
COMMENT

A priority for most early childhood teachers and educators is to provide high quality early childhood education that benefits children and families. This is not a one-off achievement, but part of an ongoing, evolving process. Research evidence on effective pedagogy shows adults can make a vital contribution to the development of children's competencies and learning dispositions. Adults who interact with children from the basis of children's interests, and are involved, responsive, and cognitively demanding can help extend children's thinking and learning dispositions. Adults encourage "sustained shared thinking" where adults and children co-construct an idea or skill. Children are active learners.

The work of teachers and educators in early childhood settings is strengthened when there are linkages with other settings experienced by the child. Ecological theory, first proposed by Uri Bronfenbrenner in 1972, emphasises co-ordination and connections between different systems, such as between teachers/educators and parents/whanau, between early childhood services and schools, between early childhood services and other services.

This edition of *Early Childhood Folio* provides evidence and discussion of approaches and practice that contribute to these dual goals of improving quality and strengthening collaborative relationships. These goals are also being promoted within New Zealand's policy framework through the government's 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education and its objectives for Centres of Innovation, where competent practice in teaching and learning, "community of learning" approaches, and the use of ICT to enhance children's learning and development are of specific interest.

Two articles describe research related to transition to school. Sue Dockett and Bob Perry's "Starting School

Research Project" based at the University of Western Sydney, involved children as research participants, addressing the views, perspectives, and expectations of children as they start school. Sue Wartmann reports on a study of transitions from kindergarten to school of children with special needs. Elizabeth Wood describes tensions in an English setting between policy and developmental theory about learning progression, and explores teachers' theories of progression and continuity, and how they mediate curriculum-centred and learner-centred approaches.

Four articles focus on curriculum and assessment in New Zealand settings. Sarah Te One demonstrates how one early childhood centre is building a community of learners in which children and adults are active in building the curriculum. The article by Wendy Lee, Ann Hatherly, and Karen Ramsey examines the use of ICT to develop curriculum and assessment processes. Anne Meade describes the development of *The Quality Journey* resource kit, and research on the experiences of professional development providers, teachers and educators in using the kit for self-review in early childhood centres. Finally, Alexandra Gunn discusses the influence of policies and procedures on inclusion, examining the extent to which policies and enrolment protocols in 9 education and care centres and 4 kindergartens are inclusive of disability, ethnic diversity, and diverse family structures.

As a whole, the articles highlight the important role of reflective practice, and of reciprocal communication and negotiation between adults involved in children's lives.

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