
Comment

The various articles in this issue of *Early Childhood Folio* address issues of contemporary debate in Aotearoa New Zealand's policy and practice landscape. Three articles are concerned with the care and education of babies, toddlers and younger children. Lesley Rameka, Ali Glasgow and Megan Fitzgerald bring findings from the first phase of a Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project, "Te Whatu Kete Mātauranga: Weaving Māori and Pasifika Infant and Toddler Theory and Practice in Early Childhood Education" (2015–2016). Their research was framed by a kaupapa Māori and sociocultural theoretical lens and took place within one Samoan, one Tokelau, one Cook Island and three Māori early childhood education settings. The culturally relevant and innovative research methods included wānanga/meetings with kaumātua/elders, whānau, and community church leaders to gather pūrākau (traditional oral stories) about the values, practices, and understandings of the care and education of babies and young children. The key themes that emerged from analysis of the pūrākau—communal caregiving, intergenerational relationships, waiata and oriori, and tuakana/teina relationships and caregiving—highlight cultural and traditional knowledges that can be used to support culturally embedded infant and toddler provision in Māori and Pasifika early childhood services. Furthermore, the research is highly relevant for all early childhood teachers and services in offering understanding of possibilities for culturally and linguistically responsive communities.

The focus of the article by Jayne White, Gareth Ranger, and Mira Peter is on 2 year olds in early childhood settings. As these authors point out, "2 year olds are located awkwardly within the educational landscape—considered to possess unique and fluctuating characteristics that situate them differently from other age-groups while simultaneously being treated the same as their older peers". Furthermore, there are anomalies in the policy framing for this age-group, including that the ratio requirements and general funding criteria for this age group are the same as for older children, yet 2 year olds are not included in the provision of 20 hours ECE. Research has tended to neglect this age group, while the number of 2 year olds in ECE is growing fast; so Jayne, Gareth and Mira's survey of service participants about 2 year olds in ECE reported in this article is timely. Key issues in catering for 2 year olds were identified. These included additional supervision and safety costs for services, and challenges around curriculum and pedagogy. The writers highlight policy issues that early childhood participants perceive to be affecting the provision of services for 2 year olds.

The health and wellbeing of children from birth to 3 years in ECE settings is examined by Susan Bates in her article reviewing international health literature. As she states, "considering children's wellbeing through international health literature can trouble 'situation normal' narratives in early childhood settings in Aotearoa New Zealand" (p. 16). The review highlights health challenges that Susan argues teachers are generally ill-equipped to deal with. She proposes policy and practice

directions, including reduced group size, and adult:child ratios that enable responsive caregiving especially for infants, incorporating caregiving and health capability as key competencies for early childhood teachers, and development of tools for teachers to notice, recognise, and respond to health issues.

Two articles, each undertaken in a single early childhood setting, explored different approaches to assessment, discussing how these could add new understandings that are of value in teaching practice. In a case study in one early childhood setting, Paula Cown, Sue Werry, Gayle Bell, and Roberta Skeoch examine family/whānau perspectives on the value of an approach to assessment in which children and their whānau considered and commented on children's learning before the kaiako/teacher had offered any analysis. Some positive outcomes from this approach included "that children's interests from home were shared with others in the centre and built on; whānau

activities such as duck shooting and rugby league were taught by the expert children to their friends at the centre; children took home their new skills such as question posing as a way to begin investigations into areas of interest" (p. 23). The second article, by Meredith Kelly, with three teachers in a kindergarten setting, explored the integration of schema learning theory into socio-cultural practices. The authors met with the teaching team twice to share and discuss schema literature and engage the teachers in a focus-group interview to consider adding schema learning theory and practice to their pedagogy. The authors suggest that use of both schema theory and sociocultural approaches enables educators to explore children's thinking more intentionally in their assessment, planning and curriculum.

Finally, the article by Elizabeth Schaughency, Jessica Johnston, Shika Das, Jane Carroll and Elaine Reese discusses findings derived from questionnaires and discussion groups asking

parents of 3- to 5-year-old children what "parent friendly ways" they would like to help them support their children's development towards the transition from early childhood services to school. Their findings revealed the strong interest held by parents in learning ways to support their children's development at home, in learning in a social context with other adults, and in finding out about socially mediated contexts for their children's learning. An upshot of this study was the development and trialling of three versions of resources for parents of preschool-age children. The article concludes with discussion of the tangible benefits of collaboration among researchers, educators and families/whānau for professional development and the early childhood programme.

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Editor