small excerpts, those that are familiar or different, that we remember in particular, use to make connections in one way and then maybe another. Later we may think again and discard them as we consider practice in our different disciplines. Therefore, this ‘stitching together’ process makes these small pieces important as they sharpen our individual views of personal practice.

This paper considers these fragments as important parts of professional knowledge and experience and which add colour and depth to our growing understanding. My aim here is to use an example where the snippets are used to provoke thinking and further questions about practice, particularly in an attempt to understand the significance of the new guidelines for practicing teachers from the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (2017a). ‘Our Code, Our Standards’ was developed for teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand to “provide a framework to guide career-long professional learning and development” as teachers (p.16). This paper does not seek to detail in great depth either the Code or the Standards, but to give an example of one possible way for individual teachers to use the resource and engage deeply with their own practice and their own ideas about best practice for themselves and their teams, as well as the sector as a whole.

Through journaling my teaching practice in response to

the Code, I found that snippets of teaching experiences started to fall into place. I recognised these as the ‘life happening around us’ that Lennon spoke of and which had value in broadening my own personal understanding of my own best practice.

## The Standards for the Teaching Profession

The new Code and Standards for the Teaching Profession (Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2017a) clearly detail the expectations for teachers. It is less like the previous ‘Code of Ethics’ that it may be said to replace. Instead, this document is a framework of expected behaviour and commitment into which the previous documents have been integrated, at least in part. Combined with this is a continuous improvement model that focuses the practitioner on what it means to be and what is expected of a teacher.

The Code is broken into four areas:

- Commitment to the Teaching Profession,
- Commitment to Learners,
- Commitment to Families and Whanau, and
- Commitment to Society.

Each of these is then broken down further into examples of what they might look like in practice.

Underpinning the new Code and Standards for teachers are a set of values:

- whakamana (empowerment),
- manaakitanga (care and respect),
- pono (showing integrity) and
- whanaungatanga (relationships)

These values define what being a teacher means. They also underpin the environments we create and the behaviours that are indicative of being in this profession.

There are also six standards in the new documents which include:

- Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership,
- Professional Learning,
- Professional Relationships,
- Learning-Focused Culture,
- Design for Learning and, finally,
- Teaching.

There are clear illustrations of what the standards mean in practice (Education Council, 2017b). The ongoing idea is not that the teacher produces specific evidence, but displays an overall quality of practice which reflects the standard. In other words, there should be ‘naturally occurring’ evidence because each teacher should aim to work at that high level.

The notion is that the standards enable “professional conversations among colleagues and leaders so there is a common understanding of what it means to be part of the teaching profession” (Education Council, 2017a, p. 2). Such conversations can enable teachers to build a clear understanding of best practice individually, in teams and across the sector.

## The Story

This year, as are teachers in many other centres and institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand, my colleagues and I have been engaging with the new Code and Standards as a team. To begin this, we spent an afternoon talking as a group and then working out what would be examples of best practice for us as individuals.

In the examples below, I am starting to think about my own best practice and what it would look like, remembering all the times I have tried to apply what someone else described and that didn’t work because it wasn’t about MY practice. In this way, the Code and Standards are a helpful guide in this process of thinking about best practice for the individual teacher and the next phase of the process (detailed below) continues that focus.

The Code and Standards do not offer any ideas about capturing the information from the Inquiry so I decided that a journal might be useful. As Holly (1983) observes, the journal is...

...a reconstruction of experience...Like the diary, the journal is a place to ‘let it all out’...the journal is also a place for making sense of what is out...the journal is a working document (p. 20).

Journals are a series of observations, making sense of events and then setting further questions to be answered. I had used journals before and found that they enable the ‘working-out’ part. This makes the process very similar to the ‘reflect, plan, do, reflect’ cycle that was already very familiar to me as a teacher. It also meant that I would be free to focus on the content of my observation and not on trying to understand a new recording process.

Here is what I wrote in my journal:

### Reflection (‘Narrative fragment’ one)

*After the meeting, I went back to the breakdown of each standard to guide my thinking across each area. Although the paperwork is pretty specific about what each means, I needed to consider what each of these would look like in my own practice. For example, the Tiriti o Waitangi partnership standard asks “Understand and acknowledge the histories, heritages, languages and cultures of partners to Te Tiriti”. So I changed this in to a question by adding ‘In my practice, how do I...’ to the beginning. The answer was “I engage with each person I meet, employing the principles of the Treaty to underpin and inform my practice. I try to include everyone one in the classroom work, I use Te Reo in all aspects and areas of my practice and I use storytelling and the principles of AKO to involve everyone’s cultures and backgrounds in my practice.”*

### Reflection (‘Narrative fragment’ two)

*I left the fragmentary answers I formulated after the meeting for a few days and came back thinking about what I would consider my ultimate ‘best practice’. I have long wanted to approach teaching and learning as inquiry and discovery that put the students on a pathway to finding out and making sense for themselves and then teaching each other. My justification for this is that recently I have been taking an Inquiry-based approach as the environment of tertiary teaching changes. I have tried some things out and some were quite successful and others were not, so this seemed a good place to try out how to develop a process for improving my own practice. One of the important learning points that I found out quite quickly is that starting from an inquiry-style question means I must give up the level of control of the class that I used to have. It is really exciting to see the students engaging with each other, finding things out and teaching and learning the group, but letting go a little is a far bigger step than I anticipated.*

*This has led me to wonder why I need this much control and why I have never noticed this before. I have also had to learn to wait for possible answers and how to deal with a silence that doesn’t necessarily mean that they don’t know.*

As I thought back to try and establish what I already knew about the topic, the ‘narrative fragments’, the bits and pieces of memories of events gave me a good idea of what I already knew and pointed clearly at what I needed to do. For example:

- *I was so nervous about this first session of Blended Learning. I had 22 of my colleagues signed up and not sure what to expect especially where the technology was concerned. The first session was horrendous, very few of the class who were using the school computers could get on the net and we had to move to a computer lab. I felt so out of control in this session”*
- *I tried using the software with the class. I am worried about these new technologies and don’t feel like doing much more with them.*
- *I am more than aware of not knowing enough about online learning. I think I need to consider my professional development for online learning.*

When I went back to look at these fragmented stories of learning events I could see plenty of questions to ask myself and with which to guide improving my practice. Also, reading over this again, I could immediately answer some of my earlier questions which strengthened my resolve to plan events that would build my confidence in this area.

Importantly, I was beginning to see the end point of this inquiry cycle and some movement closer to this standard's and my own 'best practice' ideals.

The first event I planned from these notes was to use a simple piece of software from within the learning management system. This software allows real-time collaboration among the students.

### Reflection (Narrative Fragment three)

*I have set up a task for the students to mind map their present knowledge on the screen as this will be a good place to start the discussion. They should all be able to see what everyone has written as it appears. I planned this as a section at the beginning of the class to get them all talking and recording their ideas. The same old nerves were there at the beginning but, the 'one-click' necessary to start worked well and the students were really engaged. When they had finished we looked at all they had said on the main screen and discussed their thinking.*

*Looking back at this event, I began to feel that if I make small steps and make simple plans, I will be able to improve my practice here. It is all about confidence and my early experiences didn't help this. I have added some Discussion Boards for this week and am exploring an online mind map for one class next week.*

My journey of inquiry into my practice is not yet finished (and I wonder if it will ever be). This first event which came at the end of an easy step-by-step process was very useful as a guide to what I could achieve with the Code and Standards.

- First, instead of trying to take on a big chunk of my practice, I looked at individual events in classrooms and discussed them in my journal which showed the beginning of a real journey of discovery and improvement.
- Second, the step-by-step process meant that I could see success almost immediately which would be an encouragement to continue posing questions to explore.
- Third, the journaling records those illusive, fleeting moments in the day that are important to developing a deeper understanding of my practice
- On the flip side of this, I have explained what I saw and felt and, therefore, only one observer was involved in the process. Even though I aimed to be as systematic as possible and work through the events of the day very methodically, I was aware that my socio-cultural lenses would not permit me to 'see' everything that happened and thus I was commenting upon what was important or unusual to me and 'leaving out' what wasn't (Richardson, 2003).

To make sure my journey of inquiry remained reliably based, I have discussed my thinking as it evolves with trusted colleagues who I know will give me honest feedback. These conversations can only add to my understanding of and knowledge about what it means for me to be a teacher.

## Reflecting on reflecting on my teaching practice

So what does this mean for me as a teacher intent on moving my practice forward in a continuous improvement manner? Looking back, it seems I have often made plans to investigate my practice and make changes. I start well, but life and all those other events that I wasn't expecting take over my time and my plans get lost in the middle.

However, even with this small glimpse, the Code and Standards offer a process that enables me to take on a small chunk, explore and make changes to a depth that works for my ideas about my own best practice. The use of a journal is one way of capturing the day-to-day events that I partly remember as fragments at the end of the day. These are important to me as, when pieced together, they offer reasons for why I practice in the ways I do and how I might move forward. There will no doubt be issues raised about these new documents, however, they provide viable pathways forward for me as a teacher to look at what best practice means to me and how to move closer to those ideas.

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# Naming the early childhood professional

## *Artefacts, childish pursuits and critical questions*

Andrew Gibbons

**This article addresses the problem of naming those who work with children in early childhood education setting. The article works through some perceived problems associated with shifting boundaries in the profession of early childhood teaching. In order to do so, it employs three artefacts that are quite familiar to early childhood centre communities. These artefacts give the discussion a sense of immediacy, and highlight the role that the immediate environment can play in opening up critical questions concerning the early childhood education teaching profession.**

That the 'profession' is constantly shifting in its nature is evident in the update to the curriculum document *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). In the update the term *kaiako* has been added to the entire curriculum – the 1996 version including the term only in the curriculum for *Kohanga Reo*. *Kaiako* now refers to "all teachers, educators and other adults, including parents in parent-led services, who have a responsibility for the care and education of children in an ECE setting" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 7). Meanwhile Parliament has been asked to consider whether to 'protect' the term teacher through the Education (Protecting Teacher Title) Amendment Bill – a bill about which the Education Council (2018) expressed reservations on account of the perceived difference between a teacher and, the term preferred by the Council, a 'registered teacher'.

At the same time, the updated curriculum says of children, that they:

... come into the world eager to learn and into family, whānau or 'aiga that have high hopes for them. Teachers, educators and *kaiako* in ECE settings work together in partnership with the family to realise these hopes (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 6).

These subtle twists of the words that are carefully and intentionally employed to describe adults that work with children in early childhood education may seem somewhat trivial. However, they are anything but trivial

when exploring the deeper implications of their uses for the lived experiences of centre communities, and for the adults who work in these communities. An analysis of such language raises questions about child rearing, education, and professionalisation.

The idea of a profession of early childhood and care experts continues to be a challenge within the profession (Dalli & Urban, 2010; Moss, 2006; Osgood, 2012). A professional discourse constructs a boundary based on privileged knowledge – for instance, knowledge that child rearing is educational and that higher education is essential to understanding the nature of the professional role (Meade et al., 2012). However, there are many contending perspectives on what the profession should look like, and there are many perceived differentiations between professionals who are identified as teachers, and those who are identified as caregivers (O'Connor, McGunnigle, Treasure, & Davie, 2014). These differentiations have socioeconomic and political implications for the early childhood professional and the profession (Ailwood, 2018; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012; Osgood, 2012). Most importantly, those who work with children in early childhood centres experience some longstanding, and some new, forms of domesticisation that challenge the idea that the profession enjoys much of the supposed status that being a professional is supposed to bring.

In this article, the artefacts that may be familiar to early childhood centre communities are employed to focus on particular questions and issues. The use of these 'things' provides context and method for the analysis. They include: children's literature; the game of *hop-scotch*; and the iPad application *Endless Numbers*. Using these tools invites the idea that early childhood centre communities are rich in devices for challenging what is taken for granted about early childhood education, and the contemporary shifting landscape of the early years of education as evident in recent news media policy and research publications.

## Hopscotch, progress and technocracy

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Crombie conducted an anthropological study on the game of hopscotch which showed that the game had ancient roots. In Crombie's analysis (1886, p. 408) the ancient hopscotching child enjoyed the "wanderings of the soul in a future state". In the Christian tradition, the image of a labyrinth is replaced by the more orderly, squared, representations of the progress of the soul through various states of spiritual being. Each square to hop through was a state rather than, as known now, a number. These earlier manifestations of the game highlight the prioritisations for children's education at their respective times.

That the modern child typically jumps through numbered squares might be interpreted as evidence of their increasingly metric lives – lives made up of accumulations of all sorts of data. The child's future is in this sense an enumerated journey that parallels their learning math during the game of hopscotch. From the mysterious hopping about towards an unknown future, to the hop and skip of an eternally saved or damned self, we have moved to a neo-bureaucratic management of a child's development.

Gazing away from the child's play, we can see a family role transforming through deeper layers of the game's purposeful governance of the child – the extraction of the maximum value of hopscotch. This extraction of value is apparent in governance of child rearing, both through the family and the early childhood profession. The OECD's 'Starting Strong' series provides evidence of the kind of game of progress that children are hopping through. The OECD's series of early childhood educational interventions are aimed at rationalising and enhancing early educational qualities within a context of 'productivity' that makes it possible to use the phrase 'babies and bosses' (OECD, 2004) in a public domain. The series of reports have been followed up with intensified measuring of children through early childhood assessment programmes promoted around the world (see for instance Pence, 2016) – but currently being resisted in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The OECD work on policy development requires questioning in relation to how an understanding of, and intentions for, early childhood care and education creates and shifts boundaries for family and professional responsibility and for the range of possible aspirations for a young child's care and education. For instance 'good' parents are increasingly constructed as desiring to send their child to a professional early childhood environment where the adults know best. Paradoxically, not only are these parents consumers of early childhood services, they are also constructed as critical to the quality of that service. The OECD (2012, p. 220) notes that parental involvement in ECE is a "fundamental right and obligation". The professional is then the expert who demands the labour of the parent to create the right kind of educational environment. Given the increasing hours of a young child's life given over to the professional, the family capacity to

know and shape these rights and obligations wanes. The role of policy is then to 'lever' the profession and the family together, a leverage that is made palatable by the assumption that while the family should know the child best, the professional teacher is an expert in child-rearing, up to date with, and able to deploy, the latest research on child development and on early childhood curriculum.

However, in Aotearoa/New Zealand policy developments including the reduction of funding incentives for fully qualified teaching staff, and the plan to exclude early childhood teacher education from proposed postgraduate initial teacher education (see May, 2014), are evidence of limits to the esteem of the profession and in particular of its champions within the academy. The entire sector, teachers, the academy and ECE businesses has been under fire in recent media debate (Gerritsen, 2018; Woulfe, 2014a, 2014b) in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In these debates, the quality of service provided by the sector has been challenged, and the right of the profession to call itself expert undermined. Gender is one critical factor to consider in this challenging of the profession.

## The Tiger That Came To Tea

In the children's story *The Tiger That Came To Tea* a young girl and her mother are interrupted by an uninvited tiger who eats all the tea on the table and then clears out the larder and the fridge too. The tiger is a reminder of the absence of the father. The absence of the father in the family is a narrative of intervention. Children without fathers, so the story goes, need the intervention of early childhood services in order to grow up in the 'right' kind of supportive heteronormatively gendered environment (see for instance the Early Childhood Council, 2013). This kind of very problematic narrative goes further, and becomes even more problematic in its understanding of gender. The early childhood profession is itself regarded as without a sufficient paternal sway. The profession is talked about as if it is too feminised and so the familial-professional partnership is characterised as deficient on account of the absence of men. This criticism of the profession's gender imbalance is itself rather imbalanced by a weak understanding (at best) and a particular normalisation of gender (Sumison, 2005). In addition a failure to address the wider historical, social, economic and political drivers that influence such apparent imbalances.

Davis (2010) tracks the 'feminine profession' through various pedagogical iterations, singling out the kindergarten and progressive early childhood education movements for their various interpretations and models of the feminine teacher – from innate care-giver to formally trained child psychologist. While the characteristics may vary, they have cumulatively constructed the profession and its very complex and disputatious identity.

These movements have not, however, led to any new understanding of the longstanding gendered boundaries between caring and education, and to the competing views on who the early childhood teacher *is*. Their legacy



is perhaps to keep polemics, distrust and power at the centre of the early childhood policy community through which pedagogical factions clamour for their evidence and/or philosophy, and their construction of the good teacher. Davis notes, “contemporary policy debates ... seem fated to rehearse the same controversies and the same struggles for legitimate authority” (2010, pp. 289–290). A key element in this fruitless and unwinnable contest is a reticence to consider the deeper tensions between private and public spheres and by the agendas of the governments whose favour is sought by competing educational ideologies. The changeable and complex political boundary making perpetually redefines the early childhood professional identity – while redefining is itself not necessarily a problem, who is doing the pushing, in the interests of whom, and for what effect? These questions are necessary in order to: make sense of the impact of an epistemological boundary between the profession and the community (particularly in terms of what knowledge is marginalised); reveal the professionalised technologies of intervention into the institution of the family (Smeyers, 2008, 2010a, 2010b); and to explore the ways in which other related boundaries impact on child-rearing – for instance the very idea of the privacy of the home (Derrida, 2000).

*The economy of early childhood education is a complex screen behind which the tensions of low pay and good business operate in tacit complicity with public perception*

Davis, citing Arendt from her essay on education, notes that rather than enhancing the capacity of the profession, the early education profession loses its sense of “responsibility for the world” (2010, p. 298) when it is the object of increased surveillance and governance. He challenges that the profession is increasingly and problematically an “insidious and unaccountable technology of governance active in the subtle, covert reconstruction of the public, the private, and the boundaries between them” (2010, p. 298).

Does the profession then sustain itself on the resources of the family home, whether it is welcome or not? I think it is unreasonable to presume that the profession is not considerate of the notion of partnerships with families – it is certainly rhetorically aware of the problem of being an unwelcome guest (see for instance ECE Taskforce, 2011). The concern here is the very construction of the early childhood teaching profession and the ways in which it is self-critical.

Are teachers sensitive to this ebb and flow that continues

to shape the boundaries of the profession? Should the profession keep in mind its nature as a mechanism within a wider disciplinary apparatus that takes advantage of the early years of learning as a function of controlling the freedoms of the social world and the future ‘life chances’ of the child? This idea of the future is the focus of the final ‘toy’, exploring the professional influence of the era of ‘cool capitalism’ and its fast flows of electronically mediated knowledge (Loveless & Williamson, 2013).

*Apply iPad liberally*

‘Endless numbers’ is free iPad application for children’s early education that makes more mobile the success of products like ‘My Baby Can Read’ and ‘Baby Mozart’. The product is an excellent example of the construction of educational anxiety and the rush to plug children in to educational advantage. These pressures connect the family and the profession through the kind of deterministic evidenced-based thinking that associates good games, good play, good teaching and good home-centre partnerships with better life chances (see for instance Woulfe, 2014b). The interest here is not whether the evidence is good regarding both the quality of the application and its causal relationship with the universally agreed good life, but rather with the application of new knowledge about early childhood education’s critical role at particular times of a child’s life. There are drivers of this knowledge. The economy of early childhood education is a complex screen behind which the tensions of low pay and good business operate in tacit complicity with public perception. Early education is endless business opportunity whether through the numbers of sales of presumed vital toys or through the numbers that float around about children’s best development.

For teachers, it is not the numbers that are endless but rather the debates about best practice that endlessly reproduce knowledge on development and pedagogy. The professional teacher is expected to have her eyes glued to her twitter account should a new professional fact become fashionable and then regulated. One of the very fashionable but highly problematised twitterings around early childhood is the use of new electronic media. The rolling out of new media into the early childhood teacher’s curriculum is loaded with assumptions of the profession’s ‘low-tech hi-touch’ stigma (Gibbons, 2007; Gibbons, 2008). iPad applications are one example of a contemporary anxiety that is quickly being associated with lost opportunity.

Child-rearing professionals engage with the problem of the promise of the future, the problem with the anxiousness that we have in relation to the idea of a life lived meaningfully (Camus, 1991). This kind of anxiety steers the teacher towards a unified technical determinism, and away from the idea of a professional ‘care’. Care is critical to partnership. However caring partnerships should remain quite skeptical of any illusions of better technologically determined futures. While the profession as expert and technician has little to do with partnership, there is some other kind of professional identity, a shared and open idea that resonates with the work of Camus on absurdity,



### Opening the immediate environment to critical scrutiny opens creative spaces for inquiry and insight.

resistance and polemics, and that hears the concerns of Arendt on the tensions between private and public spheres.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to question the kind of thinking that entrenches the profession. The entrenchment is an epistemological error, a weak response to an apparatus that asks only certain questions. The point is not to drop the profession, but rather look at opportunities to engage in professional questioning – and that's where the devices have a role to play, as they offer provocations that invite questions, and encourage in particular exploring what has become taken for granted about the early childhood teaching profession.

Davis wonders about the possibility of a future “genuine and enduring embrace of infancy as a communitarian locus of caring relations between adults and children” (2010, p. 298). He says we need to ask serious questions and wider debate about who is involved, he says ‘relative jurisdictions’ ... the question of course is then going to include how to ensure we are all at all times interested in this question, whether we are parents, business owners, government officials, academics, and of course children.

The nature of the professional in early childhood education will continue to cause headaches. Rhetoric, policy, and experience are in constant tension. The profession is told it has no real power or authority, with its low status and poor pay, and stressful working conditions, at the same time as it is told that its status is based on a problematic expert knowledge, a knowledge that privileges “certain ways of seeing things to the detriment of other possible understandings” (Smeyers, 2010b, p. 284).

These headaches don't just face the profession as a whole, they are in the face of each and every adult, each and every day, whether that professional be named kaiako, teacher, or caregiver. They are debates that don't necessarily require solutions, as they are too complex to solve, however they do require questioning. In order to question one's professional identity, we need an open, caring and creative place in which we work, and this includes the work of learning about teaching.

The work to be done here is a kind of professional narrative that keeps a careful eye on the boundaries that are created between teacher, adult, kaiako, parent and, of course, child. Most importantly, how do we take care to explore these boundaries without resorting to the kinds of naïve exclusivity that determines who can and cannot play this professional game. It's naïve because, most importantly, it's a game that always implicates everyone.

So there is some work to do here to negotiate out of a blind alley in which the governing of the profession is expressed in terms of honouring but acts in ways that marginalise, demean, deprive and exploit teachers, adults, kaiako, and parents. The role of the profession is a critical and careful distrust of the boundaries that appear and that are employed, including family-centre boundaries, qualification boundaries, developmental boundaries, research boundaries, and pedagogical boundaries, and a critical and careful trust that builds rather than divides the community on account of these boundaries. This is not to suggest that the boundaries should be dissolved and that everyone involved should be all things at all times but rather that we attend to how we negotiate these complex boundaries.

Teacher education is one space to develop a relationship to this kind of professional role, however teacher education can also be highly divisive; a site of academic positioning, disciplinary self-interest, and muddled obligations. The final point to this paper is then to ensure that teacher education and teacher educators critically question the varied and complex problems associated with the professionalization of early childhood education, through the study of teaching, and with the student teacher.

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# Ways for forward for the ECE sector

## *Messages to the Minister*

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**Editors' note:** As promised, Chris Hipkins, the Minister of Education, has launched a review into the early childhood sector. What are some of the messages that he will hear?

We put out an invitation for contributions on this topic and here are seven responses (edited and condensed), including one that is an open letter to New Zealand's Prime Minister:

### *An open letter to Jacinda Ardern*

From Jan Beatson

Dear Prime Minister,

**First, our warmest congratulations to you and your partner on the upcoming birth of your first child. This will be a momentous event full of joy, exhilaration and promise.**

What do you imagine the early childhood years will be like? I imagine that although this will be a busy and sleepless time, there will be plenty of individual attention, love, cuddles and importantly, time. There will probably be opportunities to go out for walks, visiting friends or family, to make connections with the wider world through various destinations and time spent out in nature.

You probably recall many happy times from your own childhood of playing in the outdoors with children of many ages, possibly free to roam the local neighborhood and experience the real world. You would have been well aware of the risk and 'dangers' – which properties had friendly faces, which to avoid, which had dogs, which roads were busy and which plants were poisonous. You and your partner will reflect on your own childhoods and draw upon what was important to you as you consider what is 'best' for your child. You have also probably read all the latest information on the importance of the first three years and how critical this period is.

There are many families in New Zealand today who, for various reasons, are not aware of this information. Many find themselves in situations where both parents are working in order to meet basic day-to-day living expenses. For most, the options for childcare will be about choosing the most convenient place and cheapest space, rather than what is optimal. Many consider that as all centres are licensed and reviewed by the Ministry of Education, then the 'quality' must be good.

However, there are many ECE services in New Zealand which operate on maximum children in minimum spaces, with staff, who are paid minimum wages. Ratios for under two children are one adult to five children.

Please think about this when you are at home with your newborn baby – do consider that it is legal in this country for one person to care for five newborn babies at once. Would you want this for yourself or your baby? Many families have no choice but to put their child into these situations and all this can occur in 2.5 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor space and 5 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor space.

Many centers also have a high turnover of staff so they never get to develop the important long-term close relationships with children and whānau, so essential for development, they never get the deep understanding of the interests and personalities.

Over the past 40 years I have experienced many changes in ECE, many of these are positive. However what I view as 'caged children' has had many detrimental effects and has led to many children experiencing deprived childhoods. We humans are a species that has a metabolism with glutamate muscles which need to be developed; we need to run and to move. Throughout human history and pre-history, play has been children's primary means of acquiring the skills, values, and the knowledge they need to survive within their culture. Play in nature provides the time, space and opportunities for real holistic development (Gellert, 2002). Gray (2013) suggests that by depriving children of these opportunities we are depriving them of ways to learn how to take control of their own lives. We may think we are protecting them, but in fact we are diminishing their joy, diminishing their sense of self-control, preventing them from discovering and exploring the endeavours they would most love, and

increasing the odds that they will suffer from anxiety, depression, and other disorders.

Despite our wonderful curriculum *Tē Whāriki* and our culture of 'the great outdoors', we lag seriously behind the rest of the world. The Ministry of Education advisors may inform you that 'forest kindergartens' and other prolonged regular opportunities for children to play and explore in the outdoors are possible in New Zealand ECE services. But those advisors probably do not note that the few outdoor ECE programmes that are operating do so *in spite of* the restrictive licensing regulations. The programmes are expensive to operate, especially in this climate of escalating property prices, and are quickly in danger of becoming elitist.

With the review of the early childhood sector, we have the opportunity, if we can find ways through the licensing criteria, to provide amazing programmes for all children in our wonderful beach and bush settings. We do not have the extremes of weather, the poisonous snakes or animals such as bears that other countries contend with, but still manage to operate. As outdoor areas in homes diminish, parents work longer hours and children are kept in smaller and smaller spaces, this becoming even more critical.

I hope that in the future all children will be able to access

these experiences in their local neighborhoods, as they have done for decades in other countries. Once parents, politicians and teachers become aware of the critical difference this can make to a life, surely there will be the goodwill to make this happen.

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*Jan Beatson has worked across the early childhood sector for 40 years. She owns and operates three early childhood centres and several playgroups. She is passionate about creating opportunities for all children to experience nature and the wider world.*

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## *Loving relationships, beautiful spaces*

From Mike Bedford

**The emphasis in the next ten years needs to be on children's quality of life and experiences. The first priority must be on quality of life in the moment. This is care. Secondly, we need to holistically consider the way in which experiences of all things – relationships, environments, discovery and knowledge, set an emotional, social, physical, and learning trajectory for future years. This is Early Childhood Education.**

We have absolutely failed in the 98% 'participation in quality ECE' goal, because the *quality* of care, and consequently of education, is drastically lacking. From many visits to ECE Services, I would estimate that 20–30% of ECE Services are likely to be actively harmful. I'd estimate that perhaps half of NZ ECE centres, while not actively causing damage, are of only mediocre quality.

Key issues are stress, inconsistent relationships, noise, overcrowding and poor quality outdoor spaces. Children are disadvantaged in these environments. While being fenced into small spaces devoid of grass and natural environments, with no space to run, they are often isolated from normal adult conversation, parks, varied town spaces, and other members of their communities. It's not surprising therefore that children start school with language problems. This is anti-education.

The MOE indoor space allocation equates to about 30 children and five adults in a modest three-bedroom house

– one of the lowest standards for space in the OECD. It's serious overcrowding, but it's worse if the centre is bigger, with more noise and even larger group sizes. Group size directly affects teacher-child relationships, noise and stress. The outdoor allocation equates to the backyard of a ¼-acre section for 100 or more children. Our minimum temperature standard is the worst in the world for ECE, yet in 2017 winter research, 19 out of 21 centres failed to meet this standard.

**Relationships:** In two ChildForum surveys 15% of teachers reported that they didn't have time to develop relationships with children. Even if you were to halve that percentage, it's still a big red light. Even for emotionally and socially healthy 3–4 year olds, that's not good – it's not quality ECE. For infants and toddlers, or any child with a social or emotional disadvantage, it's an institutional abuse that they will have been too young to recall, but the damage will remain. If your home background is not good, this situation reinforces negative social and emotional development. Ratios are not only about supervision, they are about the quality relationships essential to ECE and care, and about individual child needs. Relationships are intrinsic to pedagogy.

**Locations:** The Ministry of Education needs a mandate and guidelines for ECE service location that will prevent centres being established in those business, commercial

and industrial locations which prioritise commerce and commuter convenience – not what is best for children. It needs to stop. The Ministry also needs to work with Local Government to address the rights of children as citizens, and to prevent them being disadvantaged by Resource Consent conditions for residential areas.

**Teacher employment and health:** Major drivers behind the teacher shortage are likely to be working conditions, physical and emotional health damage, bullying and exploitative contracts (e.g. 5 days sick leave a year, no breaks in the day, no adult furniture). When experienced teachers leave the sector saying, “I feel broken by this”, there is a problem we need to address. It is an injustice, but also damaging because stress and high turnover damage relationships with children. Teacher health is child health. Employment conditions are absolutely Ministry of Education business.

**ECE Service design – support and standards:** If you design to current regulations in ECE you will get bad design. Not maybe. Definitely. There is a need for a better programme to support ECE Services with design advice, and a need to replace the inappropriate *Playground Safety Standards* with a standard for ECE outdoor environments. There is a need for an interior design performance standard, especially for

heating and ventilation, noise, hygiene and ergonomics, to reduce stress, infections and adult injuries. Adequate adult-sized furniture needs to be mandatory, and improvements are needed to mandatory hygiene facilities.

**Ministry of Health and cross-sector support:** As far as I am aware the Ministry of Health has never had even one full-time position for ECE environments, or for child health in ECE settings. In the Ministry of Health, most ECE regulatory and health advice comes via Environmental Health and Border Protection, rather than Child Health. A survey by Wellington Regional Public Health in 2008 found that disease prevention advice across DHBs was inconsistent, and not a single Public Health Unit agreed with the Ministry’s advice for viral gastroenteritis. It took another six years for the Ministry of Health to correct their advice. ECE health needs to be properly recognised, staffed, and resourced as a specialist role in central government, in either of the Ministries of Health or Education, with strong cross-agency links.

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*Mike Bedford is a specialist in ECE wellbeing and design with over 25 years’ experience, including more than 1500 visits to 600–700 ECE centres sector-wide. He is currently undertaking doctoral research in ECE environments.*

## Regs we can trust

From Angela Mitchell

**What is my message to the Minister of Education?**

**The Hon. Chris Hipkins - please show us that the opening words of our curriculum matter to you. *He taonga te mokopuna, kia whāngaia, kia tipu, kia rea. A child is a treasure, to be nurtured, to grow, to flourish.***

I live and work in Northland, and to coin a phrase “I love it here”, but I have worked with too many children who’s ‘normal’ is a parent in jail, family violence, exposure to drug addiction, poverty. Many good people hurting. The impact on the children, families and teachers broke my heart on a regular basis. The teachers I worked with were passionate and caring. We did all that we could do to be positive, to provide a safe oasis, a point of contact and support. But some days it was so hard. All children should feel safe and cared for, it is their right, but within an early childhood service these children require the very best of quality in terms of care, safety and responsiveness if they are to thrive.

My experience was telling me that although some early learning environments met the regulations, they clearly did not meet children’s needs. Physical space became an area of interest when I saw confident capable thinkers develop strategies to solve their problems. Biting, hitting, aggressive shouting, knocking over furniture; these children needed space, physically, mentally and emotionally and they created it. Children were hurting and being hurt.

Wanting to find out more about the regulations relating to space and how they were determined, I approached the Ministry of Education. I was informed that any research was prior to 1998 and now only available in Government archives. Twenty years old and hard to access. I was shocked and disillusioned.

The Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations, 2008, are a safety net for children, families and teachers. Licensing criteria for early childhood services are based on these regulations, we need to be able to trust them. The foundation of our teaching and learning needs to be strong. Guarantee the early childhood regulations are relevant, backed with current, contextual research and then enforce them. Ensure all early learning environments are worthy of the treasures they hold.

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*Angela Mitchell is a mum, a nana, and for many years an early childhood teacher. Because of the risks associated with ECE teaching, she has resigned from teaching and is currently entering data into computer programmes.*



## *Please update funding models*

From Susan Bailey & Alaine Tamati-Aubrey

**Playcentre's vision for the future would be that all parents and whānau know they are valued and affirmed as the first and best educators of their children; that our communities are enriched and whānau are strengthened throughout Aotearoa. That tamariki are valued as being active participants in their own learning and parents and whānau are fully supported to enable authentic, holistic and successful learning journeys be experienced by all members of society in Aotearoa. The Playcentre cooperative community often enables people to not just become better parents, but also to be better advocates for our children and empowers us to become *truly engaged* in our children's education. We are the ones with the vested interest in our children's lives; their success is our success. It is up to us, the parents, to support our children throughout their educational journey, as well as the rest of their lives. But we need a funding system that enables that to happen.**

As Playcentre contributes positively to the social capital of communities throughout Aotearoa, the impact of parents' and whānau involvement with Playcentre is experienced well beyond the early years. Playcentre members and their children often become active community members, sports team coaches, on schools' Boards of Trustees, adult and child educators, teachers and teacher aides, academics, leaders in business, government and NGO sectors, Members of Parliament, a Governor-General (Dame Catherine Tizard) and a Prime Minister (Rt Hon Dame Jenny Shipley).

However, Playcentre relies on at least one parent (or other family member) committing to helping the organisation to run. This is demanding and often impractical in today's society where expectations around parenting and work have shifted significantly over recent years and many government policies now reflect this. This means that parents and whānau don't necessarily see that they have an 'active' choice when it comes to choosing a form of early childhood education which might suit the needs and aspirations for their tamariki and whānau.

As parents, as educators, as volunteers, Playcentre members often get caught up in the quintessentially Kiwi 'number 8 wire' tradition of making things work out: balancing parenting, volunteering, caring for others, learning, educating and paid work. At times, Playcentre loses members as the pressure gets too much – caring for and educating children; managing the education programme (for the children through *Tē Whāriki*; and for adults through the NZPF Adult education programme); managing the centre and its members (budget, property, maintenance, employment, health & safety, etc.) whilst also contributing to the governance of a co-operative national organisation.

Playcentre receives funding based on an out-of-date model for 'Parent-led Services'. This needs to change.

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*Susan Bailey & Alaine Tamati-Aubrey are Co-Presidents of the NZ Playcentre Federation.*

## *An end to neoliberal economic ideas underpinning ECE*

From Margaret Stuart

**I hope for an end to neo-liberal economic ideas underpinning education.**

It is an accepted 'truth', emanating from both national and international bodies that early childhood education (ECE) is a cost-effective investment. Talking about the Australian context, Kathryn Bown and Jennifer Sumsion (2016) note that national reforms have been driven by "productivity and human capital agendas – a dominant justification for investment in ECEC" (p. 206).

Policy-makers are keen to ensure the efficacy of their investments. Indeed, lobbyists such as Nobel prizewinning economist, James Heckman and colleagues note the "body of evidence showing the beneficial effects of [high-quality early ECE] programs enrich the learning and nurturing environments of disadvantaged children" (Elango, García. Heckman, & Hojman, 2015, p.7). Heckman was cited extensively in the ECE Taskforce's *An agenda for amazing*

*children* (2011) as evidence-based economics. Policies can be at risk of becoming embedded in outdated economic thinking.

The Minister of Education, Chris Hipkins, is aware of such a tendency. Announcing the review of education, he stated "too many of the policy settings for the education portfolio ... are rooted in a 20th Century mind set" (2018, para. 4).

The economic mind sets that underpin the 1989 Education Act are driven by productivity and human capital theories, in the guise of New Public Management accountabilities. Zsuzsa Millei (2015) suggests that human capital and neuro-science theories gave 20<sup>th</sup> century policy-makers tools to address the need for early intervention, and targeted funding to discrete populations of risk. Targeted funding was marshalled by the National Government (2008-17) —using such rationales— in proposed

interventions into ‘vulnerable children’ and their families (Stuart, 2018).

Chris Hipkins aims to engage the whole education community in seeking a better way—one ‘that is inclusive, that can adapt to the needs of the modern world. It needs to engage every learner – in a much more personalised learning experience’ (2018). He suggests that there is much good in the previous Labour Coalition’s *Ngā Huarahi Arataki – Pathways to the Future 2002–2012, a 10 Year Strategic Plan for ECE (Pathways to the Future)*. Of concern to those wary of 20<sup>th</sup> century economics, are the indications that any new strategic plan for ECE will support labour market participation.

It would be a lost opportunity if this government with its visionary prospects of reforming social services, re-envisioning environmental priorities, and the ‘living standards framework’, was to rest any new education strategic plan on 20<sup>th</sup> century economics. Hipkins is clear about revisiting ‘Tomorrow’s schools’ with its competitive focus on public choice theory. Of concern to some are issues such as differential funding that Teacher-led and Parent-led services receive; and the growth of privately-owned services.

The proposed 2018 ECE strategic plan should avoid what Buchanan (2015) calls a scheme where ‘children’s relations with self and the wider world are promoted in highly “economistic” terms, where development and growth become “aims and values in themselves”’ (p. 208).

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*Margaret Stuart has a long history of working in ECE, most lately teaching on the Bachelor of Teaching ECE in the Waikato. She can remember when education was perceived as a public rather than a private good.*

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## Performance feedback is the missing component for ECE teachers

From Tara McLaughlin and Linda Clarke

Feedback, specifically performance feedback, is essential for supporting teachers’ implementation of effective practices in education settings (see Mitchell & Cubey, 2003; O’Keefe, 2017) and is a powerful influence on learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Performance feedback is a professional learning and development (PLD) component that involves providing teachers with information about the fidelity (quality and dosage) of practice implementation and should include both supportive and constructive feedback (Snyder, Hemminger, & Fox, 2015). While constructive feedback identifies opportunities for improving or refining teaching practices, supportive feedback highlights progress toward teacher goals. Feedback should be data-based following direct observation and focused on collaboratively-identified goals. Despite the potential of this powerful PLD component to improve quality in early childhood education (ECE), performance feedback is not currently a

strong feature of PLD in ECE contexts.

Recommended ECE PLD in New Zealand embraces processes for collaborative and teacher-led inquiries to engage teachers in critical reflection and discovery of effective pedagogies in local settings. Quality characteristics of PLD have focused on contextualised supports that build on teachers’ knowledge, values, and goals while providing opportunities to investigate new pedagogies in their own settings using data and reflection to challenge assumptions, extend thinking, and drive changes in teachers’ practice (Mitchell & Cubey, 2013). PLD models such as teacher-inquiry, action research, communities of practice, and professional learning communities are described in the literature and routinely used in the sector (Cherrington, 2017). Occasionally, within the PLD literature there is reference to feedback and coaching (cf. Mataiti, Van Bysterveldt, & Miller, 2016), however, feedback is rarely further explained or described.

To address this missing component, there is a need to consider and embrace coaching models within NZ ECE PLD as performance feedback is most often described in PLD that includes coaching (Snyder et al., 2012). Coaching models or feedback processes adopted, adapted or developed should focus on improving quality teaching and learning practices.

While we do not advocate for the use of any specific model of PLD in ECE, we implore the Minister of Education to seek, support, and provide opportunities for effective PLD in ECE that includes performance feedback.

We further urge that research and development is needed within New Zealand to explore and incorporate the important role of performance feedback and coaching in PLD to improve quality in ECE.

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*Tara McLaughlin, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer in early childhood at Massey University. Tara's research is focused on intentional and social-emotional teaching practices, and she is part of a team supporting the use of practice-based coaching for embedded instruction in inclusive preschools across the state of California.*

*Linda Clarke, M.Ed., is a doctoral student at Massey University. Linda's research focus is examining practice-based coaching to support teaching practices that promote toddlers' social-emotional competence in New Zealand early childhood services.*

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## Where does the money go?

From Sara M.

**I would like all children to have access to resources and an environment that they cannot just grow in, but thrive in.**

The gaps are becoming larger in society between the wealthier and the poorer, and I feel that this is also starting to be seen with in our early childhood centres, with some centres being very well resourced and others clearly in need.

I also know that some of the funding going to a range of providers is not being used for the children. I would like stronger ERO reviews for centres that are not putting the money back into the children, and I would like the auditing clear for where funding is going.

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*Sara M. is a qualified early childhood teacher with a background in primary teaching, as well as Playcentre. She asked for her name not be published because she is a 'working teacher'.*



Photo credit: New Windsor Playcentre.

Where to next? Balancing possibilities in e.c.e....

# The 3P's of Kindergarten

## *A review of: 'Growing a kindergarten movement in Aotearoa New Zealand: Its people, purposes and politics'*

Helen May and Kerry Bethell

NZCER Press, Wellington, 2017

Reviewer: Gail Pierce and Tristan Wallace

**Upon receiving the invitation to review this book, we waited in eager anticipation for our copy to arrive. The title had grabbed us and we looked forward to reading a record of kindergarten history that we felt sure would chart the history that we had walked in our own 30 years plus association with the kindergarten movement.**

At first glance we were impressed with the appearance of this book. From the very first picture on the cover of the book we could see that the images of children were valued as a means of expressing an organisational commitment to providing learning through play in meaningful contexts. Naturally our first order of business was to find links to familiar places spaces... there were plenty of pictures so surely there were some that linked to our individual kindergarten journeys? A feeling of initial disappointment ensued as we discovered that our organisation had somehow missed the opportunity to share any of our archived photos. Putting this aside we could easily identify with images of our own teaching era, and value the effort and integrity that the authors had put into selecting photos that reflected the people and places through the history of kindergarten in Aotearoa.

As a non-fiction book, the inclusion of photographs and stories using the voices of real people creates a human element that has been privileged by the quotes and references affording a rich insight into the times and what was important during those earlier periods. The images provide an insight into what it was like to be a child, teacher or parent in each of the periods reported on. It would be easy for a reader to focus their attention on the photos following the fashion, trends and impact of theorists throughout the decades. However, as the title alludes to, the politics surrounding the kindergarten movement have had and continue to impact the operation of kindergartens, our attention turned to the written content of the book.

The influence of the political scene in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Aotearoa is highlighted throughout the narrative. Advocacy for children, women, teachers and quality early childhood provision for Aotearoa came through strongly. The history is charted from the late 1800s and the introduction of Froebel's ideal for supporting the learning of young children. It follows a rugged path of growth as strong pioneers (predominantly women) campaign through

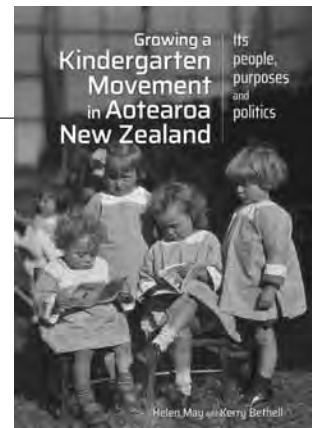
societal and political change. Kindergarten was initially established in New Zealand cities that were growing in population, and was kept alive by women with strong political voices who lobbied anybody who would listen for money and practical support. As the movement grew and the value of kindergarten became known throughout the country, activists emerged from the provinces, eager to have their voice heard.

The authors had carefully gathered valuable information into chapters defined by decades. Great care was taken in the collation of what was no doubt copious amounts of raw material – names, places and photos which had been selected to highlight the important aspects of the kindergarten movement in each decade.

The images depicted the smiling faces of teachers and children, alongside the more grim and determined expressions of the presidents, secretaries and politicians. The authors provide a detailed account of the will power of those within the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union to have their voices heard in what must have sometimes looked like a 'bun fight'! A strong sense of each geographical area and their kindergarten representatives wanting resources for their spaces appeared to be a recurring theme.

While there is little documented evidence of what eventually went wrong, it seemed that the demise of one collective group was inevitable. From the early 1990s there was a split and a growing segregation of associations who began to operate as silos. Without the bargaining power of one large organisation, it could be fair to say that the advocacy voice for kindergarten began to quieten nationally. At the time of publishing, kindergarten was reported to provide care and education to 15% of children enrolled in early childhood. With increased competition from other providers, kindergartens could potentially benefit from a whole group advocacy approach again... but that would mean circumnavigating the politics that remain largely unspoken about.

There were many aspects within this chronicle of





kindergarten history that made us smile and puff up with pride. Throughout the book images of children highlight the value of a philosophy that has not changed since the inception of kindergarten and Friedrich Frobel's famous motto, "Come let us live with our children", (p. 8).

Photographs demonstrate children's engagement with play in environments that were intentionally prepared by teachers who were informed by the thinking's of their time. We cringed as photos reminded us of our early days of kindergarten teaching when 'table top activities' were considered a necessity for children. Looking back three decades prior though, we could see evidence of today's philosophy in action – teachers were encouraged to "free up kindergartens" (p. 111)

"She said to me, 'Let the children free'. I talked it over with the girls I was working with and we let the children free because it was more natural. We didn't have a timetable. We even let them go to the toilet when they wanted to!" – 1950s (p. 111)

A photo taken in 1953 provides an indication that many aspects of kindergarten have not changed. This image depicts teachers visiting a family to get a better understanding of the child, which demonstrates the strong value that teachers today place on relationships, understanding children and acknowledging where they come from to ensure success.

Having lived and worked through the last 35 years of the story of kindergartens in New Zealand, we could easily place our knowledge in the context the changes depicted to the early childhood sector as a result of government policies and societal change. With the array of dates conveying varying initiatives we wondered how easy it would have been to contextualise. A timeline with key dates and outcomes could have added greater clarity for the reader. Despite that, this book could be a useful resource that encapsulates those key historical influences.

The book is promoted as a collective endeavour between and New Zealand Kindergartens (NZK) and the Kindergarten Federation (E.C. Leadership). The authors, Helen May and Kerry Bethell are well known and respected in the field of early childhood education through their extensive experience in lecturing and in writing. Their academic backgrounds along with the contextual knowledge makes them well placed to examine the kindergarten movement alongside the sociocultural and political backdrop from the last 140 years. That said – it is disappointing that despite the endeavours to include voices from across the kindergarten sector, those from E.C. Leadership are noticeably underrepresented following the split with NZK. The outcome of this is that while there would have been an impact on both organisations from the political and social aspects, it is unclear what the response was from those associations in E.C. Leadership.

While for nostalgic reasons, this book would appeal to those who have lived in Aotearoa and worked in kindergarten, especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there is

a broader appeal. As a historical record, those studying and seeking to understand early childhood in New Zealand would find this a useful resource, while across the early childhood sector, the impact on the kindergarten movement from political agendas is shared by other services. Considering current philosophy and pedagogical underpinnings, the reminiscences from those practitioners from the past give the reader an insight into the source of current beliefs around teaching in the early years.

## A history of faith-focused e.c.e. services

*Thumbnail review of 'In the best interests of children' by Cheryl Greenfield.*

Publisher CECEAA, 2014; available from: Castle Publishers: <http://www.castlepublishing.co.nz/in-the-best-interests-of-children.html>

Cost: \$24.95

Reviewer: Sue Stover (with input from Luisa McKenzie of Milford Baptist Kindergarten)



**To mark its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary, the Christian Early Childhood Education Association of Aotearoa has published a brief history. The book chronicles the outreach by Llyn Gammin of Hamilton Baptist ECE to other Christian services that began in 1993. The urge to connect with others reflected the strong presence of Baptist churches in the provision of community e.c. services and the goals for the national organisation included mutual support but also aspirations of shared training.**

Largely a work that draws together organisational archives into a readable narrative, the book also includes ample snapshots, personal reminiscences, and a timeline. In addition, it also provides reflection on what characterises a Christian e.c.e. service, suggesting:

"Ultimately being a Christian early childhood service is about allowing the love and grace of God to permeate every aspect of delivery; the fruits of the Holy Spirit evident; which in turn results in being visibly and tangibly different from non-Christian centre" (p. 34).

# Contributors

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**Paula Cown** is a senior lecturer in early childhood education at Toi Ohomai in Rotorua, teaching courses in undergraduate and postgraduate ECE degrees. Her interests include language and literacy learning, and teaching and learning with children in the outdoors.

**Andrew Gibbons** is an early childhood teacher educator and Associate Professor at the School of Education, Auckland University of Technology. He has a keen interest in philosophy and politics, and these orient his research of early childhood education, and education more generally, to questioning beliefs and practices, and their impact on the experience of being human. He has published widely on topics including the early childhood teaching profession, Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood education policy, approaches to early childhood curriculum, the educational implications of the work of Albert Camus, the philosophy of education, the role of technology in education, and the future of the university.

**Valerie Margrain** is a New Zealander who has worked in NZ schools and early childhood services, The Open Polytechnic of NZ, Victoria University and Massey University. For the last six years she has worked at The Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, and is now affiliated with the Centre for Child and Childhood Studies, Karlstad University, Sweden.

**Carina Naude** - I come from a psychology background and have practiced as a Child and Family therapist for 10 years. I have always had a special interest in teaching and recently completed a Masters degree in Teaching Early Childhood Education at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. I am currently practicing as a teacher and enjoying every moment of it. I have a special interest in assessment, attachment, leadership and research.

**Anna Jo Perry** is a senior lecturer at Manukau Institute of Technology. She is interested in how early childhood professionals develop professional knowledge and use their learning from experience in practice.

**Gail Pierce** - Kaiarataki/Professional leader for Central Kids Kindergarten. I have been an active participant within the early childhood sector for over 30 years. I completed my Master of Educational Leadership in 2014 with focussed research around distance leadership. I have a continued passion for supporting flexible mentoring opportunities for teachers.

**Tristan Wallace** is a Kaiarataki/Professional Leader for Central Kids Kindergarten. She has been working in the early childhood sector since training in the early 80's. Currently studying for her Masters in Educational Leadership, she is a strong advocate for life long self-directed learning.

**Claire Wilson** is a full time lecturer for Te Rito Maioha ki Papaioea. Claire completed her Master of Education with Massey University, Manawātū; the quality and significance of her research led to her being a joint recipient of the 2017 Rae Munro Award for high quality Master's research. Claire has a strong passion for growing resilient, culturally responsive, and competent teachers within the early education sector.





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ISSN 1172-9112

