

---

# Comment

This issue of *Early Childhood Folio* has a diverse range of articles focusing on highly relevant and current pedagogical issues. Several involve case studies, where in-depth analysis enables opportunities for learning and development afforded by pedagogy and the environment to be highlighted. Some offer new methodological approaches, including the use of a “mosaic approach” to investigate “voices” of child and adult participants, kaupapa Māori methodology to illustrate culturally valid forms of assessment within contemporary Māori early childhood settings, and the use of a model of participation in home-based settings.

Two articles have a focus on outdoors education and sustainability. Janette Kelly and Jayne White drew on findings from their action research study exploring “pedagogy beyond the gate” with six diverse early childhood settings that were engaged in nature-based outings and shared a commitment to sustainability practices. Their exploration of pedagogical practice in outdoors education will be of widespread interest to teachers, researchers and teacher educators alike. Pedagogical shifts as teachers navigated “challenges and provocations” during their experiences of taking groups of children beyond the gate are richly exemplified through analysis of vignettes, and linked to theoretical ideas. The innovative “mosaic approach” of data generation methods enabled children’s “voices” to be directly captured as well as mediated through teachers’ “hearing and seeing”.

The second article, from Australian researchers Suzy Edwards, Deb Moore and Amy Cutter-Mackenzie, focuses on

young children learning about biodiversity through play-based pedagogies. The article is interesting in comparing different types of play—purposefully framed play, open-ended play and modelled play. The authors’ conclusion is that purposefully framed play includes “opportunities for teachers to focus on what and how they will teach children about biodiversity combined with opportunities for exploratory learning”.

Another Australian article, this one by Linda Henderson, examines the nature and extent of the “invisible barrier” between early childhood teachers and primary school teachers in settings that were co-located within the same “school” environment. Small steps started to be made toward finding productive relationships through parent focus-group discussions about what learning “looks like”, the value of play, aspirations for children, and what literacy and numeracy “looks like” in the early childhood setting.

There is a paucity of research in home-based early childhood settings and Judy Layland makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of teaching and learning in the home-based sector. The author developed a model of participation that became an effective tool for educators to analyse the affordance of participation rights, and benefits for children’s learning and development and teacher understanding. The study will be of wider interest to practitioners in centre-based settings.

Lesley Rameka’s article extends understanding of sociocultural assessment by explaining the importance of culturally valid assessment in which assessment is “designed to reflect

---

culturally located interpretive systems”. This sets the scene for her introduction of whakapapa and its relevance to learning and assessment, and illustration of the whakapapa assessment framing developed by one of the kōhanga reo included in Lesley’s doctoral research.

Anne Meade’s article explores the nature and extent of communication with parents and whānau about children’s interests and programme planning. Her examination of differences in communication between education and care centres with 100 percent qualified teachers and centres with 50–79 percent qualified teachers is timely. In many vital aspects of communication that are important in curriculum planning and implementation, the centres with 100 percent qualified teachers did better than those with 50–

79 percent qualified teachers. The differences, favouring the 100 percent centres, extended to depth of relationship and frequency of communication with parents about educational aims, professional knowledge about curriculum and assessment, staff ability to explain theories, depth and richness of portfolio documentation, and focus within portfolios on learning areas. The study is important, not only because staff communication with parents and whānau about educational aims is one of the distinguishing characteristics of effective ECE settings, but because in 2009 the government removed the policy target for all regulated staff to be qualified registered teachers (or a proportion in training for a registerable qualification). The findings, and those of the wider Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa /New Zealand Childcare Association

study from which they are drawn, support the case for returning to a target of 100 percent qualified teachers.

In this issue, Geraldine McDonald is interviewed as a researcher whose work has made a difference in early years education. Geraldine has always been a thinker ahead of her time. Her understanding of early childhood education services as community development programmes, for women as well as children, is a theme that has run through many *Early Childhood Folio* articles and is now an international policy focus with the emphasis on integrated and multi-service early childhood provision.

*Linda Mitchell*