
Comment

The articles in this issue of *Early Childhood Folio* offer interesting discussions of research on issues and topics concerned with pedagogy. Two articles on the pedagogical use of picture books focus on the affordances of picture books to enrich and support language and culture. From Nova Scotia, Christine McLean brings an international perspective on the co-construction of pedagogical documentation by teachers and children. Two articles are written by teacher-researchers, who worked on externally funded research with academic researchers, gathering and analysing data from their own settings. These teacher-researchers give honest accounts of their explorations, findings, and insights that will be a source of inspiration to others who are researching their own practice. The final article is an exploration of the experiences and perspectives of early childhood education held by Indian immigrant families—a topic that is highly relevant in Aotearoa New Zealand’s superdiverse society.

Two articles, written by researchers from the University of Waikato where the Waikato Picture Book Research Unit is located, are about the pedagogical potential of picturebooks. Both articles will be of direct interest and relevance to early childhood practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand for their clear discussions of theoretical frameworks and literature, and the potential and use made of picture books in supporting language and culture.

The article “Supporting Language, Culture and Identity using Pacific Picturebooks” discussed research that aimed to: a) identify picturebooks reflecting Pacific culture, values and languages published since 2013; and b) analyse the Pacific values and identities reflected in the text and images of a sample of these picturebooks. As these authors point out, “One of the ways in which children can see

their language and culture reflected in education settings is in picturebooks. This format has the advantage of presenting both text and image in ways that are suitable for a wide age range”. The authors emphasise not only the value and importance of children from minoritised communities seeing themselves in the books they read, but children from dominant countries learning there are other ways of viewing the world. Through a careful search process, a total of 90 picturebooks were located, representing Pacific Island Nations and communities, including Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Kiribati, Niue, Fiji, and Vanuatu. A cross section of 10 picturebooks were then chosen for detailed content analysis in relation to their reflections of Pacific identity, language, and values. Four themes were identified in this analysis—Pacific languages, traditional tools and practices, geographical context and settings, and Pacific identities. In combination, discussion of these themes is highly relevant for teachers who are wanting to weave their own local curriculum that reflects their distinctive nature and values, and for supporting the delivery of the three *turu* in *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018).

“Te Puna Pukapuka Pikitia: Picturebooks as a Medium for Supporting Development of Te Reo Rangatira with Kindergarten Whānau” draws on findings from a pilot research project that focused on the research question: ‘How can pukapuka pikitia be used as a medium for supporting the development of Te Reo Rangatira with kindergarten whānau?’ A 4-week programme introducing pukapuka pikitia featuring te reo rangatira to the whānau of tamariki was held at a North Island kindergarten. Reactions of whānau to the programme were positive and there was tangible evidence of increased incidences of te reo in the everyday lives of whānau. There is very little research

available on how to support whānau in additional language learning, and this study provides an initial foray into this area, which the authors intend to expand in further research.

Christine McLean brought interesting findings from her qualitative research in three early learning settings in Nova Scotia, Canada, where she analysed the co-construction of pedagogical documentation by educators and children. Her emphasis was on pedagogical documentation in order to “make learning visible to children, educators, parents, and the public”, and specifically, to engender understanding of the meaning of children’s actions and words and use of documentation as a tool for collaboration, further learning, teacher research, and curriculum development. Her methods included useful “reflective dialogue prompts” for educators that will be of interest to others wanting to think critically and deeply about their documentation and reasons for making it. Educators were also asked to reflect with the children using photographs as a catalyst for discussion and then write the interpretation of the event with the children and from the children’s perspectives. Again, reflective dialogue questions, such as, “What do you want others (people, parents, children) to know about this? What should we tell them?” were catalysts for interesting conversations that captured children’s views. Christine finishes her

article with recommendations for educators, administrators, and teacher–educator providers. Her article adds refreshing insights into how pedagogical documentation is used in countries other than Aotearoa New Zealand.

Two of the articles in this issue have been written by teacher–researchers who participated in research within their own settings, in collaboration with university-based researchers. “Recognising Young Children as Mathematicians: Connecting Mathematical Concepts to Practices, Pedagogy, and Play” discusses findings from a Teacher-led Innovation Fund (TLIF) project that investigated mathematical learning in children’s play in an early childhood centre and into the first year of school. Teachers in the EC centre and school acted as teacher–researchers, identifying children’s interests, and offering provocations. Their focus was on what it might mean for children to have “opportunities to be a mathematician”.

Teachers from Newtown Kindergarten undertook their own small research investigation of how to support children’s scientific investigation through intentional teaching. They were participants in a Marsden-funded research project about supporting belonging with refugee and immigrant children, which also coincided with their own strategic internal review of their teaching practice. Pedagogical

practices found to be of particular importance were: the importance of slowing down, the value of repetition, the depth of child engagement in scientific activities and the significance of sensory learning. These teachers had initially been somewhat wary of taking an “intentional teaching” approach, which they had equated to “teacher-led” activities, but after engaging in the work and understanding the approach better, they came to realise they acted in a child-centred way, and saw tangible benefits for children.

The population of immigrant children coming to New Zealand is fast growing, making Aotearoa New Zealand one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the OECD. Census 2018 found that 27% of New Zealanders were born overseas. The experiences of children’s engagement in early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand from the perspectives of nine Indian immigrant parents were explored by Mahaveen Syeda and Rosemary Richards in the final article in this issue.

Linda Mitchell, Editor

Reference

Ministry of Education. (2018). *Tapasā: Cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners*. Author.