AJEC

Australasian Journal of Early Childhood

In this issue

Empowering teachers and children in early childhood

Teaching with technology: Innovations in the field

Strengthening relationships between Indigenous carers and families

Australian Early Development Index: Marginalising vulnerable children?

and more …

Early
Childhood
AUSTRALIA INC
… voice for young children.

AJEC

The *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* (AJEC) is published quarterly and is sponsored by Early Childhood Australia. It features up-to-date articles designed to impart new information and encourage the critical exchange of ideas among practitioners in the early childhood field. The AJEC Committee invites contributions on all aspects of the education and care of young children. The journal is controlled by an editorial board and all submissions undergo a blind, peer-review process.

Early Childhood Australia is listed as a commercial publisher with DEST.

Interested authors and reviewers should obtain a copy of the guidelines for contributors from Early Childhood Australia's website: www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

T: +61 2 6242 1800

F: +61 2 6242 1818

E: publishing@earlychildhood.org.au
marketing@earlychildhood.org.au

PO Box 7105, Watson ACT 2602

Early Childhood Australia

Early Childhood Australia is the peak early childhood advocacy organisation, acting in the interests of young children, their families and those in the early childhood field. As a leading early childhood publisher, Early Childhood Australia aims to promote and support best practice in early childhood. Our advocacy work is supported by our members, who participate in state branch activities and form part of a growing community willing to stand up for children. Members also enjoy significant benefits such as savings on Early Childhood Australia publications and conferences.

Current reviewers

AJEC

Contents

* Denotes primary research articles

Editorial

THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME for early childhood as we experience unprecedented federal interest in issues relating to young children, their families and the services that support them. At the same time we are living in an era where there are increasing expectations that policy is based on evidence—evidence from research and evidence from practice. What a time in which to be researching, teaching, practising and publishing! A time when early childhood workers, families and children need to enact empowerment, take control of the agenda and drive it in ways that may, in the long term, change our world.

This issue of AJEC offers some gems to help us along our way. **Jenny Overton** writes about power and empowerment; about teachers experiencing power imposed upon them, and both empowerment and disempowerment for themselves. She argues that goodwill between teachers and their employers is critically important in teachers' empowerment, and that this is linked to demonstrating that employers (and society?) value what teachers do.

Following on with the theme of empowerment, is the article by **Campbell and Scotellaro** who discuss an exciting pre-service teacher education programme that focused on enhancing student technological knowledge and skills. The project focused on both attitude change and enhancement of skills resulting in an improved sense of empowerment in the students. **Lee, Ginsburg and Preston** further the idea of empowerment through increased knowledge and skill. They present a tool they have developed to support educators in teaching mathematics. This uses video clips of learning sessions which students can use to deconstruct teaching and learning, and in the process, enhance their own mathematical understanding.

Imtoual, Kameniar and Bradley share a story of successful empowerment. They write about their work in a multi-racial kindergarten, attempting to identify what factors contribute to the high esteem in which the service is held in the local community. We are all familiar with programmes that work because of the presence of a key person or people. In this article the authors attempt to unpack the layer beneath this to identify specific factors that could be transferrable, and thus support other services in their efforts to become more effective. The importance of relationships between staff and families, and between the service and the community was emphasised. *Yarnin* was a tool used very effectively in building and maintaining these relationships. There is a lot we can learn from this article about developing and running effective services in a complex and hurried world.

Quality early childhood programmes also focus on empowering children and we have two articles in this issue that follow this theme. **Agbenyega** argues that the Australian Early Development Index disempowers children because of its derivation from Paigetian and Gesellian universal stage theories. By not taking into account children's familial and cultural contexts, the AEDI runs the risk of further marginalising children who are already vulnerable. Children's empowerment involves hearing children's voices. **Lee** presents us with the voices of a group of Korean immigrant girls, sharing with us their understanding of marriage in America. She demonstrates how the girls interpreted messages from the hegemonic culture in the light of their own experiences, reinforcing our understanding of children's activity in constructing an understanding of their worlds.

Lynch argues that children who are mobile face the risk of disempowerment in their learning because, despite the existence of a legislated framework, individual teachers interpret the framework differently, resulting in very different learning experiences for children. Moving schools can therefore be disruptive for children who may need to '… renegotiate what doing school and doing literacy means every time they move.'

All in all, a fascinating edition of AJEC offered to us by a range of, by and large, new (to Australia) and emerging authors. Well done to all.

Margaret Sims

Acting AJEC Editor
University of New England

Early childhood teachers in contexts of power:
Empowerment and a voice

Jenny Overton
Southern Cross University

THIS ARTICLE REPORTS ON findings from a qualitative research project (Overton, 2006) that highlighted a lack of empowerment experienced by, with and for eight early childhood teachers working in Tasmanian schools. The study investigated how change affects teachers, and focused on the theme of power as experienced by these teachers. The study noted three dimensions of power relationships in teachers' work lives: power imposed upon teachers (i.e. top-down, bureaucratic power); empowerment for themselves and others (reactionary mechanisms across or between teachers in search of empowerment); and disempowerment (behaviours, events and actions that actively eroded teachers' sense of empowerment). This article outlines the ways in which these teachers were constrained, yet sought to self-enable, in their work contexts. Recommendations and implications are included in the discussion.

Introduction

THIS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH investigated what happens to teachers at the point of intersection between their identities—their personal and professional 'selves' (Branaman, 2001; Palmer, 1998)—and educational change. It commenced with concerns about the impact on teachers of ongoing educational change, most obviously through the changes to the teaching of literacy in early childhood. It examined three main questions: 1) What are the implications of ongoing educational change for teachers? 2) Does this change impact on their individual identities? 3) What might this impact be?

Other questions emerged as the grounded-theory approach to data analysis continued. Three key themes of identity, change and power surfaced, and from these, other questions arose. Questions related to the theme of power were:

- what are teachers' understandings about the use of power in the processes of change?
- how do teachers position themselves in these power relationships?
- is there evidence that the use of power in the change process affects individual teachers' identities?

The power relationships evident in teachers' working lives became an issue as teachers balanced their knowledge, beliefs, feelings and values against what their employer, and/or its agents expected of them in the processes of change.

Literature review

In 1991 Goodson called for educational research that 'assure[s] that the teachers' voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately' (p. 36). This research was an attempt to do just that. The early childhood teachers in this study provided a set of voices that deserved to be heard loudly. These teachers exist in a milieu underpinned by dimensions of power-based relationships (Apple, 1995; Ball, 1987; Batallan, 2003; Weber, 1986). This article highlights how they used, and were subjected to, power in the course of their work lives.

A review of literature provided research perspectives for the study. The first perspective is that change is an ongoing and essential part of education (Fullan, 1998; Hargreaves, 2003). Change is expected and is integral to the work lives of teachers. The teaching of literacy has undergone recent iterations. These variations were noticeable in the requirement for more explicit teaching of skills and a phonics-based approach to literacy (Brock,

1998; Clyne, 1997), a rise in critical literacies (Knobel & Healy, 1998), 'multiliteracies' (Healy, 2008) and 'techno-literacies' (Lankshear, Snyder & Green, 2000).The review of the literature revealed that, because teachers invest so much of themselves in their job, changes in programs, policies and practices imply not only changing what teachers do but also have implications for who they are as people (Hargreaves, 1998a; Palmer, 1997). With increases in the number and frequency of changes, there are implications for teachers that go beyond adjustments to teaching knowledge and practice (Britzman, 1997; Danielewicz, 2001; Nias, 1989, 1998).

This research sought to uncover what happens to teachers in the processes of change. Understanding what change means to teachers and how it affects them is critically important (Cheater, 1999; Wiley, 2000; Zembylas, 2003). This research also raised questions about whether teachers have been adequately supported in the processes of change and whether the individual teacher's identity—what they understand, know, believe, feel and value—is significantly affected by the ongoing expectation of educational change (Churchill, Williamson, & Grady, 1997; Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Smyth, 2001).

Method

The qualitative research employed a critical case study approach (Stake, 1995) to examine the effects of change on eight early childhood teachers. It used the concept of *identity* (Palmer, 1997) to investigate the deeper personal and professional implications of change. Eight teachers were interviewed twice.

The topic of variations in literacy teaching was used to initiate the conversations. The interview focus, as led by the teachers, extended to other kinds of changes and the impact of these on teachers and their teaching role. A summary of the first interview was returned to each participant before the commencement of the second interview.

The participant teachers were employees of the Tasmanian government education department. They were early childhood teachers, teaching students aged from four to eight years (Kindergarten, Prep, Grades 1 and 2). The data set was gathered across 2001 and 2002. The participants were all women (by coincidence, not design) and had a range of teaching experience from 'beginning' to 'close to retirement'. They were teaching in schools across northern Tasmania.

Data analysis

The data, transcripts from the 16 open-ended interviews (Kvale, 1996), were analysed using a three-tiered approach. The first level of analysis utilised a narrative approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne,

1988). This summarised the information provided in the interviews and provided background understandings about each of the teachers. The second level of analysis interrogated the data using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1999). Three themes of change, power and identity were clarified from the data. The third level of analysis expanded on the previous two and employed a discourse analytic approach using Gee's (1999) framework of 18 analytical questions, in conjunction with the research questions, to develop further understandings about the teachers' perceptions of their identities in contexts of change.

Findings: Three dimensions of power

The analysis of the data revealed that these teachers were working with several dimensions of power relationships (Weber, 1986). These impacted in a variety of ways on their personal and professional selves.

Table 1 provides a summary of these types of power and their respective sub-categories. Selected quotes from the data support the noted categories and sub-categories.

Imposed power

1. The political nature of imposed power

The teachers demonstrated an awareness and acceptance of the political nature of ongoing educational change. The links between what was happening in the social and political arenas and the imposition of educational change was evident to them. Teachers demonstrated an awareness of the social and political, rather than educational, reasons for change and that the pressures, tensions and conflicts they experienced through the many changes in education were partially the result of political agendas.

> Lots of the stuff that we've been getting [changes in policy and programs, etc.] comes from our dear [the Federal Minister for Education] who really doesn't know a thing about teaching children how to read and how to be literate. (Suzanne, T1, p. 3)

Educational changes did not necessarily have an educationally based justification. Instead she considered that they were about meeting a political agenda.

2. Power imposed through senior staff and principals' direct actions

The data revealed specific incidents where power was imposed on these teachers, or their colleagues, through the direct actions of the principal or senior staff. This had distinct repercussions for how some teachers perceived themselves and their role. They indicated that they only reacted to such incidents when necessary for self-preservation.

Table 1. Summary of types of power			
Power: Type and definition	**1. Imposed Power** Top-down, bureaucratic power	**2. Disempowerment** Intentional or unintentional actions that served to de-value and undermine teachers sense of personal power in the education system	**3. Empowerment of self and other** The ways in which teachers sought personal and professional empowerment for themselves and those around them
Sub-category 1	The political nature of imposed power	Disempowerment through devaluing and lack of appreciation	Empowerment through voluntary transfers as a means of self-empowerment
Sub-category 2	Power imposed through senior staff and principals' actions	Disempowerment through the lack of provision of resources and funding	Empowerment through involvement in professional associations (e.g. Kindergarten Teachers Association, Early Childhood Educators of Tasmania)
Sub-category 3	Power imposed through the policy and expectations of the educational system, i.e. the Department of Education (DoE)	Disempowerment through the lack of direct of indirect forms of support from the system (DoE), the principal and senior staff	Self-empowerment through length of teaching experience or inexperience
Sub-category 4	Power imposed through the use of 'research' and 'statistics'		Empowerment through own learning and/or professional development
Sub-category 5			Empowerment through encouraging self and others
Sub-category 6			Empowerment through decision-making processes

There's no point having an opinion because it doesn't count for anything … If it was the right opinion, what the leadership wanted, yes. But if you had any aspirations to have something different you are taken aside and told 'you know that wasn't the right sort of thing to say'. (Katrina, T2, p. 5)

3. Power imposed through the policy and expectations of the educational system, i.e. the Department of Education (DoE)

The third category is the imposition of power through the education system's implicit or explicit policies and expectations (Department of Education [DoE], 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2002). The education system had expectations and requirements of teachers that they felt were unreasonable, unprofessional or unacceptable interpretations of policy at the local level. Examples of this included the requirement to transfer every seven years, and the introduction of major revisions to the curriculum without adequate supports. Barbara discussed her reaction when her assistant principal told her that her teaching style was 'old hat' and that a literacy program that was about to be introduced to her school would vastly improve students' learning.

They [senior staff] were suddenly implying that what we're doing before was a waste of time, that over 50 per cent of what we were doing could be far better if we introduced these programs. Well, I was pretty staggered because here's me, trying to do a bloody good job and having this new person coming in telling me that what I was doing was old hat, a waste of time, and that in many schools they're now learning 30 words a week. (Barbara, T2, pp. 13-14)

The imposition of this new program, without explanation or consultation, was demoralising for Barbara.

4. Power imposed through the use of 'research' and 'statistics'

There was evidence that vague references to 'statistics' and 'research' were used as support mechanisms for

changes that supported a particular agenda. The need for schools to provide baseline data, the implementation of national and state-based testing programs and the expectation that teachers would gather and enter information online were changes that caused teachers to feel an intensification of pressure and tension. It was considered that those whose agendas were served in this process of change applied pressure through the strategic use of statistics.

Sally discussed the role that 'statistics' played in this intensification of pressure.

> *… and their consultation is statistical just like everything else is statistical in the Department now. So if 75 per cent of the surveyed teachers say that they agree with something, then we use it. So, 25 per cent might have problems with it but they're going to have to use it anyway.* (Sally, T1, p. 11)

To Sally it seemed like a mechanism to silence the unwilling minority. She also saw that, through gathering data on students' progress, individual teachers' performance may be monitored, and she wondered how other teachers felt about that.

Disempowerment of teachers

Much of the literature refers to teacher empowerment through engagement with decision-making (Davis & Wilson, 2000; James, 1999; Short, Rinehart & Eckerly, 1999), but this was not strongly evidenced in the data. Teachers made decisions based on their educational understandings. When this was in conflict with those in authority, either at a system or school level, the teachers felt disempowered because they sensed that 'might was right'.

1. Disempowerment through devaluing and lack of appreciation

These teachers discussed a significant number of incidents through which they or their colleagues had experienced a lack of appreciation or had felt undervalued. The intentions of those in power were not investigated in this research. What was noted, though, were how these teachers experienced a diminished sense of being valued and appreciated by the educational system in general and by their senior staff in particular. In some instances the under-valuing of teachers could also be seen to be a form of manipulation and control. Rose noted a frustration at her most recent school appointment when her new principal gave her no feedback or indication of whether her teaching was acceptable.

> *We have a principal that doesn't have a philosophy of being in the classroom regularly to know all the nitty-gritty stuff. I got really crabby in the first couple of years just coming to terms with the fact that yes, I am still valued, but I have to really search for it. Sometimes you build yourself up for recognition and praise, and now I know I needed to seek it in other ways. I probably am doing a good job after all. But you don't know.* (Rose, T2, p. 4)

2. Disempowerment through the lack of provision of resources and funding

The use of the funds for teacher and student support in schools was another way these teachers sensed power at work. Linking student achievement with school funding was an issue of concern. When students in schools with a low socioeconomic status failed or barely achieved baseline data benchmarks, rather than providing more funding to the schools to help address the social issues creating problems for these students, they were at risk of having funding withdrawn.

There was also a lack of tangible appreciation for the teachers' hard work. Because teachers invest so much of themselves in their work (Nias, 1989), this lack of appreciation eroded self-esteem, by implying they were not valuable to the educational system. Evidence of professional respect from their employer, in the form of funding and resources to support the tasks of teaching and learning, was not sufficiently visible for these teachers—diminishing them and their performances.

> *Sometimes I think we're undervalued. I mean, why haven't we got a nice little toilet, say? At our school there's just the scungy rotten old toilet and not even a decent mirror or hand basin. I mean why don't we get a little bit of pampering? We work hard as professionals. Why don't we have a few nice mod cons in our school to say 'hey you're something special, you work hard' … as an indication of appreciation?* (Pat, T2, p. 7)

Pat noted that 'undervaluing' extended beyond teaching staff, to general and senior staff as well.

3. Disempowerment through the lack of direct or indirect forms of support from the system (DoE), the principal and senior staff

Another form of disempowerment evidenced in the data was a lack of direct support from the principal, senior staff or the education system. Katrina expected some kind of occasional positive response from the senior staff team as an acknowledgement of a job well done.

> *It doesn't have to be monumental but it has to be just one sentence to say 'gosh you've done a good job there' or even a suggestion of 'I tried this once, you know, you could incorporate that' and gives you another idea. Whereas, [in my new school] I haven't had one piece of interest in anything that I've done. Nobody looks at any displays you're doing apart*

from the parents and children. Nobody is interested in us, or anything that you're doing in the classroom. (Katrina, T2, p. 3)

Katrina perceived this lack of feedback from the leadership team as a lack of support, and an omission that caused professional self-doubt. She invested much of herself in her work (Nias, 1989) and was unable to separate her worth as a teacher (professional) from her worth as a person (personal).

Empowerment of self and others

1. Empowerment through voluntary transfers.

Two of the teachers in the study had sought voluntary transfers to new schools in an attempt to gain a sense of empowerment.[1] Neither of these situations could be considered transfers for trifling reasons; both teachers had actively exhausted all other avenues in their professional desire for a sense of value and appreciation from their principal or senior staff team.

Katrina indicated a need to empower herself through this course of action. It was not a pleasant choice, but one derived from the unhappy situation at her current school: 'I felt that I needed to move on for my own sake' (Katrina, T2, p. 2). 'I think it's time to make a clean cut. I need to build myself again into a new situation where I could be comfortable' (Katrina, T2, p. 5).

In discussing her desired transfer, Barbara said: 'I hope with all my heart that I could be transferred next year' (Barbara, T1, p. 13). For Barbara the impending transfer was not entirely voluntary; it resulted from the implementation of the transfer policy. The lack of choice meant that there was not a lot of empowerment for her. However, because of the difficulties at her current school, she indicated that perhaps this might prove a better option.

2. Empowerment through involvement in professional associations (e.g. Kindergarten Teachers Association, Early Childhood Educators of Tasmania)

Of the four participants who were involved in professional associations, two said they saw it as a forum for discussion about significant issues, with potential for lobbying for the empowerment of teachers in the educational decision-making arenas. These two teachers indicated that they gained empowering benefits for themselves and witnessed empowerment for others in and through their involvement in these professional associations. Sally indicated there were benefits for her that were empowering.

So I get a lot of [sense of value] at work. I have been on an association with a group of women that have been just great to work with and we feed off each other's ideas and support each other and that's great. (Sally, T2, p. 3)

Rose emphasised the need for the committees to be supportive of classroom teachers:

However, I do feel that with those committees that I'm on, like the KTA, I would like to be far … to see our committees far more as advocates of the practitioners in the classroom. (Rose, T1, p. 8)

She also stated that, because she was a part-time kindergarten teacher and unable to 'get to the staff room', she gained the needed support and empowerment outside of the school context, through her involvement with KTA and ECET.

I've searched for that [support] from outside [the school], but it's not until the last 10 years that I've actually decided that I have enough confidence to take on more of a role with it, and it's been really satisfying. (Rose, T2, p. 7)

3. Self-empowerment through length of teaching experience or inexperience

Length of teaching experience was both an empowering and disempowering issue. For a new teacher, it could act as a deterrent to speaking up. Georgie felt that she was not yet experienced enough to tackle big issues with principals or senior staff. The length of teaching experience could also empower, when teachers realised that, with their years of experience and knowledge, they were sufficiently brave or knowledgeable to rely on that for empowerment in professional confidence.

Rose mentioned the ways that 'as one gets older and braver' (T1, p. 7) and that 'you take more risks as you get older ... when you think "what the hell"…' (T1, p. 6). 'After all the years of teaching I'm foolish enough or brave enough to use my gut feeling' (T1, p. 2).

Sally acknowledged the bravery that experience had given her.

And there's no way as a teacher that you feel empowered enough to go and do that [speak to the principal about changes that need to be made] until you've been teaching for a while and you're more experienced and feel you can express your opinions and points of views. (Sally, T1, p. 13)

Rose mentioned the empowering benefit she received from her changing the Kindergarten reporting documents. It had happened, 'at this time in my career, where I was strong enough to hang in there. If it

[1] The DoE has had a policy whereby teachers were required to change schools after seven years. While there were variations in policy implementation, a principal could require a teacher to transfer after seven years at a school.

happened 20 years ago maybe I couldn't have done it' (Rose, T2, p. 5).

Georgie had been teaching for four years and was aware of her comparative lack of length of teaching experience. With that came the awareness that others had more 'power' as a result of their depth of experience.

4. Empowerment through own learning and/or professional development

There were several instances where teachers noted that their own learning/professional development had contributed to their sense of empowerment and professional self-worth. Knowledge, or more particularly being seen to have further knowledge, was equated with power for speaking up and confidence in applying for promotable positions.

Pat indicated that her sense of being a valued staff member at her current school had come about through the process of reading and learning:

> Well, when I first went into the school everybody was wonderful, they were such lovely staff. They were very supportive so it was … only self-inflicted, that sort of feeling … But by the professional development I went through and by a lot of reading I did, and just by trial and error and learning from the situation and from my peers and other teachers … that's how I gained the knowledge … So that's where I think I've gained in my confidence. (Pat, T2, p. 3)

Pat had embarked on a personal learning program to empower herself and thereby positioned herself as a more knowledgeable and valuable staff member.

Barbara experienced a similar situation, finding greater empowerment through the upgrading of her teaching qualifications. 'But having just done that Bachelor's thing, it's been great, you know, with [University lecturer] and the others, they've sparked me up and got me thinking of other areas' (Barbara, T2, p. 17). Barbara's involvement in the training and implementation of the Spalding method had an immunising effect—against the disempowerment of either being required to be involved or of feeling excluded because of non-involvement. In this sense, her involvement was a self-protective mechanism against disempowerment: 'Then I thought, OK, I'll put my name down for it because I thought I can't keep on knocking something that I don't know anything about' (Barbara, T2, p. 19).

5. Empowerment through encouraging self and others

The collegially supportive desire to empower coworkers was evident in the data. Teachers considered some of their peers to be in need of encouragement and mentoring, and acted to this end. This occurred as older teachers supported younger teachers, as those who were familiar with a school mentored those new to the school—across grade levels, through engagement in professional associations, and a range of other mechanisms.

Pat noted that, while she had given 'gifts and thanks' to other members of staff and to the principal, she was aware that teachers supported each other. Katrina noted that at her school there was opportunity for support through grade group teams. She also noted, though, that this had a competitive effect for some and as such was counter-productive.

> I think there's been teams built around people supporting each other… for instance the early childhood team would support each other because there is nobody else to support them. (Katrina, T2, p. 3)

6. Empowerment through decision-making processes.

There were instances where the teachers indicated that they were empowered to make decisions that affected their teaching lives. The ability to have a 'voice' in the decision-making processes of the school was a form of empowerment. It was noted, though, that opportunities for teacher involvement in decision-making were tightly controlled by senior staff, and decisions made by teachers were sometimes undermined in later actions by senior staff. Teachers were pleased when opportunities for consultation were offered, but had become cynical about the extent of their potential for authentic involvement.

Jodi noted that her staff was empowered in one context.

> It was an issue that we discussed at quite some length at a staff meeting last year, and it was decided that there were to be no bells and no interruptions of any sort during class time. (Jodi, T1, p. 9)

This was not an individual making decisions about their own practice, but a whole staff decision about school-wide issues. Presumably, the power to make this decision came to the staff through senior staff or the principal.

Barbara commented that her involvement in Spalding literacy method training was her decision. 'With Spalding, it's my choice to do it or not. It is not something that we are all going to do' (Barbara, T1, p. 16). It could, however, be noted that this was not a truly free decision as there was pressure exerted that engendered compliance with what had been a senior staff/principal's decision.

Discussion and implications

The data revealed many incidents and variations of empowerment and disempowerment in these teachers' work contexts. The next section discusses some of the

implications under these headings:

1. Implications of issues of power
2. Teacher contentedness
3. Teacher support
4. Teacher powerlessness
5. Goodwill between teachers and their employer.

1. Implications of issues of power

The power—or more specifically the em-powerment or dis-empowerment—experienced by the teachers in this study has direct implications at several levels. Three will be discussed here.

a) The first implication of empowerment/ disempowerment is the level of teacher retention. Unresolved frustration can lead to dissatisfaction and in extreme cases can develop into stress and burnout (Batallan, 2003; Churchill, et al., 1997; Ferguson, 2000; O'Brien, Goddard & Keeffe, 2007). How teachers manage their professional working lives is critical to teacher supply and retention. Feeling disempowered and lacking a sense of professional efficacy can lead teachers to seek other careers.

b) The second implication of power relationships is the level of teacher satisfaction and teacher contentedness (Bell, 1994; Day, Fernandez, Hague & Moller, 2000). Remaining positive, committed to the tasks of teaching, and dedicated to student learning, is at the heart of what teachers do. Investing a manageable degree of themselves into these tasks and gaining a commensurate degree of satisfaction from the commitment is essential to this 'give and take' equation. Without this, teachers are at risk of leaving the profession.

c) The third implication of these issues of power is the related issue of student learning. Fullan noted that student learning is at the heart of what schools do (1998). It is more likely to be enhanced when teachers are contented, committed to the tasks of teaching and have an appropriate sense of efficacy and empowerment (Damasio, 1999; Goodson, 1997; Hargreaves, 2003).

The relationship between these three issues is not difficult to notice. They are complex issues in themselves and space here does not permit further expansion. Suffice to say that teachers who are contented in their teaching contexts—who have a sense of empowerment, whose workplace challenges do not overwhelm them—are more able to commit to the tasks of teaching with greater enthusiasm. This has implications for enhanced student learning (Hargreaves, 2003). Satisfied teachers will stay longer in the profession and do the best job they can (Nias,

1998; O'Brien, et al., 2007; Rogers, 1992; Smyth, 2001). Frustrated and stressed teachers will be less effective in facilitating student learning (Gibbs, 2003; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Mackenzie, 2007; Midthassell, 2004).

2. Teacher contentedness

The issue of contentedness in teaching is at the core of retaining teachers in the profession and enhancing student learning. Being content in the tasks of teaching grows from the combination of a range of interrelated elements. These include the following:

- efficacy: the belief that what one does can make a difference; in a teacher's case, to the lives and learning of students (Gibbs, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

- empowerment: a sense that one is able to complete the assigned tasks (Dee, Henkin, & Druemer, 2003; Jones, 1997; Rice & Schneider, 1994).

- trust: to be able to be trusted to do the assigned tasks without invasive checks (Misztal, 1996).

- value: the awareness that you are a valued member of staff and the job that is done is valued and appreciated by those in power (Fullan, 1998; Macmillan, 1999).

- voice: an awareness that one's opinions and ideas are heard, acted upon and valued (Maeroff, 1989).

- professional integrity: how what happens in the workplace fits with one's beliefs and professional and ethical standards (Palmer, 1997).

These elements are interrelated in ways that are too complex to cover here. However, each in its own way is important and together they are vital to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a contented teaching workforce. This contentedness is characterised by a positive sense of personal and professional control and manageability of the work environment and the tasks associated with teaching.

3. Teacher support

This study highlighted the issue of supports for teachers to protect them from being disempowered and swamped by the enormity of teaching tasks. It examined whether, or in what ways, personnel and systems support, enhance and facilitate the processes of teaching and learning (Lortie, 1998). The data demonstrated that these teachers were not receiving the levels of support they needed. Teachers reported numerous incidents when they or their colleagues were not supported, were actively disempowered or treated poorly by agents of their employer. It should be said that these teachers took self-protective, evasive action for themselves or for others only when circumstances became extreme. There were no reports of actions characterised by flights of fancy or unsubstantiated concerns. Rather, these teachers reacted with solid

educational justifications to perceived threats to themselves or their colleagues.

4. Teacher powerlessness

Beyond the available supports for teachers are the issues of what those in positions of power—from policy-makers to principals and senior staff and district support personnel—can do to empower teachers, thus supporting the teaching and learning cycle. Sarason (1996), in explaining his issues with power relationships in school cultures, said:

> …the sense of power is the sense that you have been accorded the respect and given practical responsibility to have some voice in determining what and how you will learn and act. To feel powerless is to feel that your ideas opinions and interests do not deserve a hearing; you are the object of the discharge of power of others; your role is to do what you are told, like it or not; your role is to conform, to play the game by the rules of others. …That sense of powerlessness had self-defeating consequences for everyone in the school culture. (p. 344)

This research demonstrates clearly that the teachers experienced this same sense of powerlessness, to one degree or another. This kind of powerlessness can drive teachers out of the profession. It can reduce them to timid, self-doubting professionals who no longer enjoy their jobs. It can impinge on their sense of efficacy, compromise their professional integrity, challenge them to the point of breaking, silence their professional voices, and force them towards early retirement and premature career changes.

5. Goodwill between teachers and their employer

One of the significant findings of this study relates to the existing state of 'goodwill' between teachers and their employer and/or its agent. This goodwill, which could also be described as 'capital' (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988), meant a mutually beneficial flow of 'give and take' relationships between what was given and received by teachers and what was expected and received by the education department. This goodwill, however, appeared to be in a state of corrosion, as these teachers indicated their continued frustration, stress and cynicism. Their desire to continue to commit to the tasks of teaching as they had done in the past was eroded by perceived unrealistic expectations from their employer and a lack of support in the processes of change. When the agents of their employer, senior staff and principal no longer supported them in the tasks of teaching, when there was little or no demonstration of valuing or appreciating the teachers, when their senior staff became increasingly distant from the classroom experiences, and when they experienced or witnessed disempowering incidents, these teachers inferred

that it created conflicts. They indicated that it caused personal and professional self-doubt. They questioned their individual worth to the educational system and experienced a reduction in their sense of professional self-worth. It added to their sense of cynicism and frustration, and diminished their commitment to the tasks of teaching.

Recommendations

It would appear from these findings that the goodwill that had formerly existed between teachers and their employer needs to be repaired. This situation is exacerbated when systems of education grow more managerial in dealing with employees, when the need for accountability takes priority, and when educational change is unrelenting. In the Australian context, where the introduction of a national curriculum is imminent, this situation could be considered critical; hence immediate and clear remedial actions are needed.

If the voices of these participants in this study are to be heard and acted on, then valuing, support and validation is what is required. These teachers were looking for affirmations from their principal and senior staff about their professional contributions—a few words of valuing and support (Rose), 'a few mod cons' (Pat), and feedback that 'doesn't have to be monumental … just one sentence to say "gosh you've done a good job there"' (Katrina). The remedy requires principals and senior staff to demonstrate interest, be prepared to hear the voices of teachers, and to provide relatively simple levels of verbal, tangible and psychological support for the work they do. It must be noted though that these teachers were not seeking a form of 'teacher appraisal'—it was affirmation and support at a more informal, personal and basic level.

Thus, this article recommends that these findings and observations be translated into three levels of valuing and support from senior level to teaching level: 1) sensitivity to the need for valuing and support, particularly in contexts of ongoing educational change; 2) awareness and recognition of teachers' needs for this support; and 3) some actions to demonstrate to teachers that their professional contribution is appreciated. Further research is also recommended to investigate the nature of teachers' needs; to determine what is currently available to teachers, both officially and unofficially; and what the education system can do to further enhance teachers' sense of worth to the system.

Conclusion

This article has outlined how early childhood teachers discussed the issues of power relationships in their work contexts. They experienced three levels of

power relationships: from a top-down perspective—an imposition of expectations from the system; empowerment for themselves and others—mechanisms across or between teachers in search of empowerment; and disempowerment when behaviours, events and actions actively eroded their sense of power and empowerment. Issues of powerlessness and its antithesis, empowerment, appeared to underpin these teachers' understandings about themselves and their work. The data revealed instances of active and passive disempowering from their employer and/or its agents, thus creating a diminished desire to commit to the tasks of teaching, and thus has potential implications for students' learning. Relatively simple support structures could pay comparatively big dividends. These teachers spoke openly and honestly and, as Goodson (1991) suggested, researchers ought to make the voice of teachers heard, heard loudly and heard articulately. Katrina's comment sums it up, and so this article finishes with her voice:

> …just one sentence to say 'gosh you've done a good job there' … just little things … that show that yes, they are thinking you're doing something worthwhile. (T2, p. 3)

References

Apple, M. W. (1995). *Education and power* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Ball, S. (1987). *The micro-politics of the school: Towards a theory of school organization*. London: Methuen.

Batallan, G. (2003). Power and authority at school: Conflict in school relationships from the perspective of Early Childhood teachers. *Mexican Journal of Educational Research, 8*(19), 679-705.

Bell, L. (1994). When worlds collide: School culture, imposed change and teachers' work. In F. Crowther, B. Caldwell, J. Chapman, G. Lakomski & D. Ogilvie (Eds.), *The workplace in education, Australian perspectives: ACEA 1994 yearbook* (pp. 52-59). Sydney: Edward Arnold.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Forms of capital*. New York: New York Press.

Branaman, A. (Ed.). (2001). *Self and society*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Britzman, D. B. (1997). The terrible problem of knowing thyself: Towards a poststructural account of teacher identity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 9*(3), 23-46.

Brock, P. (1998). Breaking some of the myths – again. *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 21*(1), 8-26.

Cheater, A. (Ed.). (1999). *The anthology of power: Empowerment and disempowerment in changing structures*. London: Routledge.

Churchill, R., Williamson, J., & Grady, N. (1997). Educational change and the new realities of teachers' work lives. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 25*(2), 141-158.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clyne, M. (1997). Language policy and education in Australia. In R. Wodak & D. Corson (Eds.), *Language policy and political issues in education encyclopedia of language and education* (Vol. 1). Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social Capital in the creation of Human Capital *The American Journal of Sociology, 94* (Supplement. Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure), S95-S120.

Damasio, A. (1999). *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves: Identity, pedagogy and teacher education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Davis, J., & Wilson, S. M. (2000). Principals' efforts to empower teachers: Effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress. *The Clearing House, 73*(6), 349-354.

Day, C., Fernandez, A., Hague, T. E., & Moller, J. (Eds.). (2000). *The life and work of teachers: International perspectives in changing times*. London: Falmer.

Dee, J. R., Henkin, A. B., & Druemer, L. (2003). Structural antecedents and psychological correlates of teacher empowerment. *Journal of Educational Administration, 41*(3), 257-278.

Department of Education [DoE] (2000a). *PASS Program Introduction*. Retrieved 30 November 2001, www.discover. tased.edu.au/literacy/pass/profdevteach/sld001/htm

Department of Education [DoE] (2000b). *The Tasmanian literacy outcomes, years K to 8*. Retrieved 22 November 2001, www. discover.tased.edu.au/literacy/tlos/default.asp

Department of Education [DoE] (2000c). *The Tasmanian state literacy and numeracy plan*. Retrieved 21 November 2001, www.doe.tased.edu.au/ooe/publications/literacy/default.htm

Department of Education [DoE] (2002). *Exploring effective literacy teaching and learning: A Tasmanian perspective*. Hobart TAS: Printing Authority Tasmania.

Easthope, C., & Easthope, G. (2000). Intensification, extension and complexity of teachers' work. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 21*(1), 43-59.

Ferguson, D. B. (2000). NSTA teacher survey lists teachers' dissatisfactions. *Curriculum Administrator, 36*(7), 18-22.

Fullan, M. (1998). The meaning of educational change: A quarter of a century of learning. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *International handbook of educational change* (Vol. 1, pp. 214-228). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Gee, J. P. (1999). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. London: Routledge.

Gibbs, C. (2003). Explaining effective teaching: Self efficacy and thought control of action. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 4*(2), 1-14.

Goodson, I. F. (1991). Sponsoring the teachers' voice: Teachers' lives and teacher development. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 21*(1), 35-45.

Goodson, I. F. (1997). The life and work of teachers. In B. J. Biddle, T. L. Good & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), *International handbook of teachers and teaching* (Vol. 1, pp. 135-152). Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer.

Hallinger, P., Bickman, L., & Davis, K. (1996). School context, principal leadership and student reading achievement. *The Elementary School Journal, 96*(5), 527-549.

Hargreaves, A. (1998a). The emotions of teaching and educational change. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *International handbook of educational change* (Vol. 1, pp. 558-575). Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer.

Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Healy, A. (Ed.). (2008). *Multiliteracies and diversity in education.* South Melbourne, Vic: Oxford.

James, W. (1999). Empowering ambiguities. In A. Cheater (Ed.), *The anthology of power: Empowerment and disempowerment in changing structures* (pp. 13-27). London: Routledge.

Jones, R. E. (1997). Teacher participation in decision-making - its relationship to staff morale and student achievement. *Education, 118*(1), 76-82.

Knobel, M., & Healy, A. (Eds.). (1998). *Critical literacies in the primary classroom.* Newtown, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lankshear, C., Snyder, I., & Green, B. (2000). Teachers and technoliteracy: Managing literacy, technology and learning in schools. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Lortie, D. C. (1998). Unfinished work: Reflections on Schoolteacher. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *The international handbook of educational change* (Vol. 1, pp. 145-162). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Mackenzie, N. (2007). Teacher morale: More complex than we think? *The Australian Educational Researcher, 34*(1), 89-104.

Macmillan, R. B. (1999). Influences of workplace conditions on teachers' job satisfaction. *The Journal of Educational Research, 93*(1), 39-42.

Maeroff, G. I. (1989). The principles of teacher empowerment: Status, knowledge and access to decision making. *The Education Digest, 54*(6), 6-12.

Midthassell, U. V. (2004). Teacher involvement in school development activity and its relationships to attitudes and subjective norms among teachers: a study of Norwegian elementary and Junior High School teachers. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(3), 435-456.

Misztal, B. (1996). *Trust in modern societies: The search for the bases of social order.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Nias, J. (1989). *Primary teachers talking. A study of teaching as work.* London: Routledge.

Nias, J. (1998). Why teachers need their colleagues: A developmental perspective. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *International Handbook of Educational Change* (Vol. 2, pp. 1257-1271). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

O'Brien, P., Goddard, R., & Keeffe, M. (2007). *Burnout confirmed as a viable explanation for beginning teacher attrition.* Paper presented at the AARE, www.aare.edu.au/07pap/abs07.htm#O

Overton, J. (2006). *Teacher identity and power relationships in contexts of change: A case study of teachers.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia.

Palmer, P. J. (1997). The heart of a teacher: Identity and integrity in teaching. *Change, 29*(6), 14-22.

Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach.* San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Rice, E. M., & Schneider, G. T. (1994). *A decade of teacher empowerment: An empirical analysis of teacher involvement in decision making, 1980-1991.*

Rogers, W. A. (1992). *Managing teacher stress.* London: Pitman.

Sarason, S. B. (1996). *Revisiting "The culture of the school and the problem of change."* New York: Teachers College Press

Short, P. M., Rinehart, J. S., & Eckerly, M. (1999). The relationship of teacher empowerment and principal leadership orientation. *Educational Research Quarterly, 22*(4), 45-53.

Smyth, J. (2001). *Critical politics of teachers' work: An Australian perspective.* New York: Peter Lang.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1999). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In A. Bryman & R. G. Burgess (Eds.), *Qualitative research* (Vol. 3, pp. 72-93). London: Sage.

Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk-Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research, 68*(2), 202-249.

Weber, M. (1986). Domination by economic power and by authority. In S. Lukes (Ed.), *Power* (pp. 28-36). Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Wiley, C. (2000). A synthesis of research on the causes, effects and reduction strategies of teacher stress. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 27*(2), 80-91.

Zembylas, M. (2003). Interrogating "teacher identity": Emotion, resistance and self-formation. *Educational Theory, 53*(1), 107-127.

Learning with technology for pre-service early childhood teachers

Anne Campbell
Faculty of Education, University of Canberra

Grazia Scotellaro
Faculty of Education, University of Canberra

THIS PAPER DESCRIBES AN innovative pilot project at the University of Canberra aimed at providing pre-service early childhood teachers with the skills, confidence and ideological change required to include technology-enhanced learning as part of the early childhood curriculum. The impact of the project was evaluated through participant observation, and a thematic analysis of entries in student learning diaries, student feedback and transcriptions of semi-structured interviews with staff involved in the delivery of the program. The analysis demonstrates that an intensive learning program can successfully change the attitudes of pre-service early childhood teachers toward the integration of technologies in the early childhood curriculum, and that the scaffolded learning process in the intensive program enhanced the learning and retention of the students' technological knowledge and skills.

Introduction

WHEN MY GRANDSON TURNED three I made the mistake of giving him a toy mobile phone for his birthday. He was excited enough when he opened the parcel, but obviously very disappointed when I showed him that we could only have pretend telephone conversations. He examined the toy phone very carefully, then looked at me sympathetically and explained in a somewhat patronising tone, 'They should have sold you a sim card when you got this, Nana. They don't work without sim cards, you know.'

Welcome to the world of the 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2005), the 'millenials'; Oblinger, 2003; Wiethof, 2006; Zemke, 2001) or the D-generation (Jukes & Dosaj, 2006) who were born into a world where technology is a given and where mobile phones and computers are tools you have used since your fingers were big enough to press the keys or the touch screen. Digital technology is so much part of their lives that they barely notice it is there. They can use DVD and CD players to select their favourite movies and music, use the remote to channel-surf, use a microwave to heat up their snacks, a mobile phone to SMS their friends, the internet to email their grandmother, and the family computer to play and to learn (Zevenbergenen & Logan, 2008).

It is a technological world in which children are often more comfortable than their parents and teachers. Until very recently this has been regarded as anathema to effective early childhood education, where the emphasis has traditionally been on the development of interpersonal social skills and physical coordination (Ferguson, 2005; Miller, 2005).

Zevenbergen and Logan (2008) have pointed out that this has led to a 'digital divide' between the learning experiences encountered in a child's home environment and those experienced in early childhood educational settings. This situation is especially worrying when there are significant gender differences among even four- and five-year-old children in terms of access to computers and in the ways computers are used.

It is also disconcerting that some children still do not have access to computers at home and therefore do not have the opportunity of developing the skills my grandson and other 'digitals in diapers' like him take for granted—skills such as using a mouse, finding letters and numerals on a keyboard or screen, typing letters, navigating websites, retrieving files, using pull-down menus, loading CDs and DVDs, uploading photos from a digital camera, using toolbars, saving files, printing documents and files, using drawing software and typing words (Zevenbergen & Logan, 2008, p. 42).

Although some of these skills are used for playing games, this is still an impressive array of digital literacy skills, even more so when they have been acquired more through independent learning and experimentation than through an adult providing instruction. I cannot help being impressed when my grandson gives me a Christmas card he has made himself by inserting a photo of his new guinea pig into a word template and adding the text, even though I know his mother told him how to do this. That children as young as this have the capacity for learning such a sophisticated array of skills and practices has significant implications for early childhood educators.

If we are to take seriously such principles as student-centred learning, providing equity for all learners, and preparing them for future roles in a technological society (ACTDET, 2007; DEST, 2007; MCEETYA, 2006), we cannot ignore findings that tell us that children in early childhood centres who have access to computers at home are the ones who have highly developed IT related skills (Zevenbergen & Logan, 2008). Nor can we ignore the fact that early childhood educators need to know how to make effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in their classrooms, and need to be convinced that doing so will enhance the learning of their young students.

In Australia it seems that it is easier for early childhood teachers to accept the role of ICT as an assessment tool than as a way of enhancing student learning. For example, Boardman's (2007) innovative use of digital cameras and voice recorders in early childhood environments is limited to describing the effectiveness of using ICT to document the learning journeys of young children for the benefit of teachers and parents, and so the children themselves can see what they have learned. This is an excellent use of ICT, but it is not using technology to enhance student learning.

Signs of an increasing acceptance of the role of ICT in early childhood learning are encouraging, although less so in Australia than in other countries such as the United Kingdom (O'Hara, 2008; Sarama & Clements, 2001), United States (Bradley, 2007; Ching, Wang, Shih & Kedem, 2006; Estrella, 2006; Hong Kong (Leung, 2003) and Finland (Kankaanranta & Kangassalo, 2003). Despite these changes, using ICT to enhance the learning of children in early childhood environments still needs a major change from traditional beliefs about 'quality education' for this age-group (Miller, 2005; Ferguson, 2005), and an early childhood centre with an IT hub for the children's use is still the exception rather than the norm in Australia. As one early childhood teacher explained:

> We don't want them sitting in front of a computer screen or a TV. They probably get enough of that at home. What they need at the centre is to run around, do something physical. Learn how to interact with other children. In early childhood that's what's important. The human touch.

The current emphasis on the provision of 'quality' early childhood education by the Australian Federal Government has brought the debate about the inclusion of ICT–enhanced learning for young children into the limelight, with considerable resistance from practitioners who value more concrete activities (Shazia, 2000; Turnbill, 2001). As Downes, Arthur and Beecher (2001) found, one difficulty is providing funding for the hardware and software needed to support the introduction of ICT in early childhood education, but an even more urgent need is the professional development of early childhood teachers.

Context of the study

The development of ICT skills relevant to teaching and learning is a required part of the undergraduate curriculum at the University of Canberra. Students choose tutorials to suit their individual non-academic commitments, and those in early childhood courses are often placed in *Learning with Technology (*LwT) tutorials with students from primary or secondary courses. Given the diverse teaching contexts of their potential professional destinations, the LwT curriculum therefore needs to be broadly relevant to all students, although there is some option for them to shape assignments to their own specific contexts.

As the use of ICT for learning at the early childhood level is quite different from its use for the same purpose at primary and secondary levels, feedback from the early childhood students who had completed the subject indicated they were not satisfied that LwT was meeting their needs. It was obvious that 'integrating ICT in the early childhood curriculum' meant something completely different from integrating ICT in the primary or secondary curriculum. As one of the lecturers explained:

> Most of the literature on the integration of ICT in education is related to a secondary or college level context. There is very little that is relevant to an early childhood context.

Evidence for the accuracy of this statement can be found in the ICT competency policy documents produced by the various state and territory Departments of Education in Australia (ACTDET, 2007) and 'technology in the classroom' texts published for teachers (John & Wheeler, 2008; Roblyer, 2004), as well as in the literature (Downes, et al., 2001; O'Rourke & Harrison, 2004; Swamithan & Yelland, 2003).

Unlike older early childhood teachers, most of the students enrolled in LwT were themselves 'digital natives' and were not resistant to the idea of using

ICT to enhance learning in early childhood classes, but felt marginalised by the predominance of secondary students in their tutorials:

> There are so many secondary students in our tutorial that they always get their way. Even when we try to have a say, they're louder than we are. And I don't know—they seem more confident than us. It's not that we're not confident, but there's more of them and somehow they just dominate the discussion.

Their lecturer concurred:

> We try to accommodate the early childhood group but, for example, the issue of plagiarism, students plagiarising assignments, that's something that's more relevant to high school and college, but it's not very relevant for an early childhood student. Hopefully, five-year-olds haven't got to that yet! Looking for resources on the internet, using the internet for research, preparing worksheets is also more relevant to high school level. The early childhood students are looking for online games, learning activities that can involve that age group.

Both the students and the subject convenor felt that the early childhood students needed a more targeted program to provide them with the confidence and expertise to use the technology creatively to provide quality learning experiences for young children. They also indicated that developing expertise in using relevant hardware and software over a semester frequently meant having to re-learn skills that had not been used for some time.

In response to this feedback and after consultation with the convenor of the early childhood teacher education course, the convenor of Learning with Technology decided to offer the subject specifically for early childhood students as a two-week intensive program during the class-free period between semesters:

> This would kill three birds with one stone. It would separate the early childhood students from the primary and secondary students, take some pressure off the computer laboratories, which during the semester can barely accommodate the 245 students enrolled in the subject, and let me try out the new mobile laptop trolley.

Although there were online versions of the subject available, feedback from the early childhood students indicated that they were far more comfortable with a face-to-face learning situation. Comments in the formal student feedback collected at the end of every semester included:

> I didn't like learning online. I wasn't sure what I had to do.

> I felt abandoned. Confused. It was hard to agree on what we were supposed to be doing.

> The online discussions weren't relevant to what I wanted to do. The secondary students dominated.

> It was very lonely out there.

> I missed meeting with my friends.

The solution was to offer a two-week intensive program of two hours per day for three groups of early childhood students, with a total enrolment of 60. Independent assignments were to be submitted during and after the completion of the intensive program. The content of the program was similar to that delivered in the regular and online versions, but examples and skill development were directly related to an early childhood environment and there was an increase in the amount of hands-on practice with software relevant to the creative use of ICT with young learners.

Method

The research was located within an interpretive research framework of narrative inquiry, as interpretive research can be sensitive to individual meanings and explore a diversity of meanings, whereas 'massive surveys with pre-coded slots to be ticked and computer analysed will not tap into this information' (Wearing, 1998, 188). To provide some predetermined focus for the study, data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with the lecturer of the intensive LwT program and the course convenor of the Early Childhood program. Participant observation of the tutorials was used during the intensive program. Thematic analysis of the weekly entries in the learning diaries of the 60 Early Childhood students enrolled in the intensive program, and formal feedback surveys completed by these students provided additional data for the study (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

The intensive LwT program was delivered to three groups of 20 early childhood teacher education students enrolled in the first year of their pre-service course. The intensive program consisted of 10 two-hour sessions per group over a two-week period, using individual wireless laptops with internet access (PCs in the first week and Macs in the second week) provided by the university. The laptops are stored on trolleys and can be borrowed by any lecturer for tutorials anywhere on campus that has wireless access, although to date the early childhood intensive LwT program is the only group to have done so. Seating in the room used for the intensive program was around a large table so that direct eye contact could facilitate interaction between students and lecturer. As the laptops are fully portable, it was possible for the lecturer to send students out of the boardroom for activities that needed a quieter context, such as recording a voice-over for a podcast.

Lectures dealing with specific issues relevant to the

early childhood context were available online through a mixture of videos, podcasts, interviews with experts, Powerpoint presentations and links to online teaching resources. The face-to-face sessions concentrated on increasing the students' confidence in using both Mac and PC laptops and developing expertise in using software such as Microsoft Office, Hotpotatoes, Audacity, Garage Band, iPhoto, iTunes, iMovie, Smartboard Notebook and online resources such as Google Docs, Vixy Net , Zamzar, Youtube, Teacher Tube and Wikispace.

In the face-to-face sessions students learned:

- how to create and insert sound and video files into Word documents and Powerpoint presentations (using Audacity to record the sound) and to add both embedded and hidden hyperlinks
- how to simplify saving documents in a variety of formats such as pdf and html using Zamzar
- how to create drag-and-drop quiz activities with Hotpotatoes with text images, sound and video; use digital cameras
- how to use iPhoto and Garageband to produce simple podcasts
- how to use iMovie and Powerpoint to create and edit a short movie and turn the movie into a podcast using Garageband
- how to create a short educational activity using the Smartboard suite
- how to create a learning space for students using Wikispace, with links from a home page to resource page and activity pages.

Although these skills are similar to those taught in the LwT program for primary and secondary pre-service teachers, having a separate program enables the lecturer to use examples of content relevant to early childhood students.

Findings

Early childhood course convenor's perspective

From the interview with the early childhood course convenor it was clear that the intensive program had been extremely effective in promoting a positive attitude among the students towards the integration of ICT in the learning experiences of young children.

It was fantastic. The student evaluation of the program was so positive that I'm thrilled. I think we'll stick with this. I'd even recommend it for practising teachers.

One of the main advantages from the perspective of the course convenor was that the program could be tailored to meet the specific needs of her early

childhood students. Although the early childhood group learned the same ICT skills as primary and secondary students, and did basically the same assignments, the fact that they could apply them in ways relevant to the early childhood environment—such as creating a 'talking' story-book—made the learning much more valuable and immediately relevant.

Completing most of the LwT assignments by the beginning of the following semester also had the advantage of reducing some of the pressure usually experienced by students struggling to complete a large number of assignments in a short timeframe during the semester, as well as having other responsibilities such as part-time work and/or looking after a family. The unit content, delivery mode and timing were therefore all innovations that led to the very positive response to the program.

The early childhood centre at the university already uses ICT to record the children's learning, making it one environment where students completing the LwT intensive program can put their newly acquired skills and knowledge into practice.

Lecturer's perspective

The lecturer found the intensive program provided scaffolding opportunities that were not possible in the normal program:

I could start off with really easy applications of the software that built up the students' confidence and over the days increase the complexity of the activities until they were being really creative.

This is not possible in the normal delivery modes used in the subject, as, even during the face-to-face tutorials, tutors interact with their students only once a week. The lecturer explained that many students forgot the skills acquired if they did not have opportunities of consolidating them regularly.

More than half of them have part-time jobs, and even the full-time students rush off to their next lecture after my class, and by the next I have them, they've forgotten what they learned the week before. There's no time to practise. They spend more time working, going to other classes, socialising or looking after their kids if they're mature age students or friends, or just doing all their other assignments than using their IT skills. They take it all in, but it doesn't stick. It's not like my subject is the only thing they have to concentrate on.

The learning environment in the intensive program was tightly controlled by the lecturer, so it was possible to give the students experience in using both PC and MacIntosh platforms, and convincing most of the students that the transferability of IT skills and knowledge from one platform to another presents

no major difficulties. This was a major breakthrough, as many practising teachers (and teacher education students and their lecturers) have a deep-seated belief that IT literacy skills do not transfer between platforms. Showing the students that this was not the case by using the platform with which they were familiar in the first week and then switching to the unfamiliar one in the second was far more valuable than telling them their IT skills were transferable. As the lecturer observed:

They started off with something they knew, but throughout the first week I kept pointing out that the differences were not so big. I'd say 'well, you're doing this on the PC, but next week you'll be doing it on the Mac, and it'll be a bit different, but you do it like this'—and so when it came to using the Mac it wasn't all that difficult for them. They knew a lot of the Mac skills already. And after the first day of just getting used to the way you did the same things as on a PC in a slightly different way on a Mac, it was no big deal.

The lecturer commented that she was frequently surprised at how many teachers became quite stressed when presented with unfamiliar technology such as a Smartboard, or an unfamiliar educational software program such as Hot Potatoes. As a number of researchers have pointed out, much of the reluctance among teachers towards adopting new technologies lies in their fear of the unknown and their lack of confidence when confronted with unfamiliar technology (Downes, et al., 2001; Shazia, 2000). This was also a point made by one of the students enrolled in the intensive LwT program:

When the school [the school at which the student was based for field experience] introduced the Smartboard the teachers refused to use it because it was too complicated, or because they couldn't see why it would be useful for whatever they were doing in their classrooms. There was this attitude of 'the last thing I need right now is having to learn another technological thing'. It made me think about whether there was such a thing as too much technological change, especially for early childhood teachers. After all, it's the kids that matter, isn't it?

A particular reluctance among students enrolled in the intensive LwT program noted by the lecturer was changing from a MacIntosh to PC.

Students told me 'I've been a Mac person or a PC person all my life, so why should I have to change?' It's a funny attitude to have these days, because if you go to a school where they have Macs and you're a PC person, you have to change. And in reality they're really not so different, and once you've mastered the differences, you wonder why you ever made such a fuss about it in the first place. That's what the students said too after day two.

They all sat there in amazement and said, 'It's not that difficult. We did this on the PC and it works exactly the same way on a Mac.'

One of the most rewarding outcomes of the trial project for the LwT lecturer was that the intensive program enabled her to see the progress the students were making:

There was an observable change in attitude from the first day where the students were all somewhat fearful of using the wireless laptops facilities. Then on the second day they'd come in all enthusiastic and say, 'Oh, yeah, we did that yesterday and it wasn't so hard. Yeah, I can do that.' And then I'd say, 'Well, now we're going to do this activity, but part of this activity is what you already learned to do yesterday, so it's not that different', and they'd just go.

It was also obvious that there was much less loss of learning than in the normal delivery mode, something not anticipated by the lecturer:

I wasn't expecting this. But when I think about it, because they didn't have this gap of a week between what they learned, with all the other things in between—other lecturers, other assignments, work, whatever—in the intensive program there was none of this, and no loss of learning. Whether they'll still remember everything we've done in six months' time, I don't know, but I could see that their learning was a lot quicker and with a lot deeper understanding than with the students in the normal semester, who by the second week have forgotten what we did in the first week.

Teaching the entire cohort of early childhood students was also an advantage for the lecturer, as she could be confident that they were all receiving the same learning experience, something not necessarily the case when using sessional staff as tutors. Monitoring individual student progress was also easier in the intensive context, a process aided by the location which enabled the lecturer to see all of the students, quickly help those who needed it, and modify activities if it was clear that a number of students found them too difficult:

I got to know the students really well. I could pick up the ones that were having difficulties, who needed more assistance than others, the ones who knew more than the others, and I could see when I needed to simplify things.

Having three groups in quick succession was also an advantage, as learning activities could be modified for the later groups if they had been less successful than anticipated with the first group:

In fact, that's what I did. I planned an activity and it worked fine on my computer at home, but then

I got here and it didn't work, so I had to switch to Plan B and by the time I took the second group I could incorporate parts of Plan A, and by the third session it was mostly Plan A again, because I'd fixed the problem.

The lecturer's confidence and flexibility in dealing with unanticipated problems in using ICT was an excellent model for the students; and her enthusiasm for trying out new technology in creative ways was contagious, as the entries in the students' learning journals demonstrate:

My confidence in technology is bigger now and I feel OK in just playing around and exploring with technology.

I'm amazed at how much I've learned. We've explored features of programs that I use every day, but that I'd never even dreamed would exist.

I'm shocked at what the children would be deprived of if I hadn't done this course.

The lecturer admitted to the students that the intensive program was a collaborative experimental learning journey. 'I told them, "Look, I'm trying to do new, more creative things with this technology too, so I'm learning along with you. That's what makes it exciting for me". This admission gave the students the confidence to be creative themselves, to experiment, to 'play around' with unfamiliar technology in much the same way young children do—a process the lecturer clearly found liberating and enjoyable. As the lecturer observed:

That's what was so great. The freedom to experiment. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, it doesn't, and you try something else. That's what was great. And to do so free of the usual administrative things that you have to do during the semester. It was so focused. My whole brain was braver and I tried things I'd never do during the semester, like podcasting, and it was a big success.

For the students, the intensive program also had the effect of focusing their learning and becoming collectively braver as they gained confidence in their ability to experiment and draw on their imagination to use the technology creatively. Sharing the learning journey was obviously a key factor in the success of the intensive program.

Students' perspective

The overwhelming response of students to the intensive program as revealed in an analysis of the comments made in their weekly learning journal was that it was an excellent way of learning and retaining knowledge and skills essential for the effective use of ICT in early childhood education. The main reason for this positive response was the scaffolding provided through the intensive structure of the program. The only negative comments related to the lack of university facilities available during the intensive program, such as access to the computer laboratories for follow-up work and the completion of assignments, although this was balanced by parking being more readily available than during semester.

The initial shock for the students was that they would be expected to use both PCs and Macs during the program. Almost all students were regular PC users and had little experience in using a Mac. Their trepidation at having to do so is almost tangible in their learning journal entries:

I'm a PC girl, have been brought up a PC girl, and my parents are both against Macs. I never expected to have to use a Mac.

I was reluctant, almost fearful of Mac computers. I'd avoid them in the IT labs, and if I had no choice, I'd fumble around on them and get nothing done.

When we were told we'd be using Macs, I inwardly groaned … LOUDLY!

I thought the world of the PC was the only one worth living in.

The level of prejudice against Macs among students seems based largely on ignorance, and by the end of the second week of the program most students had accepted that changing platforms was not a problem:

I liked that the laptops we used were both PC and Mac, as it got me comfortable with both.

It was a true pleasure to learn to use the applications on a Mac.

The Mac tutorials are particularly useful to us, as many schools use Macs, therefore we need to learn to use them and to take advantage of all their great features.

I now feel that I could confidently use both Mac and PC.

This change in attitude is a major breakthrough, as the tendency to prefer one platform and exclude another is extremely prevalent among many teachers (and teacher educators). As the students realised, this attitude disadvantages those who are unable or unwilling to concede that moving from one platform to the other is not a major problem and can actually have advantages.

As students became more familiar with the range of applications available to them and the potential for the creative use of features within the applications, there was also a marked change in attitude toward the perceived benefits of using ICT as a teaching/learning resource in early childhood contexts:

You can create files/documents that you want to use and then link them together and allow children to explore them at their own pace, allowing children to be active in their own learning and to control the pace at which they engage with the activity you have set for them.

The Smartboards use many different modes of learning—visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and written, which engages students with different learning styles.

The idea of allowing children to create their own podcasts appealed to me as it is such a good way of allowing the students to participate in their own learning and to motivate children. I was also impressed by the idea of using digital cameras to have children take their own photos and then centre lessons around these photos.

The use of ICT to record student learning was mentioned by some students'—you could make podcasts to give you a new and exciting way of demonstrating children's learning'—but it was the creative use of ICT in helping young children to learn that most excited them:

I learned that there are numerous ways in which information can be presented to children.

I'm constantly thinking of all the learning possibilities that utilise these new discoveries.

It's been a real eye-opener to explore programs that I didn't know existed and had right at my fingertips, such as the Paint program.

One concern expressed by some students was that the children they would be teaching might know more about ICT than their teachers:

I realise that I need to know what the children already may know and where their minds are with technology, because technology is normal for them, but harder for me.

My greatest worry is that the children will know much more about technology than I do, although maybe this means that I can learn from them.

If this is a concern for pre-service teacher education students, it might well be an even greater concern for practising teachers, and could be another factor linked to the lack of uptake of ICT in early childhood education in Australia, as mentioned by Zevenbergenen and Logan (2008). It was a concern also mentioned by the students in this study:

Having just left the system, I am surprised how little teachers use these technologies.

I found the Smartboards fascinating, yet am disappointed, as very few schools in New South Wales [where I will be teaching] have them.

It is to be hoped that the enthusiastic response of these students towards using ICT to enhance the learning of young children will not be dampened by a lack of ICT hardware and software in the early childhood classrooms where they will be teaching.

Conclusions

The analysis of themes emerging from student learning journals and interviews with the LwT lecturer and early childhood course convenor, supplemented by covert observation, indicated that the intensive mode of delivery of the subject was very successful in making these early childhood pre-service teacher education students aware of the possibilities of enhancing the learning experiences of young children by using ICT in the classroom (Chen & Chang, 2006). The responses of the lecturer, the course convenor and the participating students indicated that the intensive program was perceived as more successful than the normal program in doing this because it facilitated the use of scaffolded learning and gave the lecturer and students greater freedom to experiment with the technology than is possible in the normal or online program.

If the skills, knowledge and confidence gained in the intensive program are to be retained, these pre-service teachers will need to have access to adequate ICT hardware and software in their own teaching environment so they can continue to apply their learning. Their attitudes have clearly changed as a result of the intensive program, and their increased knowledge and skills have given them digital confidence, but their practices cannot change unless appropriate ICT resources are available in the early childhood educational environment.

References

ACTDET (2007). *Every chance to learn curriculum framework.* Canberra: ACT Department of Education & Training.

Boardman, M. (2007). 'I know this child has learned: I have proof.' Employing digital technologies for documentation processes in kindergarten. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 32*(3), 59-66.

Bradley, A. (2007). New center to explore role of digital media in learning. *Education Week, 27*(15), 5-5.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Chen, J., & Chang, C. (2006). A comprehensive approach to technology training for early childhood teachers. *Early Education and Development, 17*(3), 443-465.

Ching, C. C., Wang, X. C., Shih, M., & Kedem, Y. (2006). Digital photography and journals in a kindergarten – first-grade classroom: Toward meaningful technology integration in early childhood education. *Early Education and Development, 17*(3), 347-371,

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education.* (6th edn) Milton Park: Routledge.

DEST (2007). *Partnerships in ICT Learning Study*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science & Technology.

Downes, T., Arthur, L., & Beecher, B. (2001). Effective learning environments for young children using digital resources: An Australian perspective. *Information Technology in Childhood Annual,* 2001(1), 139-153.

Estrella, S. (2006). Teaching toddlers. *Music Education Technology, 4*(2;2), 38-39.

Ferguson, S. (2005). How computers make our kids stupid. *Maclean's, 118*(23), 24-30.

John, P. D., & Wheeler, S. (2008). *The digital classroom: Harnessing technology for the future.* New York: David Fulton.

Jukes, I. & Dosaj, A. (2006) Understanding the digital kids. *The InfoSavvy Group* Retrieved 8 August, 2008. http://edorigami. wikispaces.com/space/showimage/Jukes+Understanding+Di gital+Kids.pdf

Kankaanranta, M., & Kangassalo, M. (2003). Information and communication technologies in Finnish early childhood environments. *Childhood Education, 79*(3), 287-292.

Leung, W. M. (2003). The shift from a traditional to a digital classroom: New possibilities for early childhood pedagogy. *Childhood Education, 80*(1), 12-17.

MCEETYA (2006). *Learning in an online world*. Carlton: South Curriculum Corporation.

Miller, E. (2005). Less screen time, more play time. *Principal, 85*(1;1), 36-39.

Oblinger, D. (2003). Boomers, gen-Xers and millennials: Understanding the New Students. EDUCAUSE *Review, 38*(4), 37-39.

O'Hara, M. (2008). Young children, learning and ICT: a case study in the UK maintained sector. *Technology, Pedagogy & Education, 17*(1;1), 29-40.

O'Rourke, M., & Harrison, C. (2004). The introduction of new technologies: New possibilities for early childhood pedagogy. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 29*(2), 11-18.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd edn.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Prensky, M. (2005). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon, 9*(5), 1-5.

Roblyer, M. D. (2004). *Educational Technology in Action.* New Jersey: Pearson.

Sarama, J., Clements, D. (2001). *Computers in early childhood mathematics. In developmentally appropriate technology for early childhood (DATEC): An interactive symposium.* Seattle: AERA.

Shazia, M. (2000). Factors affecting teachers' use of information and communications technology. *Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education, 9*(3): 319-342.

Swamithan, S., & Yelland, N. (2003). Global perspectives on educational technology. *Childhood Education, 79*(5), 258-260.

Turnbill, J. (2001). A researcher goes to school: Using technology in the kindergarten literacy curriculum. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 1*(3): 255-279.

Wearing, B. (1998). *Leisure and Feminist Theory.* London: Sage.

Wiethof, C. (2006). The millenials, the next generation of students and how to motivate them. Retrieved 22 August 2008, www.cofc.edu/orientation/Millennials in the classroom.ppt+wie thoff+carolyn+the+millennials+the+next+generation+of+stude nts&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=au&lr=lang_en

Zemke, R., (2001). Here come the millenials. *Training, 38*(7), 44-49.

Zevenbergen, R. & Logan, H. (2008). Computer use by pre-school children: Rethinking practice as digital natives come to school. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 33*(1), 37-44.

Video Interactions for Teaching and Learning (VITAL): Analyzing Videos Online to Learn to Teach Early Childhood Mathematics

Joon Sun Lee

Hunter College, The City of University of New York

Herbert P. Ginsburg

Teachers College, Columbia University

Michael D. Preston

Teachers College, Columbia University and Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning

THE MOST PRESSING NEED in early childhood mathematics education in the United States is to improve early childhood teacher preparation. A Web-based video system, "Video Interactions for Teaching and Learning (VITAL)," is a novel and effective approach for teacher preparation integrated into early childhood mathematics education courses. With extensive analysis of videos involving children's mathematical thinking, VITAL provides prospective teachers with engaging and intellectually stimulating hands-on and minds-on learning experiences that supplement the traditional textbook and readings.

Introduction

THE JOINT POSITION STATEMENT of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) states that 'high quality, challenging, and accessible mathematics education for three to six-year-old children is a vital foundation for future mathematical learning' (2002, p.1). Currently in the United States, the need for effective early childhood mathematics education is emphasised at the national, state, regional and local levels (Clements & Sarama, 2004; NAEYC, 2003; NAEYC & NCTM, 2002; NCTM, 2000, 2006).

The impetus for this new focus has been two-fold. One factor is a serious concern about American students' mathematics underachievement. Children from East Asia outperform their American counterparts in mathematics achievement even before entering first grade (Miller, Kelly, & Zhou, 2004; Stevenson, Lee, & Stigler, 1986). The other and more promising factor is the research-based awareness that young children already possess well-developed informal mathematics and are ready to learn complex mathematics (Clements & Sarama, 2007). Therefore, more and better mathematics education can and should be provided in the early years (Ginsburg, Lee, & Boyd, 2008).

According to NAEYC and NCTM (2002) 'to support excellent early mathematics education … [i]mproving early childhood teacher preparation and ongoing professional development is an urgent priority' (p.13). To promote the current call for change, teacher educators need to develop new approaches to better prepare teachers in early mathematics (Ginsburg, Lee et al., 2008). In this paper, we describe and discuss a web application called 'Video Interactions for Teaching and Learning (VITAL)', a novel and effective approach for teacher preparation in early childhood mathematics education. VITAL was integrated into graduate level courses on early childhood mathematics education taught by the authors at two different universities in New York City. These courses were offered to prospective teachers working on their certification in early childhood education (birth through age eight).

What are the goals and content of the course?: The context of VITAL

In alignment with the NAEYC and NCTM recommendations (2002) (see Table 1), the primary goal of these courses was to prepare reflective teachers who would be able to use multiple sources of knowledge in making valid professional judgments and decisions regarding early mathematics education

in their classrooms (i.e. what to teach, when to teach it, and how best to do so) (Ginsburg, Jang, Preston, VanEsselstyn, & Appel, 2004).

Table 1: Recommendations by NAEYC and NCTM (2002)
To support children's mathematical proficiency, every early childhood teacher's professional preparation should include these connected components:
• Knowledge of the mathematical content and concepts most relevant for young children—including in-depth understanding of what children are learning now and how today's learning points toward the horizons of later learning;
• Knowledge of young children's learning and development in all areas—including but not limited to cognitive development and knowledge of the issues and topics that may engage children at different points in their development;
• Knowledge of effective ways of teaching mathematics to all young learners;
• Knowledge and skill in observing and documenting young children's mathematical activities and understanding; and
• Knowledge of resources and tools that promote mathematical competence and enjoyment. (p.13)

The four major foci of the courses were:

- to develop a broader and deeper understanding of mathematical topics or big ideas that are developmentally and educationally appropriate for young children
- to understand what informal knowledge young children already possess related to these big ideas, and how these ideas are developed and learned in the early years, in and out of school
- to come to appreciate how their knowledge of young children's developing understanding of big ideas can be used to improve teaching and, thus, children's learning
- to expand their understanding of various methods of mathematics assessment and their use of multiple sources of evidence in assessing children's learning and reshaping their teaching.

Most importantly, teacher candidates should not only *understand* the teaching and learning of early mathematics, but also be able to *apply* that knowledge in the classroom. In order to facilitate this, they should be exposed to rich and diverse learning and teaching situations involving real children in real classrooms, and further, engage actively in observation, analysis, reflection, and decision-making in these situations. VITAL was developed to provide such an environment that could serve as a support for our early mathematics education methods courses.

Development of the VITAL Project

With the support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the second author at Teachers College, Columbia University has partnered with the Columbia Center for New Media Teaching and Learning (CCNMTL) to develop an online learning environment, called 'Video Interactions for Teaching and Learning (VITAL)', based on his courses on mathematics education (Ginsburg et al., 2004). One of the special features of his courses was the extensive use of videos to illustrate key ideas and stimulate teacher candidates' thinking (Ginsburg, Cami, & Schlegel, 2008; Lee, Ginsburg, & Preston, 2007).

The VITAL project aims to enhance and expand this video-based model so that it will be useful for a broader audience, particularly for teacher educators who have limited acquaintance with early mathematics development and learning, but who nevertheless are responsible for the preparation and professional development of early childhood teachers in this subject matter. The project is currently undergoing pilot testing and refinement in collaboration with the early childhood education programs at Hunter College of The City University of New York. By May 2009, the VITAL resources will be ready to be distributed to early childhood teacher education programs worldwide (For more information, go to http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/vital/nsf.)

Why analyse online videos to learn to teach?

There are three common ways for teacher candidates to study the realities of teaching and learning in action: (1) live observation, (2) videos and (3) text-based descriptions. Each method has its advantages, but for our purposes videos seemed to show the greatest promise. Videos can capture richer, more detailed and complex events and situations of learning and teaching than can text-based descriptions. Video technology provides more convenient access to diverse learners and teachers in a variety of contexts than live observation. Furthermore, with videos always available online, users can view (and review) them at places and times of their convenience as many times as they like and at their own pace. For teacher candidates with limited experience and knowledge, it is difficult to observe effectively the complexity of learning and teaching. Thus, multiple viewings of the same video clips promote their understanding of these complexities. Watching the same videos provides the teacher candidates with a common framework for sharing their reflections and engaging in discussion.

VITAL includes a collection of video clips or cases of a variety of teaching and learning events, which can be categorised into one of four groups that highlight:

- children's mathematical behaviours during their play, everyday activities and interviews regarding their thinking and problem solving with various mathematical contents
- teachers' mathematics lessons, or interactions with children which attempt to enhance children's learning of various mathematical contents
- teacher candidates' lessons with young individual children or groups of children to promote understanding of certain mathematics ideas of their choice (these video clips, produced by teacher candidates, are added to the *digital library* later in the semester)
- resources such as TV/media programs, computer software, children's literature and curriculum manipulatives.

What are the unique features of VITAL?

VITAL is designed to provide users with a novel method of interacting with video(s). It offers teacher candidates not only ready access to videos, but also tools for careful viewing, analysing and communicating their ideas on teaching and learning. The four unique features of the VITAL online environment are: a *multimedia syllabus, a digital library, a video viewer*, and *an assignment workspace.*

Multimedia syllabus

The *multimedia syllabus* is an online version of the traditional course syllabus with a list of dates, topics, readings, and assignments. The *multimedia syllabus* includes both readings and videos. Each of the 15 course sessions is linked to assignments and a collection of video cases relevant to the given topic (See Figure 1 for a view of *multimedia syllabus*). Users can view these video cases linked to the syllabus in a *video viewer* (described below) or proceed directly to the *assignment workspace* (described below) to view the video cases in the context of a particular assignment.

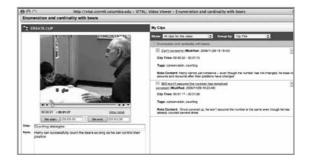Figure 1. Multimedia syllabus with links to readings, videos and assignments

Digital library

The *digital library* stores all the video cases, which are indexed by the child's pseudonym, age/grade level, math idea/content and setting. Thus, teacher candidates can, for example, view video cases along content strands to see how the content evolved between grade levels.

Video viewer

In the *video viewer*, users can not only view and review these video cases, but with a note-taking space in the *video viewer*, they can also select, annotate and save parts of video clips. These annotated and saved video segments can be repurposed later when the teacher candidates write a multimedia essay in the VITAL *assignment workspace*.

Figure 2. Video viewer with clipping and note-taking tools on the left, and saved notes on the right

Assignment workspace

The *assignment workspace* is where users work on their assignments. There are two types of assignments in VITAL: *multimedia essays and guided lesson*s. The *multimedia essays* are written in response to open-ended, exploratory questions on certain topics or concepts of early mathematics education. These *multimedia essays* consist of text combined with 'quoted' excerpts from digital videos, embedded as links in the *multimedia essays*. In order to develop their ideas and select the most relevant moments in the video clips as evidence to support their ideas, the teacher candidates must watch and analyse the relevant video cases carefully and reflect deeply on the given questions, synthesising the course discussions and readings. They cite the selected video segment (as they would text from an article or book), and explain how it is related to their ideas (see Figure 3). Completed *multimedia essays* are 'published' within the VITAL environment and thereby shared with the instructor and other students for critique and discussion.

Figure 3. Multimedia essay with video links embedded in user's text

In the *guided lessons*, as the word 'guided' denotes, the structure of the lessons creates a more guided, focused experience than the *multimedia essays*. The guided lessons we used in our courses were developed specifically to enhance teacher candidates' ability to conduct observations of and interviews with young children. The teacher candidates were guided through a series of video clips of children in observation or clinical interview settings; they were prompted to view, stop, answer a guided question, and then continue the same process with more information or more footage, simulating the experience of interacting with a child.

Implications for early childhood teacher preparation

Our experiences and those of our teacher candidates have shown that VITAL has effectively engaged teacher candidates in observation, analysis and reflection concerning real children in real classrooms, in rich and diverse contexts. VITAL has thus has prepared the teacher candidates to make informed decisions regarding early mathematics education. Next, we share what our teacher candidates thought of VITAL and their experiences with it. They reflected that VITAL was helpful particularly in the following aspects:

A video is worth more than a thousand words

'If there was no VITAL, I don't think I would have been able to analyse the situation presented well. I would have to analyse based on someone else's words which could create a different picture in my mind from what actually happened—the subtle nuances from actually seeing and hearing the interviews. It would be difficult to understand or imagine a lot of the subtle movements or facial expressions in readings, but the videos provide this image for us to interpret.'

I learned to observe closely and analyse carefully

'If it weren't for VITAL, I wouldn't have been able to hone in on my observations and obtain a razor sharp analysis. '

'I think if I did not have VITAL I would have not been able to look as closely as I did. VITAL allowed me to take a closer look and be able to pause or look at it again at my convenience … To have the opportunity to watch these videos as many times as needed and pause and reflect is great.'

I learned to make judgments based on evidence

'It was good to have the VITAL technology to strengthen our arguments/illustrate the points we were making in our papers.'

'I thought that it [VITAL] was an amazing piece of technology to let us prove and demonstrate what we were saying with video clips. Sometimes I have all these great ideas and it's very difficult to verbalise/articulate exactly what I mean all the time. Having these short clips there provided a visual accompaniment to my statements and made my essays that much more organised. Had there been no VITAL, I don't think I would have been able to support my ideas as well as I think I did.'

I gained insights into experts' thinking behind their practices

'Questions like, "what would you have done in the same situation?" at each step in the guided lesson assignment really helped me focus on that particular moment and think about the expert's thinking process underlying her interaction with the child in that specific moment. It was also helpful to hear afterwards the expert's explanation as to why she did it the way she did.'

'Dr Ginsburg was explaining his rationale for doing different things when he was working on an activity with a child in the *guided lesson* assignment. I got different perspectives on why he performed what he did/asked the questions that he did … I think it was very important because it allowed me to think about what I would have done in similar situations.'

I became aware of my own teaching practices through self-examination

'My perception of my teaching is quite different from how it actually comes across in context-seeing myself, and analysing myself in the footage was very helpful (and humbling), and made for a more meaningful assignment.'

'I was reviewing [my own] lesson, and I was able to analyse a child's reaction in a completely different light than I had at the actual time of interaction. Going over the clip several times helped me re-interpret the response, and realise [the child] had actually gotten a concept that I had previously thought she missed.'

I feel encouraged to use technology in my own classroom and school

'Thank you Professor Ginsburg for demonstrating that technology and education can be combined effectively. I was particularly discouraged after a long day at my full time job of teaching at a nursery school where I had been fielding opposition to introducing technology to the classroom … Thank you for giving me the incentive and renewed enthusiasm for supporting technology as a means for seeing things from the children's perspectives and learning from them.'

The VITAL Challenge

We also have encountered challenges while incorporating VITAL into our courses. First, in order to learn and get comfortable with the technology, both teacher candidates and college instructors, especially those who do not belong to the Nintendo generation, had to spend time getting acquainted with the technology and the concept of editing and writing with video. We recommend that a sufficient amount of time be allotted early in the course to learn about the VITAL system. Regardless of their computer savvy, all of our teacher candidates appreciated having VITAL in their courses.

'I have never played with video footage before, and this is new and exciting territory … It was a pain at first, but once I got past the fear of learning a new subject, I gained new skills which may not have been achieved otherwise.'

'It was very convenient to just log on to VITAL and view the video clips. I never had a course like this before and I thought using VITAL was such a clever idea. I felt like I was updated on the newest technology that other classes did not offer.'

Second, the viewing of the videos takes a considerable amount of time, although it would have taken much longer to observe the same behaviours in schools with actual children and teachers. Completing and reviewing work in VITAL requires a significant time commitment both on the part of the teacher candidates and the college instructors.

Conclusion

The courses described here is intended to be an example of how to guide other teacher educators in creating their own courses on early mathematics education, especially incorporating online video technology. Considering that most early childhood teacher preparation institutions require their teacher candidates to take only one course in mathematics (Ginsburg, et al., 2006), compared to several courses in language and literacy, we need a solid course to effectively prepare them if early mathematics education is to be successful.

References

Clements, D. H., & Sarama, J. (2007). Early childhood mathematics learning. In J. F. K. Lester (Ed.), *Second handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning* (pp. 461-555). New York: Information Age Publishing.

Clements, D. H., & Sarama, J. (Eds.). (2004). *Engaging young children in mathematics: Standards for early childhood mathematics education.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ginsburg, H. P., Cami, A., & Schlegel, E. (2008). *The use of video in teaching psychology and education:Theory and a case study.* Paper presented at the 'Video as a manipulative: An innovative system to transform university courses in psychology and education' symposium at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting.

Ginsburg, H. P., Jang, S., Preston, M., VanEsselstyn, D., & Appel, A. (2004). Learning to think about early childhood mathematics education: A course. In C. Greenes & J. Tsankova (Eds.), *Challenging young children mathematically* (pp. 40-56). Boston, MA: National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics.

Ginsburg, H. P., Kaplan, R. G., Cannon, J., Cordero, M. I., Eisenband, J. G., Galanter, M., et al. (2006). Helping early childhood educators to teach mathematics. In M. Zaslow & I. Martinez-Beck (Eds.), *Critical issues in early childhood professional development* (pp. 171-202). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.

Ginsburg, H. P., Lee, J. S., & Boyd, J. S. (2008). Mathematics education for young children: What it is and how to promote it. *Social Policy Report: Giving Children and Youth Development Knowledge Away, XXII*(1), 1-23.

Lee, J. S., Ginsburg, H. P., & Preston, M. D. (2007). *Analyzing videos to learn to think like an expert teacher: Early childhood mathematics courses. Beyond the journal: Young children on the web.* Retrieved 10 September 2008, http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200707/pdf/Lee.pdf

Miller, K. F., Kelly, M., & Zhou, X. (2004). Learning mathematics in China and the United States: Cross-cultural insights into the nature and course of pre-school mathematical development. In J. I. D. Campbell (Ed.), *The Handbook of Mathematical Cognition.* New York: Psychology Press.

NAEYC (2003). *State policies that promote early childhood mathematics.* Retrieved 10 September 2008, www.naeyc.org/ece/critical/pdf/math_survey.pdf

NAEYC & NCTM (2002). *Early childhood mathematics: Promoting good beginnings.* Retrieved 10 September 2008, www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/psmath.pdf

NCTM (2000). Principles and standards for school mathematics. Reston, VA: Author.

NCTM (2006). Curriculum focal points for prekindergarten through grade 8 mathematics. Reston, VA: Author.

Stevenson, H., Lee, S. S., & Stigler, J. (1986). The mathematics achievement of Chinese, Japanese, and American children. *Science, 56*, 693-699.

Bottling the good stuff:
Stories of hospitality and yarnin' in a multi-racial kindergarten

Alia Imtoual
School of Education, Flinders University

Barbara Kameniar
Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne

Debra Bradley
School of Education, Flinders University

DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLING sites in multiracial regional town contexts can often be quite challenging. This paper examines the work done in one such pre-schooling context in a medium-sized regional town where racial and ethnic tensions are high and where many families struggle with social/emotional/economic challenges. This pre-school setting has been identified in the community and within bureaucratic structures as being successful with regard to a high level of parental engagement and a positive management of racial tensions. In order to describe this success we identify a range of practices which distinguish this educational setting from others in the town. Primarily we focus on the notion of hospitality and the practice of yarnin'. This analysis arises out of ethnographic work at the preschool.

Introduction

IN EARLY 2007, we began a five-year ethnographic study based at a multi-racial kindergarten in a regional town located one hour's drive from a major Australian city. This project arose out of discussions with the district coordinator of the state government department responsible for education who identified this kindergarten as exemplary with regard to student learning and community engagement. The district coordinator invited us to undertake some work into what makes this kindergarten successful, while other educational sites in the town had been identified as facing some significant challenges around issues related to race, income and poor educational outcomes for certain identifiable groups of children. One educator familiar with the context described the town as 'a racial powder keg just waiting to go off' and each of the educational sites in the town were said to be 'hotspots for community tensions'.

The district coordinator's vision was that a study at this site may elicit some ideas on how to transfer what works there to other educational sites in the town. She said she wanted to 'bottle the good stuff'. Subsequently we began conversations at the kindergarten, where it became clear that the staff were equally as interested in sharing their stories. We formally commenced the study in the second part of 2007. A draft of this paper was sent to participants for comment, and changes were made in response. Participants have requested that their anonymity and that of the kindergarten and town be maintained.

The site for the study is a government-funded kindergarten of 61 children, approximately half of whom are Aboriginal. The teaching team is headed by a non-Aboriginal director, 'Lyn', and is made up of seven other staff members. The staff team includes a full-time teacher (in addition to Lyn), a full-time early childhood worker, three 0.5 f/t early childhood workers, a 0.5 f/t teacher and a 0.8 f/t teacher. Some of the staff are Aboriginal, some are non-Aboriginal. The staff–student ratio at this kindergarten is lower than at most other kindergartens in the state, and lower than the official formulas employed to decide upon staffing levels. This is largely the result of endless hours of grant writing, negotiations and arguments around the needs of the children, and the kindergarten's participation in a number of specialised programs. However, the staff have committed to lower child–staff ratios in spite of the additional work this entails because of their belief that this is a key characteristic of quality preschool education (Biddle, 2007) and because of how it enables quality relationships to be formed and maintained.

In our conversations with the staff at the kindergarten we have, to date, identified three broad themes that interlock to create a picture of what makes this kindergarten successful. These themes are:

1) Structural issues

2) Curriculum issues

3) Relationships.

Some of the structural issues relate to governance and forms of authority taken up within the kindergarten (Kameniar, Imtoual & Bradley, n.d., 2008), and resourcing, including funding regimes, staffing and approaches to maintenance of the property and grounds.

Curriculum issues relate to issues of engagement, participation and continuity, the inclusion of Indigenous language, the kindergarten having few explicit rules, a child-directed curriculum mediated by adults (Martin, 2007), and learning that is contextual, incidental and opportunistic.

In this paper we focus on two practices, hospitality and *yarnin'*, which relate to the third theme, relationships. This paper aims to illustrate how these two practices exemplify a broader ethos of inclusion and care that enhances the learning of all members of the kindergarten community—children, parents, teachers, support staff and incidental others. In short, these two practices are a key part of 'the good stuff' that may provide a way forward for other kindergartens and early childhood settings with similar complex issues. We commence the discussion by outlining what we mean by the term 'relationships'. We then examine some of the relational practices at the kindergarten through the lens of 'hospitality' (Derrida, 2000) before discussing the centrality of the practice of *yarnin'*.

Relationships in context

In this paper we use 'relationships' to signify negotiations between individuals as well as negotiations of individuals and groups both within, and with, social and cultural contexts (Kelley et al., 1983). We also use it to refer to interpersonal feelings of warmth and acceptance, and the values of 'caring, sharing and respect' (Townsend-Cross, 2004, p. 2).

In constructing 'relationships' in this way we draw on a number of prior studies that have examined some of the specificities of early childhood education where significant numbers of children and most of the staff have been Aboriginal. We have done this as a way of identifying what we can learn from Aboriginal approaches to early childhood education, rather than just learn about them. In using the heuristic, 'an Aboriginal approach', it is not our intention to represent 'an essentialist Aboriginal approach' (Fasoli & Ford, 2001, p. 18) to early childhood education. Such an

approach is highly problematic in any study, but is certainly compounded by the multi-racial construction of this particular site and the fact that the director is non-Aboriginal. It is also important to note that all of the staff at the kindergarten resist naming it an 'Aboriginal kindergarten', instead preferring to name it a 'government-funded and public kindergarten'.

However, the ways each of the staff approach the children and families who attend closely resembles the techniques described by writers who have undertaken research in Aboriginal contexts, where 'relationships' are described as central to successful care and learning (Fasoli & Ford, 2001; MacNaughton, 2004; Martin, 2007; Townsend-Cross, 2004). According to Townsend-Cross, Indigenous cultures are holistic and 'based on the underlying principles of *relationships and balance*. Everything and everyone is connected and balanced through relationships' (2004, p. 2). Fasoli and Ford argue that many Aboriginal parents construct the relationship between a child and an early childhood worker in a qualitatively different way than that of many non-Aboriginal parents.

> The act of giving a child over to the carer means 'I am trusting you to look out for my child and I expect you to be the main carer'. The act of taking the child from the parent means 'I personally have made a commitment to this child and will look after him until you return' (Fasoli & Ford, 2001, p. 20).

The approaches used at the research site are the result of ongoing negotiations between the Aboriginal staff and families who come to the kindergarten and the non-Aboriginal staff, who are very aware of their whiteness, including the invisible privileges conferred through this racialised category. The approaches are also negotiated with the non-Aboriginal families who choose to send their children to the kindergarten. The staff at the kindergarten work actively to create a homely atmosphere that is not just about warmth and openness but also the careful management of relationships so that the dignity of all is maintained. This homely atmosphere includes, in the first instance, hospitality.

Hospitality – the importance of invitation and the anticipation of visitation

In *Of Hospitality*, Derrida (2000) outlines relationships that may be possible between a host and a guest. He argues that these relationships are determined in one of two ways: through cultural practices (what he calls 'laws of hospitality') and through '*the* law' of hospitality. That is, '*the* law' as the categorical imperative of unlimited and unconditional hospitality. He argues that '*the* law' of hospitality precedes and gives meaning to the 'laws of hospitality' while simultaneously existing with and

relying upon culturally determined rights and duties that are always conditioned and conditional.

According to Derrida, 'laws of hospitality' are always limited and limiting. They are determined through a logic of 'invitation' which valorises the host and is always conditional. However, '*the* law' of hospitality requires a host to extend unconditional hospitality to whomever arrives. According to Derrida:

> … pure or unconditional hospitality does not consist in … an **invitation** ('I invited you, I welcome you into **my home**, on the condition that you adapt to the laws and norms of my territory, according to my language, tradition, memory, and so on'). Pure and unconditional hospitality, hospitality **itself**, opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign visitor, as a new **arrival**, nonidentifiable and unforeseeable, in short wholly other. I would call this a hospitality of **visitation** rather than **invitation** (2003, p. 128-129).

The kindergarten practises hospitality whereby families are invited to attend and welcomed when they arrive. This invitation can be structural and/or personal but it is always relational. It is structural in terms of a general openness to pre-school children that marks the state-administered kindergarten sector, which provides both general and inclusive programs for all pre-school aged children. Furthermore, it is personal in terms of openness to the differing stories that people tell about their lives and the differing stories that circulate throughout the community about this particular kindergarten.

A hospitality of *invitation* has a long history at the kindergarten. We had heard stories, before we commenced the fieldwork, of an Aboriginal early childhood teacher who would stand at the fence and call out to Aboriginal mothers as they walked past and invite them to bring their children to the kindergarten. At that time, the kindergarten was 'very middle-class' and very few Aboriginal mothers were bringing their children. There was a general feeling of mistrust for institutions within the community, not least educational institutions.

However, this hospitality of invitation is not the only form of hospitality that is practised. There is also strong evidence of a hospitality of *visitation*. That is, an openness to *receive* whoever comes into the kindergarten. It is an openness to 'the absolute, unknown, anonymous other' (Derrida, 2000, p. 25), those who arrive at the site without a known history and without an invitation (Bulley, 2006). This hospitality is a 'response to an unanticipated arrival' (Barnett, 2005, p. 13) who is welcomed and included. Nouwen describes this form of hospitality as 'real hospitality … not exclusive but inclusive … [This form of hospitality] creates space for a large variety of human experiences' (1975, p. 75).

Here there's a welcoming attitude. The parents love to come in and get involved. They are made to feel welcome. At no other kindy I've worked at do I see parents come in and have a chat or a cup of coffee. But here they do. At other places parents only come at pick-up and drop-off time and they barely speak to staff, but here everyone knows each other and they chat. Some parents will pop in just to say 'hi' or have a cuppa even when they have no other reason. (Sharon, staff member)

We have a sense of whole community. We see [the children's] brothers and sisters and we say hello. Saying hello is important. (Georgie, staff member)

Many of the families who come to the kindergarten with their children are Aboriginal; as well, many families show signs of struggling with mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues, family violence and poverty. The staff at this kindergarten are active in embracing whoever comes, regardless of the state they come in and what they come with. While this hospitality may have risks (Derrida, 2003), it allows for active engagement with the stranger as a 'somebody', rather than rendering them as the unknown other or 'nobody' (Barnett, 2005).

We have good families. They are troubled families but they are good families. (Georgie, staff member)

A commitment to unconditional hospitality is one of the practices that marks the kindergarten and its staff as so different from many other educational sites. We heard the story of one mother who telephoned the kindergarten in some distress because she had been trying to enrol her child into one of the other kindergartens in the town and had been told that there 'were no spaces available'. The mother was worried she would be unable to enrol her child anywhere. When Lyn spoke to her, it quickly became apparent that she was struggling with more than trying to locate a place for her child. Lyn invited her to the kindergarten for a 'yarn'. While talking, she told Lyn she had schizophrenia and was struggling with a variety of issues. The child was enrolled and the family embraced. When the mother responded to the official form of hospitality at the first kindergarten, she was turned away because she did not meet the unspoken conditions of entry. That is, she was not going to be easy. However, as Lyn and the other staff practise an unconditional form of hospitality, they were open to this family no matter who they were or what their story was.

When you enrol a child, you actually enrol a family. (Lyn)

After telling this mother there were no spaces for her child and she should look elsewhere, the other kindergarten subsequently enrolled other children. For Lyn, this repeated a pattern with which she had

become familiar—parents who come with problems, that is 'problem parents', are better avoided and moved on (Mattingly, 2008; Wilde, 2000). However, middle-class decorum requires a legitimate reason for moving people on. In this story the reason given was lack of space. 'Problem parents' are viewed as best avoided because they take time, emotional labour and different kinds of resources than most educational sites feel able to provide (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). This form of hospitality is conditional (Derrida, 2000, 2003). It requires the 'guest' to meet a set of predefined standards (Derrida, 2003). It is a hospitality determined through hegemonic cultural norms that circumscribes who or what is permissible, who or what is welcome (Derrida, 2003). It is an exclusive and exclusionary form of hospitality that never places the hosts at risk of becoming hostage to those who cross the threshold of their kindergarten. In addition to this, it acts counter to research that indicates how important it is to include all parents of young children in early childhood education, but particularly parents with special needs. Holistic community capacity-building programs where parents are supported are more likely to enhance the engagement and success of pre-school children (Sims et al., 2008) than constructions of 'problem parents'.

There are commonalities to who comes to occupy the subject position of 'problem parent' (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). 'Problem parents' in the regional town where the kindergarten is situated are often Aboriginal and/or poor and/or dealing with a range of complex health and family issues. They often suffer from issues associated with dislocation in a variety of forms. As people with complex issues, they enter the kindergarten and are able to locate themselves within a community. The hospitality extended to these families goes well beyond their immediate connection with the kindergarten; that is, the relationships developed at the site are deep and extend beyond the time a particular child attends the kindergarten. The hospitality practised is not a temporary or fleeting offer with an expiry date; rather it is a long-term relationship that is heavily invested in.

> *People even call from other town/cities to touch base with the kindy staff and update them on their lives or ask for advice or assistance. The kindy often know the life circumstances of large numbers of extended family members connected to the kindy. These relationships are maintained despite families changing shape and moving physical location. (Field journal)*

As one of the teachers told us, the staff at the kindergarten 'worry about [the children and their families] long after they've moved on from the kindy'. The responsibilities of the hospitality practised at this kindergarten are not bounded by time or physical location

—they are responsibilities of connections to people and communities. That is, the position of an unconditional host brings with it duties and responsibilities which cannot be abandoned once the physical visitation has ended. This reflects a renegotiation of the 'delimitations of thresholds or frontiers' (Derrida, 2000, p. 47-49).

One of the ways hospitality is established and maintained is through the rich cultural practice of *yarnin'*.

Yarnin' – the importance of knowing/ telling/hearing stories

> *We say yarnin'. Professionals say it's building community capacity. (Lyn)*

In our conversations it became apparent that the staff at the kindergarten value the practice of *yarnin'*. *Yarnin'* is an Aboriginal–English term that indicates informal but meaningful conversation. It is about sitting together and sharing stories, histories, advice, laughter and tears, and implies both active speaking and active listening. It is more than telling or retelling stories (personal stories, family stories, community stories); it is a transactional activity that involves negotiation and trust. It is democratic insofar as the stories are offered, but there is no compulsion to accept or act on what is spoken. However, through *yarnin'*, relationships, and indeed communities, are built and reinforced. *Yarnin'* is a space where thoughts and ideas can be shared and tested without shame.

In this paper 'shame' is used with both its Standard Australian English meanings and its Aboriginal–English meanings. Standard Australian English meanings refer to 'shame' as painful feelings of disgrace, ridicule, impropriety, embarrassment and humiliation. However, Aboriginal–English usages of the word have different resonances which encompass concepts of individual and collective dignity, community and family identity, 'fractured relationships' and 'broken connections'. Vallance and Tchacos (2001) argue that Aboriginal–English meanings of 'shame' encompass Standard Australian English meanings but also indicate an 'inexplicable' deep feeling that is difficult to define. This inexplicability relates to a deep fear of 'trespassing across boundaries that may be sacred' and 'a sense of being powerless and ineffectual' (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001). 'Shame' in this context is not an individuated internal feeling, but is actively disempowering and arises 'outside oneself' (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001). 'Shame' also indicates a concept of broken bonds and 'fractured relationships' (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001). *Yarnin'* acts counter to this.

Yarnin' at the kindergarten happens in different ways, at different times and between different people. Some of it is structured and planned, but most of it happens as a matter of course throughout the day. It occurs amongst the staff group, between staff and families, amongst families, between the staff and children, and amongst

the children. *Yarnin'* functions to inform others of one another's stories, to teach selves and others, and to reduce shame, as shame occurs when relationships are fractured or broken—when stories are unable to be told (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001).

Lyn told us that the staff 'know each others stories'. They see this as equally important as knowing the stories of the families and the specific stories of the children at the kindergarten. As Haig-Brown states, 'stories convey knowledge within the complexity of human affairs, expanding an understanding of other people and our sense of community with them' (1992, p. 302). Time and again the staff emphasised that knowing the stories and the histories of children, families and their communities is crucial to being able to meet the educational needs of those children and their families.

Teachers and education professionals are often 'privy to many aspects of family life that [elsewhere remains] private knowledge' (Brennan, 2007, p. 2) and it is important that this knowledge is treated respectfully. It is used to build stronger families and stronger communities, and at this kindergarten staff make every effort to know the stories of the individual children and their families in order to do so:

> *I understand my children – I know their stories and their backgrounds. (Lyn)*

> *We know the stories of the families. (Georgie)*

Knowing each other's stories was emphasised as important because of the way it enabled the building of a deep understanding and trust amongst the staff group. During our observations, we noticed that the depth of connection amongst the staff meant that there was an implicit understanding and anticipation of one another's needs (emotional as well as professional). The staff make a conscious commitment to connect and re-connect with each other and everyone else associated with the kindergarten, through storying their lives.

> *Kate came to work late and not feeling well. Lyn greeted her with an extended hug. (Field journal)*

> *On another occasion Kate came to work with a headache. Georgie sat and yarned with her and used pressure points on her hands to try and relieve the pain. (Field journal)*

Yarnin' helps the group at the kindergarten to remain strong. Through *yarnin'*, the knowledge and wisdom of the elders in the community is shared and utilised. The younger women speak to the nannas, who listen closely before speaking themselves, and the younger women listen in turn.

> *A mum with tiny baby in arms came in looking distressed. Went into corner to chat with Lyn and Georgie. Got hugs and a long chat. Left looking happier. (Field journal)*

Sharing stories allows not only for the strengthening of relationships but also for the '[exploration] of others' family structures and the mechanisms structuring these relationships' (Brennan, 2007, p. 4). Brennan's work in childcare centres argues that such sharing is crucial to the development of positive communities because it offers opportunities for 'learning [because] just being there involves picking up values, skills and mannerisms in an incidental fashion throughout close involvement with a socialising agent and cultural models of learning' (2007, p. 5).

At the kindergarten there is an explicit understanding that silence is linked to shame and a feeling of 'powerlessness' (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001). *Yarnin'* breaks the cycle of silence and shame through acknowledging that difficult issues need to be confronted and solutions worked out in supportive networks. As Lyn told us, 'we take the shame away' and 'parents deserve the truth; if there's issues there we deal with them'. The staff told us that families appreciate their honesty even on traumatic occasions when mandatory reports have to be made. Lyn said she makes a practice of having a yarn with the relevant family so they understand why it has been necessary to seek additional support. Doing this allows the kindergarten staff to continue supporting the family beyond the report. Indeed, one of the fathers commented to Lyn after a yarn of this nature that 'communication is the key'.

Staff at the kindergarten work hard to ensure there is no shame attached to any personal, community or family situation. Even very difficult issues are approached openly and with honesty and good spirit. Families are never embarrassed or humiliated by the staff, irrespective of what situation needs to be dealt with. For instance, Lyn told of the time she spoke to one dad who collected his children regularly in the family car but who also sometimes drank too much. She approached him and said, 'if I think you've maybe had a few too many drinks, do you mind if I drive you and the kids home?', and dad was fine with that. She approached this issue matter-of-factly. She did not cast aspersions on his parenting skills or his commitment to his children; she approached the situation from a care and safety perspective. She did not embarrass the father with her knowledge of his drinking habits and was not judgemental about his choices. She treated him with respect. There was no shame in the *yarnin'*. Such an approach can be described as '*yarning* for outcomes' (Burchill & Higgins, 2005, p. 8). That is, this kind of *yarnin'* is about working together to create solutions to problems and to share knowledge, experience and understandings in a way that does not 'speak down' (Burchill & Higgins, 2005, p. 8) to anyone. This commitment to 'no shame *yarnin''* is practised in all manner of situations at the kindergarten. Staff told us of the kindy's approach to nits as a way of exemplifying this practice.

Everything here is open. For example we talk about nits. No shame. Kids get a treatment. They talk about it and it's okay. (Sharon)

It started because of one of our grannies who is blind and old and looking after a number of kids. One of the kids got nits but granny couldn't see to do the treatment. Lyn noticed and so we said to granny, 'Do you mind if we give them [the kid] a treatment. She was so relieved and said, 'Oh that would be lovely, thanks.' So we did, and other families saw us doing the treatment and asked if we could do their kid too. And so we did. And no one is shamed. No one felt embarrassed or had to hide the fact that there were nits. It was a fact and it was being treated. End of story. That's how we do things here. (Georgie)

Understanding that 'connection and relatedness is what makes communication possible' (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001) without shame and allows for the discussion of a range of difficult issues at the kindergarten.

Many educational sites put up barriers that stop children succeeding. Children become identified as 'problem children' without questions ever being asked about why they behave in the ways they do. Lyn and Georgie said they often feel frustrated when children who have been successful at kindergarten transition to school and are swiftly labelled 'problem children' or 'failures'. They see that knowing the child's story and the family's background is important in being able to tailor a learning environment to suit the child and the community they come from (Roberts & Powers, 1998).

We were told the story of one child who was repeatedly being 'excluded' from school after having been successful in the kindergarten. Lyn was asked to investigate the cycle of behaviour and consequence by his frustrated mother. Lyn asked the school 'Do you know Luke's story?' Not all educational sites understand the significance of knowing the stories of the children, their families and communities. In the busy-ness of their days they tend to live in the eternal 'now' so they are constantly dealing with immediate issues. In Luke's situation, the school is identifying behaviour that is inappropriate or unsafe, and dealing with such behaviour quickly becomes the paramount priority in the overcrowded day. Finding time for a yarn where the 'bigger picture' can emerge is often difficult, and once a cycle of misbehaviour and punishment has begun, so too has a cycle of mistrust and shame. Behrendt argues that 'the imposition of …punitive measures in an already dysfunctional situation will exacerbate stress in a household' (2008, p. 8) and thus add to spiral of shame, misbehaviour and mistrust. Into this context stories about complex lives and personal circumstances can be (mis)read by educational sites as *excuses* for inappropriate behaviour rather than as root *causes*.

Often situations involving complex families and their children are treated like individualised instances of inappropriateness rather than as symptomatic of structural challenges. This approach then creates shame as it locates inappropriateness in the choices of individuals who 'should know better' and who ought to be punished for their bad decision-making. In this manner shame operates as 'a form of social control that directly targets personal dignity' (Vallance & Tchacos, 2001). *Yarnin'*, however, breaks the cycle of individualised shame and problems because it flattens out the power structures where stories are shared and put 'out there' to be talked about/through, and solutions are negotiated collectively rather than people looking for excuses or ways to blame others. This marks a difference in how stories in vulnerable communities have often been shared. As Indigenous participants state, 'They take our stories, end a project, and then we are left to deal with what is left' (Burchill & Higgins, 2005, p. 8). However, through *yarnin'*, stories at the kindergarten are not commodities to be taken, stolen or given; rather they are treasured, shared and respected. Research by Roberts and Powers (1998) argues that such moments are crucial collaborations important to building a sense of 'community'. These moments of sharing are not about 'putting the other person down' but more often about 'identify[ing] where we can go next' (Roberts & Powers, 1998).

The staff recounted a story about a time they had observed children gathering leaves from a tree in the garden and then performing elaborate procedures with found objects such as a length of discarded hosepipe. The staff sat with the children and asked them to explain what they were doing. The children explained that they were 'mullin' the yarndie'—that is, preparing marijuana for smoking through a bong. The children were imitating, through play, tasks performed by adults in their lives[1]. Lyn had taken a photograph of the children playing 'mullin' the yarndie' which she took with her on a home visit. Over a cuppa she showed the photograph to the mother of the children and they had a yarn about what happened. Lyn said that the *yarnin'* was without shame; she did not go to accuse the mother of being negligent or of behaving inappropriately but to share with her a story about her children. Through *yarnin'* they were able to share ideas about how families can manage boundaries around adult choices and behaviours that are positive for children to imitate. It was also a time to share pride in the observational skills, technological abilities and resourcefulness of these children—factors that in other contexts may have been overshadowed by the 'inappropriateness' of their chosen play.

[1] The staff asked the children, 'Who can smoke yarndie? Can kids smoke yarndie?' The children responded with scorn saying, 'Nooooo, only grown ups can'.

Conclusion

This paper marks the beginning of our long-term ethnographic work in a multi-racial regional kindergarten. Our initial engagements centre on the questions: What is the good stuff that makes this kindergarten successful in a context where other educational sites are not? What is it that needs to be bottled? What *can* be bottled?

When we began the project we were a little concerned because we thought we might discover that the 'good stuff' related to individual people or individual combinations of people. This would have posed a significant problem for the generalisablility of the study because you cannot 'bottle' people! This initial concern arose from stories circulating in the community about the kindergarten, in which much of the success was attributed to Lyn and her influence. While we agree that Lyn and her team are important, we argue that successful pre-schooling is more than just people (even specific people). It is also about the choices those people make and the actions they take. Therefore, we argue, ways of interacting, ways of building relationships, approaches to curriculum and ways of negotiating structural issues are things that can be 'bottled'. With specific reference to this paper, we argue that a disposition towards a hospitality of visitation, along with a hospitality of invitation, and *yarnin'*, are identifiable practices that can be bottled and shared amongst educational sites. These practices emphasise a community-oriented approach to pre-schooling in which complex families are valued, embraced and actively involved in the successful education of their children.

References

Barnett, C. (2005). Ways of relating: Hospitality and the acknowledgement of otherness. *Progress in Human Geography, 29*(1), 5-21.

Behrendt, L. (2008). *What follows sorry*. UTS Speaks, unpublished speech.

Biddle, N. (2007). Indigenous Australians and preschool education: Who is attending? *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 32*(3), 9-16.

Brennan, M. (2007). Beyond child care – How else could we do this?: Sociocultural reflections on the structural and cultural arrangements of contemporary Western child care. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 32*(1), 1-9.

Bulley, D. (2006). Negotiating ethics: Campbell, ontopology and hospitality. *Review of International Studies, 32*, 645-663.

Burchill, M., & Higgins, D. (2005). Indigenous community development, Australian Institute of Family Studies, www.aifs.gov.au. *Education, 19*(1), 96-115.

Derrida, J. (2003). Autoimmunity: Real and symbolic suicides. A dialogue with Jacques Derrida. In *Philosophy in a time of terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (pp. 85-136). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (2000). *Of hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond* (Rachel Bowlby, trans.). Stanford; Stanford University Press.

Fasoli, L., & Ford, M. (2001). Indigenous early childhood educators' narratives: Relationships, not activities. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 26*(3), 18-22.

Haig-Brown, C. (1992). Choosing border work. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 19*(1), 96-116.

Kameniar, B., Imtoual, A., & Bradley, D. (2008). *'The Invisible Bus': Stories of leadership and community building in a racially and culturally diverse pre-school*. Paper presented at the International conference on Educational Leadership in Cultural Diversity and Globalization, Phuket, Thailand.

Kameniar, B., Imtoual, A., & Bradley, D. (n.d.). 'Mullin the Yarndi' and other wicked problems at a multiracial early childhood educational site in regional Australia. *Educational Policy*, In press.

Kelley, H. H., Berscheid, E., Christensen, A., Harvey, J. H., Huston, T. L., Levinger, G., et al. (1983). *Close relationships*. New York: W.H. Freeman.

MacNaughton, G. (2004). Children, staff and parents: Building respectful relationships in New Zealand and Australian early childhood contexts – the Australian context. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 29*(1), 1-7.

Martin, K. (2007). 'Here we go 'round the broombie tree': Aboriginal early childhood realities and experiences in early childhood services. In J. Ailwood (Ed.), *Early childhood in Australia: Historical and comparative contexts* (pp. 18-34). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Sprintprint.

Mattingly, C. (2008). Reading minds and telling tales in a cultural borderland. *Ethos, 36*(1), 136-154.

Nouwen, H. J. M. (1975). *Reaching out: The three movements of the spiritual life (1st edn.)*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Roberts, D., & Powers, K. (1998). 'Making research count at Minimbah Aboriginal preschool, Armidale NSW', AARE conference proceedings. Retrieved 29 July 2008, www.aare.edu.au/98pap/pow98170.htm

Sims, M., Saggers, S., Hutchins, T., Guilfoyle, A., Targowska, A., & Jackiewicz, S. (2008). Indigenous child care—Leading the way. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 33*(1), 56-60.

Townsend-Cross, M. (2004). Indigenous Australian perspectives in early childhood education. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 29*(4), 1-6.

Vallance, R., & Tchacos, E. (2001). 'Research: A cultural bridge', AARE Conference proceedings. Retrieved 29 July 2008, www.aare.edu.au/01pap/val01102.htm

Vincent, C., & Tomlinson, S. (1997). Home–school relationships: 'The swarming of disciplinary mechanisms'? *British Educational Research Journal, 23*(3), 361-377.

Wilde, J. (2000). *An educator's guide to difficult parents*. Huntington, N.Y.: Kroshka Books.

The Australian Early Development Index, who does it measure: Piaget or Vygotsky's child?

Joseph Agbenyega

Faculty of Education, Monash University

SEVERAL PSYCHOLOGICAL INSTRUMENTS have been developed and used over the years to measure various domains of child development. The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is a current assessment tool being used as a community measure of young children's development. It measures the following domains: Physical health and wellbeing; Social competence; Emotional maturity; Language and cognitive skills; Communication skills and general knowledge. This article examines the tacit nuanced construction of the child within the AEDI, and critiques this within a cultural-historical theoretical perspective of child development. The paper argues that the AEDI image of the child has its roots in Piagetian and Gesellian stage theories of universality. This position is juxtaposed with more encompassing views held in the Vygotskian tradition. The paper advances arguments for an alternative consideration of child development that does not prescribe vulnerability to certain groups of children.

Introduction

IN THIS PAPER I WILL explore three different theoretical traditions of development—Piaget, Gesell and Vygotsky—focusing on the root belief structures. Following this effort I will analyse how each theoretical orientation shapes the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI). I will then concentrate on the contribution of Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory to reframe a more comprehensive view of looking at child development and measurement. The purpose for doing this is to tease out the tacit deficit model in the AEDI and how its universal usage creates and prescribes vulnerability to certain groups of children.

Theoretical perspectives on child development

This section begins by unpacking the important components of Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, followed by Gesell's and Vygotsky's as these relate to the AEDI. The choice of Piaget's and Gesell's philosophical positions are important to this paper because these traditions often provide the framework for constructing psychometric tests for measuring school readiness from a maturational and biological perspective, as does the AEDI. On the other hand,

Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory is considered in this paper as it provides an alternative and a broader philosophical framework beyond a maturational and biological perspective for thinking about child development and school readiness.

Views about development are situated within broader systems of theoretical knowledge. Damon (1998) argues that the field of child development within the last century was dominated by 'three grand systems': Piaget, psychoanalysis and learning theory (p. xv). Jean Piaget is renowned for his work on cognitive development of children. His work focused on the processes that allow children to know, understand and think about the world. Piaget's key contribution to the field of child development is his notion that all children pass through a fixed sequence, through a series of universal stages of cognitive development. He emphasised that each stage of the developmental continuum is associated with an increase in quantity of information children acquire as well as the quality of knowledge and understanding that come to them. Piaget used *assimilation* and *accommodation* as basic principles to ground and explain his theoretical ideas. 'Assimilation' in his theoretical context refers to a situation where children use their current state of cognitive development to experience and understand the world (Daniels, 2001; Piaget, 1929). On the other

hand, 'accommodation' refers to changes in existing ways of children's thinking in response to experiences of new stimuli (Berk, 2006). Piaget did not make a distinction about how children from different cultures assimilate or accommodate in the developmental continuum. It can be argued that his theory considered child development as occurring linearly and universally in stages across all cultures (White, Hayes & Livesey, 2005). This is reiterated by Lee and Walsh (2001) who state that Piaget's theory perceives every child as developing the same way 'across time' and place with just minor adjustments (p. 74).

Piaget's particular insight on child development centred on the role of maturation in children's increasing capacity to understand their world (White, Hayes & Livesey, 2005). This implies that psychological and biological maturity of children determines their ability to complete certain tasks (Piaget, 1929). Although Piaget perceived children as active participants in their environment, the universality of his theory rejects cultural diversity and how varied cultural artefacts and motives (Fleer, 2008) impact on children's development differently.

Another prominent authority on child development, Arnold Gesell, was steered by maturational perspectives of development. Gesell did not dispute the influence of external factors such as the environment on child development; however he emphasised biological (intrinsic) factors as the main determinants of development. He argues that maturation is the key regulatory mechanism for development (Dalton, 2005), and that environmental factors may play a screening or selective role determining which of competing potencies are to be realised (Dalton, 2005; Lerner, 1998). Gesell believes that all normal children go through the same sequences, but at their own pace. Gesell was very passionate about developmental sequencing, what happens at what stage of development and the processes that support this (Gesell & Ilg, 1949; White, Hayes & Livesay, 2005). His conceptual term 'maturation' implies the process and mechanism by which genes direct the development of intrinsically determined age-related changes (White, Hayes & Livesay, 2005). Although Gesell acknowledges variation in the rate of development, he emphasised that all children progress through the same universal path of development (Gesell & Ilg, 1949; White, Hayes & Livesay, 2005). As such his theory provided the basis for comparative assessment for evaluating the developmental status of individual children in comparison with others (White, Hayes & Livesay, 2005).

Lev Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory de-emphasises stage and universality and accentuates that a full understanding of development is impossible without taking into account the culture in which children develop (Fleer, 2008). He argues that children acquire understanding of the world through their problem-solving interactions with adults and other children. As children play and cooperate with others, they learn what is important in their society and, at the same time, advance cognitively in their understanding of the world (Fleer, 2008; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1987). Thus it can be argued that Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory accentuates cultural views of child development (Berk, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1987). Cultural–historical theory provides a more comprehensive view of perceiving and focusing on development as both cultural and biological. Cultural–historical theory stresses the influence of cultural elements of shared beliefs, values, knowledges, skills and different ways of doing things that shape the life of the next generation (children) (D'Andrade, 1984; Lee & Walsh, 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory unveils culturally specific determination of development that distances itself from universality (Berk, 2006; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). He posits that children's social situations contain cultural variables that are continually changing in space and time (Rogoff, 2003), that must be rigorously explored in order to fully understand children's development. Hedegaard (2008) reiterates that children's development takes place in a dialectical relationship in which the child itself determines which environmental characteristics are relevant and what represents a noticeable stimulus that would trigger a particular behaviour; and their behaviour in turn continuously affects the environment through their activities. This notion of a dialectical (interactional) relationship between environmental and cultural factors and biology as shaping individual development provides a framework beyond the mechanistic (linear) conception of development proposed by Piaget and Gesell.

Key differences and/or similarities

Like Piaget, Gesell had roots in biological science, and perceived cognitive development as predominantly biological (Kincheloe, 2008). Also, both Piaget's and Gesell's theories suggest that processes and achievements are universal in all children regardless of circumstance or culture; that the individual person is the main unit of concern; and that development is progressive or that each child 'improves' over time through a set sequence of positive changes (Kincheloe, 2008). These perceptions influence the construction and use of psychometric tests used to measure the universality of children's development, which take little notice of the tacit cultural factors that compose individual identities and behaviours. Similarly, the root of the AEDI can be traced to the fundamental tenets of Piaget's and Gesell's concept of school readiness.

The next section examines how the child is measured on the AEDI and how the processes adopted compare to

Piaget's and Gesell's theories of universality. Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory is then juxtaposed and used as the basis for advancing arguments against the current way in which school readiness and child development is positioned and measured by the AEDI.

The AEDI

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) is an offspring of the Early Development Index (EDI) developed by Offord Centre for Child Studies in Canada. The development of the AEDI has involved three stages: modification of the Canadian EDI by testing the EDI for Australia; refining the EDI instrument for Australia; and pilot testing the Australian EDI. The AEDI, which became operational in 2004, is now at the third stage of validation and cycle 2 testing (2007–10). The instrument is being implemented nationally by the Centre for Community Child Health in partnership with the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. All teachers of children in their first year of formal full-time schooling whose parents have given informed consent (Sayers et al., 2007) are eligible to complete the AEDI.

The AEDI currently tests five definitive domains of child development—which are closely linked to predictors of good adult health, education and social outcomes—by asking first grade teachers to complete an online questionnaire (both nominal and Likert Scales) of about 100 questions related to: Physical health and wellbeing; Social competence; Emotional maturity; Language and cognitive skills; Communication skills and general knowledge. Sample questions on physical wellbeing read: 'Is independent in toileting habits most of the time? Is well coordinated?' Examples of language and cognitive skills questions are: 'Ability to use language effectively in English? Ability to tell a story?' Some of the social and emotional questions read: 'Is eager to play with a new toy; demonstrate self control?' The AEDI is *not* designed to:

- diagnose children with specific learning disabilities or areas of developmental delay
- recommend children who should be placed in special education categories
- indicate who should receive extra classroom assistance or whether children should be held back a grade
- recommend specific teaching approaches for individual children and/or reflect the performance of the school or the quality of teaching.

Its purpose is to provide information about how communities have supported children before school and to provide information to every community about how their local children are developing at the time they start school (Sayers et al., 2007).

The AEDI results are provided to communities in the form of an:

> 'AEDI Community Profile, which include[s] background information about the participating schools and children, and the AEDI results, in both table and map format. In addition, the Community Profile also include[s] geographic maps that display the distribution of socio-economic, demographic, health and education factors obtained from a range of national or state data sources. The socio-demographic maps use the same suburb or area boundaries as the AEDI maps.' (Sayers et al., 2007, p. 5)

The results, which use colour shades from light green to deep green, categorise communities at five levels, from least vulnerable to most vulnerable. This enables communities to determine the level of children's vulnerability, so as to plan the best future for them. Although individual AEDI student records are not available, schools can access a school report showing the percentage of students in their Prep (first year of school) cohort doing well developmentally, and the percentage considered developmentally vulnerable across the five developmental domains (Sayers et al., 2007). However, cultural psychologists have argued that the application of dominant grand developmental theories that focused on biology and universality ignore the influence of culture in the developmental process (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Miller, 1999; Shweder et al., 1998), and that development is far more than just biology. It is 'the process of growing into a culture' (Lee & Walsh, 2001, p. 80). In this regard, I argue that the measurement of child readiness in one institutional setting such as a school is problematic and would not provide sufficient information on how children in a particular community are truly developing.

Pathology of the AEDI

Reflection

Since the introduction of the AEDI, a number of communities in Australia have been identified and placed on the vulnerability continuum. 'Vulnerable' in this sense implies the population of Australian children whose statistical figures are not comparable to Western-centric norms of child development, which is theorised in stage and universal developmental tradition of Piaget (Piaget, 1929) and maturational view of Gesell (Kincheloe, 2008).

Inappropriate theorising of development, and assessment procedures that carry a universal view of child development, position children as deficits and results in over-representation of 'at risk' children and communities (Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). Similarly, Gonzalez-Mena (2008) posits that the use

of achievement discrepancy models for determining specific difficulties contributes to the disproportionate minority representation and leads to categorisation for special education programs (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). The AEDI assumes a universal developmental approach to child development that considers all children as developing in the same way and through specific stages, targeting what children are not doing well rather than their strengths. A universal view of development adopts a linear medical–biological model in which child development is measured only as a verifiable statistic and thus overlooks the interactive relationships that occur between the child and his/her social environment (Bloch, 1991; Burman, 1994; Cannella, 1997; Jipson, 1991; Kessler, 1991; Kincheloe, 2008).

The AEDI assessment tool assumes that all children develop the measured domains in a similar set of universal steps following age norms (Piaget, 1929). This notion regards development as an individualistic process tailored to a child's biological clock that is determined by his/her direct interaction with a separate space and time. It suggests that children are captives of biology and science, and being a prisoner of biology and science implies attaining developmental milestones at the same age (Daniels, 2001; Loreman, 2007). This view disregards individualistic culture and celebrates biological and cultural universality. Aligning to this concept is to view all children 'irrespective of context to follow a standard sequence of biological stages that constitute a path to full realisation or a ladder-like progression to maturity' (Dahlberg et al., 1999, p. 46). In sharp contrast, in the cultural–historical tradition, children exist in a context located within the wider society. They are constitutive of the culture and context in which they are located (Lee & Johnson, 2007) and cannot be so separated and measured only in schools.

Vulnerability, which is used to describe communities of children who fall short of the normative developmental milestones on the key AEDI variables, constructs pejorative identities for children and communities. It is theoretically flawed when articulated through cultural–historical lenses, as the AEDI currently fails to consider how children represent and make meaning of the events that take place outside traditional institutions such as home, online community and family parties. The ways that teachers use the knowledge gained about children in the school setting to supply responses to the AEDI variables concur with mechanistic views of development like Piaget and Gesell. Such views maintain that the world is represented by symbols that are material in some biological manner and can be quantified statistically. This is in sharp contrast to the views held by interpretive psychologists like Vygotsky, who consider development more in terms of an interaction between biology and culture and that development is a very complex phenomenon that cannot

be separated from sociocultural and political context or situation-specific intentions, moods and meaning constructions (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 6). In this regard the notion of child readiness, or how a community of children are developing, cannot be accomplished by only studying quantitatively measured behaviour of groups of individuals in school settings that can then be generalised universally to communities. The AEDI approach positions teachers as unitary observers and assessors who are unlikely to see beyond their own value positions. As the assessment is relative to what takes place under the teacher's gaze, there is a tendency to overlook the competency level of each child relative to their sociocultural settings, and to consider classrooms as the only locales where children exhibit their developmental traces (Chung & Walsh, 2000).

The AEDI assumes that there is an objective common stage and culture that all children should attain and that 'some pieces of knowledge are essential learning, being pre-requisites for later success in school and in life' (Loreman, 2007, p. 8). Should all children respect, socialise, eat and communicate in the same way? Should all communities have their children behaving in the same way irrespective of the cultural–historical context of knowing and being human? What about children from cultures that do not value toys and play? What about children from cultures that prefer to eat with other children from the same bowl instead of eating from individual plates? Would there be something developmentally 'wrong' with those children? All children have different storylines as a mechanism through which cultural meanings and cultural ways of being are preserved, perpetuated and enacted (Postman, 1989). Thus it is problematic and incoherent when children from different cultures are measured with European-centric storylines such as the AEDI. Bruner (1990) posits that narratives enable people to bring coherence and identity to otherwise 'chaotic experience' (p. 128). Similarly, Postman (1989) notes that through storylines we construct theories about how we are constitutive of the world and how it works.

To a large extent the mechanistic and prescriptive variables on the AEDI construct the child as the centre of the world, and development as an idiosyncratic process that happens through children's 'direct encounters with the world rather than a process mediated through vicarious encounters with it in interacting and negotiating with others' (Bruner, 1986, p. 85). This means that children must follow the same biological sequence of development and any deficit (discrepancy) is viewed as vulnerability (susceptible to failure). Do teachers have all the cultural lenses through which to measure children? Whose cultural tools are being used for the measurement? Does institutional-based information provide sufficient justification to put communities into 'boxes of vulnerability'? On the

contrary, instead of looking for within-child deficits as evidence of a vulnerability, cultural–historical theory decentres the child and targets broader and more contextual sociocultural factors by considering day-to-day interpersonal and institutional factors that may impact children's development (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Lee & Johnson, 2007; Loreman, 2007; Malaguzzi, 1993; Vygotsky, 1987).

Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds develop and experience their environments in different and unique ways (Klingner et al., 2005). Vygotsky argued that failure to acknowledge the dominant role played by culture on development results in those who study child development drifting into the polar camps of behaviourism, stage and universality, which profoundly compromise knowing about children (Fleer, 2008; Hedegaard, 2008). A cultural–historical perspective of development recognises the significance of the dialectical (interactive) relationship between individuals and their cultural societies (Hedegaard, 2008). Cultural–historical theory share[s] a common awareness of behavior and development as interactive elements in a fluid and changing interplay (Pence, 1988, p. xxiii). Importantly, 'culture, as in social heritage and cultural tools, is a determinative complement of genotype that shapes human psychosocial differentiation in the direction of a given people's cultural meaning systems' (Nsamenang, 2008, p. 1). In its critical sense the AEDI ignores the dialectical processes by which culture and biology co-construct development (Shweder, 1995), and the differences in the behavioural characteristics, intelligences, desirable developmental outcomes and child status that are valued and promoted by different peoples in different spaces and times.

Rogoff (2003), studying the cultural nature of development, posits that the thought of young children handling knives makes many Western parents quiver, yet toddlers in parts of Africa safely use machetes. Similarly, infants in middle-class communities in the United States are often expected to sleep alone by the time they are only a few months old, while Mayan children typically share their mother's bed through their toddler years (Rogoff, 2003). Therefore, to understand how childhood is supported, constrained and constructed in any community it is important not to view development progressing linearly, but for it to be captured by a set of measuring tools at one locality such as a school.

The very notion of familiar developmental milestones—such as the ability to sleep independently, walk and read, and climb stairs at certain ages; share toys, respect and eat in certain ways—reflects European Australian middle-class culture (Rogoff, 2003; Shweder, 1995). This suggests that it is likely that Indigenous, Asian and African children in Australia will relate differently, share

things differently, socialise differently and thus perform differently on the AEDI. As their performance may not meet the expectation of teachers who represent the Western-dominant middle-class in Australia, their communities are more likely to receive vulnerability labels.

It can be argued that the AEDI as a mechanistic measuring tool demeans the complex nature of thought and behaviour. Yet thought and behaviour is not simply a procedure that follows rules and instructions. They are influenced by numerous cultural, sociopolitical and economic forces that form human existence (Hedegaard, 2008). In light of the contribution of culture to development, I argue that the AEDI, as a psychological instrument for determining vulnerability of a community of children, is quite problematic when considered in terms of the infinite supply of observational contexts that children traverse. If teachers who rate children on the AEDI view children's particular psychological phenomenon in light of different institutional settings and cultural contexts they may see children in entirely new ways. They would recognise that children and communities positioned as less or more vulnerable are not true representations of reality. Such communities or cohorts of children are simply defined without due consideration to the different values, beliefs, and social relationships to the political, economic and cultural climate, and its roles in their lives. The understanding that child development is 'a process of participation in dynamic cultural communities' (Rogoff, 2003, p. 77) rejects the deficit model of singularity where children are measured with others and subjected to vulnerability categorisations. I argue that the AEDI approach does not reflect the complexity of child development enshrined in the cultural–historical tradition. Failure to recognise this leads to categorisation of children into single cages of degrees of vulnerability defined by the five colour codes in AEDI reports.

Alternative progressive view

In contrast to grand developmental stage theories, a cultural–historical perspective of child development is taking root (see, for example, Daniels, 2001; Fleer, 2008, Hedegaard, 2008, Rogoff, 2003). In this view child development is considered more as 'dynamic interactions people experience with the specific characteristics of the changing cultural contexts within which they are embedded' (Lerner, 1998, p. 16). Viewing child development as a cultural–historical exercise is to perceive children as developing in 'the multiple and integrated levels of organisation' (Lerner 1998, p. 2) such as family, church, community centre, school and online community. Such conceptualisation enables us to recognise children's identity and reconstructs them from 'vulnerable' individuals to promising and

competent individuals who are developing in relation to their cultural contexts in time and space. This is possible when cultures provide opportunities for all children and allow the full participation in appropriate cultural and social activities. This approach offers us the opportunity to interrogate dialectically the developmental processes as a consequence of institutional collective function rather than describing children's development solely from a classroom point of view (Daniels, 2001; Hedegaard, 2008; Lerner, 1998; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005). It means that we perceive development as being influenced by both biology and culture in an interactive way. When viewed from a cultural–historical point of view, culture is the most significant system within which development occurs (Lee & Walsh, 2001). Building on Vygotsky's work, Bruner (1986) emphasises that knowing how best children are developing cannot be separated from the cultural contexts in which the individual child is located. He reiterated that development cannot be free from culture and that:

> A culture free theoretical position is not a wrong claim, but an absurd one as the plasticity of the human genome is such that there is no unique way in which it is realised, no way that is independent of opportunities provided by the culture into which an individual is born. (Bruner, 1986, p. 135)

For us to understand this very position, it is important to conceptualise culture and the social as situated. Shweder et al. (1998) perceive culture as the 'custom complex' that honours both the 'symbolic and behavioural inheritances' (p. 867). The handed-down traditions, ways of knowing, and tacit and overt characteristics, represent the symbolic inheritance or cultural community; whereas the routines established by family and social traditions represent behavioural inheritance. The implication is that cultural–historical theory pays attention to the thinking and acting processes of individuals within a cultural group. Rogoff (2003) advises that perceiving culture as a body with a clear-cut boundary is misleading and unhelpful, since its boundary extends beyond nationality, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic class, which often functions as '"social address" boxes or identity categories' (p. 78).

Perceiving children as members of a cultural community implies that we recognise them as members who co-construct a shared reality and not as deficit players with deviations that need to be fixed (Shweder, 1996). The AEDI, however, equates culture with superficial aspects of the cultural community, such as food, clothing and respect. Rogoff (2003) argued that this view of culture 'creates issues of variability within groups, overlapping involvements in different communities, and the complexities of subdividing categorisation systems' (p. 78). Analysis of what the AEDI explores about children does not reflect the complexity of children's

cultural identities and the way they develop. We need to recognise that culture is more than just a bundle of traits. It is composed of shared values and moral principles. Because the AEDI adheres to a traditional conception of development, as discussed earlier in this paper, it over-generalises children within their cultural community and provides little information about how they are developing relative to other settings in which they traverse.

Moving from disempowerment to empowerment

Although the current purpose of the AEDI is to enable communities to support their children to be 'better' ready for school, its philosophical underpinning disempowers the child. Some form of child constructions can empower or disempower children. The cultural–historical approach deals with the thinking processes, ways of knowing, values and ethos that help sustain a community's continual existence and development (Shweder et al. 1998), those who ascribe to this tradition perceive children as competent—they have their individual capabilities that make them researchers and discoverers of knowledge. The child developing in culture does not mean culture engulfs the universal child; it empowers and complements the development of the child. It facilitates and provides the compass for the individual child to participate appropriately in his/her cultural community. Since the cultural–historical perspective of development is mutually constitutive, cultural changes shape the individual and they in turn shape their cultural settings and community relations. Thus Vygotsky's cultural–historical theory positions the child as historical, rejects the external and perceives child development as situated within time and space. This notion is supported by Rogoff (2003) who has indicated that, in the cultural–historical tradition, development is best understood by examining the interactive systems within everyday cultural life. Institutions change over time, as do the interactive elements within culture. It is not therefore helpful to see culture as historically static or development of children as regulated within rigid stages. Seeing it in this way robs the individual child of power and identity.

On the social competence and wellbeing domain for instance, the AEDI seeks information about children such as: 'Child plays, gets along with others and shares, and is self-confident'. These items disconnect extensively from the sociocultural perspective and are heavily connected to Piaget's egocentric child, which conjures a negative image of children as unsociable, selfish and self-centred, who are not able to share with others (Loreman, 2007). If children are constructed as vulnerable through the administration of a single quantitative instrument, they are positioned as

powerless because it reflects a narrowly focused child development, and defines children's cultural community only in terms with their connection with teachers and schooling. It does not consider the extended sense of community relations and how it is constitutive of child development (Lee & Walsh, 2004). It shows that development is occurring passively, influenced by only genetics (Kincheloe, 2008). Since individuals who are constructed as vulnerable suffer the often debilitating consequences of their construction (Persuade, 2000) and become further marginalised, we need to empower them by recognising them as active constituents in multiple — rather than single — cultural communities, which often have competing practices and values.

This requires a significant shift in concept beyond universal notions of child development in which dominant theoretical perspectives of child development become deep-seated folk psychologies (Bruner, 1996). Folk psychologies induce us to design and assess child development on folk assumptions. Bruner argues that, 'just as we are steered in ordinary interaction by our folk psychology, so we are steered in the activity of helping children learn about the world by notions of folk pedagogy' (p. 46); notions which are the taken taken-for-granted practices that emanate from intensely entrenched cultural philosophy about how children develop and gain knowledge (Lee & Walsh, 2004). The AEDI, like all other measuring instruments, needs to be challenged and problematised, but only after it is first understood and respected.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the AEDI has been constructed in last century's grand universal theories of child development, which are inclined to developmental milestones and maturational perspectives in the Piagetian and Gesellian traditions. From this paper I posit that the AEDI measures Piaget's child because it does not consider the centrality of cultural–historical theory in children's development (Vygotsky, 1987). Perceiving and measuring child development from a cultural–historical approach considers a more extensive and responsive way through which they develop more-complex imaginations and behavioural characteristics, and does not impose or force children to measure up to dominant assessment tools that are designed in grand universal theories. Through multiple lenses we can study the co-creation of human beings and cultures by focusing on both mentalities and practices, and both culture and biology. Development is a moving target, a shape-shifting target. The diverse range of settings that children encounter brings to presence an out-there that is multiple, shifting and non-coherent. Trajectories of development children imagine and enacted in one setting would be inconsistent with trajectories enacted

in another setting. Development, therefore, cannot be summed up in one short assessment. If we want to move away from measuring Piaget's child, then we need to develop assessment tools based on multiple psychological perspectives (Shweder et al., 1998). Also, as it is possible that teachers who rate children on the AEDI are likely to be influenced by the kind and form of knowledge they have, it is important to connect teachers with alternative theories of child development that promise a broader view of children. For those designing assessment tools for measuring how children are developing, new conceptual and theoretical understandings about development will need to be examined in light of contextual understandings and practices, and with regard to how those understandings might be interpreted and applied in their particular environment and communities.

References

Berk, L. E. (2006). *Child development* (7th edn). Boston: Pearson.

Bloch, M. (1991). Critical science and the history of child development's influence on early education research *Early Education and Development, 2*, 95-108.

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burman, E. (1994). *Deconstructing developmental psychology.* New York: Routledge.

Cannella, G. S. (1997). *Deconstructing early childhood education: Social justice and revolution.* New York: Peter Lang.

Chung, S. & Walsh, D. J. (2000). Unpacking child-centeredness: A history of meanings. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 32*(1), 215-234.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

D'Andrade, R. (1984). Cultural meaning systems. In A. Shweder & R. A. LeVine (Eds.), *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion* (pp. 88-122). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (1999). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Pstmodern perspectives.* Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Dalton, T. C. (2005). Arnold Gesell and the maturation controversy. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science, 40*(4), 182-204.

Damon, W. (1998). Preface. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (5th edn) (pp. xi–xvii). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Daniels, H. (2001). *Vygotsky and pedagogy.* London: Routeledge.

Fleer, M. (2008). Using digital video observations and computer technologies in a cultural–historical approach. In M. Hedegaard & M. Fleer (Eds.), *Studying children: A cultural–historical approach.* McGraw Hill: Open University Press.

Gesell, A., & Ilg, F. L. (1949). *Child development: an introduction to the study of human growth.* New York: Harper & Row.

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008). *Diversity in early care and education: Honoring differences* (7th edn). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Hedegaard, M. (2008). Developing a dialectic approach to researching children's development. In M. Hedegaard & M. Fleer (Eds.), *Studying children: A cultural–historical approach.* McGraw Hill: Open University Press.

Jipson, J. (1991). Developmentally appropriate practice: Culture, curriculum, connections. *Early Education and Development, 2,* 120-136.

Kessler, S. A. (1991). Early childhood education as development: Critique of the metaphor. *Early Education and Development, 2,* 137-152.

Klingner, J. K., Artiles, A. J., Kozleski, E., Harry, B., Zion, S., Tate, W., Durán, G. Z., & Riley, D. (2005). Addressing the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education through culturally responsive educational systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 13*(38), 1-43.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). Educational psychology: Limitations and possibilities. In J. L. Kincheloe & R. A. Horn (Eds.), *Handbook of education and psychology* (pp. 3-40). West Port, CT. Praeger.

Lee, K. & Johnson, A. S. (2007). Child development in cultural contexts: Implications of cultural psychology for early childhood teacher education. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 35*(3), 233-243.

Lee, K., & Walsh, D. J. (2001). Extending developmentalism: Cultural psychology and early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 7, 71-91.

Lee, K., & Walsh, D. J. (2004). Teaching children at-risk: An American preschool teacher's folk psychology and folk pedagogy. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 2,* 229–246.

Lerner, R. M. (1998). Theories of human development: Contemporary perspectives. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 1–24). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Loreman, T. (2007). How we view young children with diverse abilities: What Canada can learn from Reggio Emilia. *Exceptionality Education Canada, 17*(1), 5-26.

Malaguzzi, L. (1993). For an education based on relationships. *Young children, 11*(93), 9-13.

Miller, J. G. (1999). Cultural psychology: Implications for basic psychological theory. *Psychological Science, 10,* 85-91.

Nsamenang, B. A. (2008). Culture and human development. *International Journal of Psychology, 43*(2), 73-77.

Pence, A. R. (1988). *Ecological research with children and families: From concepts to methodology.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Persuade, P. (2000, 24-28 July). *Labelling: Its effects on labelled students.* Paper presented at the International Special Education Congress, Manchester.

Piaget, J. (1929). *The child's conception of the world.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

Postman, N. (1989). Learning by story. *Atlantic, 264,* 119-124.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Ryan, S. K., & Grieshaber, S. (2005). Shifting from developmental to post-modern practices in early childhood teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 56,* 34-45.

Sayers, M., Coutts, M., Goldfeld, S., Oberklaid, F, Brinkman, S. A., & Silburn, S. R. (2007). Building better communities for children: Community implementation and evaluation of the Australian Early Development Index. *Early Education and Development 18*(3), 519-534.

Shweder, R. A. (1995). The ethnographic aims of cultural psychology. *ISSBD Newsletter, 1*(95), 2-4.

Shweder, R. A. (1996). True ethnography: The lore, the law, and the lure. In R. Jessor, A. Colby & R. A. Shweder (Eds.), *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry* (pp. 15-52). Chicago: University of Chicago.

Shweder, R. A., Goodnow, J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R. A., Markus, H., & Miller, P. (1998). The cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. In W. Damon & R. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 865-937). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky: Vol. I. Problems of general psychology.* R. Rieber & A. Carton (Eds.), N. Minick (Trans.) New York: Plenum Press.

White, F., Hayes, B., & Livesey, D. (2005). *Developmental psychology: From infancy to adulthood.* Sydney: Pearson.

Marry the prince or stay with family—that is the question: A perspective of young Korean immigrant girls on Disney marriages in the United States

Lena Lee, Ph.D.
Miami University, Oxford

ALTHOUGH SEVERAL STUDIES have examined popular culture, the perspectives of young children from various cultures still have not been discussed at length in such studies. In order to listen to these children's voices, this paper focuses on young immigrant Korean girls in the United States. It particularly examines their interpretations of marriage in American popular culture — in this case as marriage presented in Disney animated films. It explores the Korean cultural value of family, which significantly influenced the informants' points of view toward marriage. Finally, the paper provides some suggestions and implications for research on popular culture and young children.

Introduction

INTEREST IN AND CONCERNS about popular culture have increased since the 1950s, when television emerged. Since that time various forms of popular culture have had a huge impact on society. During the past two decades in particular, popular culture has provoked much concern because of the overwhelming amount of such things as racism, sexism and violence to which young children are exposed more than ever before. Much research has explored issues related to popular culture and young children in different countries (e.g. Ali, 2002; Änggård, 2005; Brooker, 2003; Cheung, 2005; Dockett, Perry & Nanlohy, 1999; Donald, 2005; Dyson, 1997; Giroux, 1999; Glaubke, Miller, Parker & Espejo, 2001; Lemish, 2007; Luke, 1999; Marsh & Millard, 2006; Yelland, 1998).

As one example of popular culture in American society, Disney films have often been discussed in the research literature. According to several scholars (e.g. Budd & Kirsch, 2005; Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002; Giroux, 1999; Kasturi, 2002; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1997; Wasko, 2001), these films tend to consistently represent and reinforce certain American socio-cultural values and norms—particularly those of white, middle-class Americans. At the same time, they are also likely to ignore complex socio-global issues such as the cultural differences and struggles of various groups. As a result, it is said that Disney films produce and maintain specific forms of American cultural power and hegemony.

Although all of the studies previously mentioned are important and persuasive in their critique of the Disney films, they have merely analysed their texts without considering the perspectives of the viewers—in this case children—and their socio-cultural situations. Considering that there are only a few studies (e.g. Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Dyson, 1997; Tobin, 2000) which have discussed young American children's interpretations of popular culture, this paper attempts to examine how young children perceive popular culture. I specifically examine American immigrant children. Despite numerous children from other cultures learning about American society and its socio-cultural values through popular culture (Lee, 2008; Olsen, 1997; Pyke, 2000), immigrant children's voices have hardly been included in the studies. This paper attempts to begin the inquiry of exploring the perceptions of children from various cultures by using a small-scale study with Korean children as an example of immigrant groups.

Specifically, this paper focuses on Korean girls' perspectives. As Walkerdine (1997) asserted, most studies on girls' narratives about popular culture have been conducted with adolescents, since it has usually been assumed that popular culture is a salient

feature of adolescent culture. As a result, young girls' perspectives have often been marginalised in popular cultural studies. However, a girl's identity and cultural awareness does not begin with her adolescence; rather, it is continually formed from her early childhood onward. It is thus valuable to look closely at how these young girls interpret and reconstruct their own personal meanings and interpretations of popular culture.

As an exemplary symbol of American culture for young people, Disney films can reveal American socio-cultural assumptions to Korean children more clearly than can many other kinds of children's popular culture. Hence, Disney films are used as a tool to examine young Korean girls' perceptions about the United States and its culture. Moreover and as previously mentioned, many scholars have criticised Disney films' representation of certain social values and assumptions. By discussing how Korean immigrant girls perceive Disney films, this paper also aims to bridge the gap between academic theories and young children's own views.

Marriage in Disney films

In addressing young Korean girls' understandings of American popular culture, this paper explores their ideas of marriage as presented in Disney films. Marriage in the films, specifically that of the female protagonists, is often a salient representation of such American social values as individualism and freedom. According to Taxel (1982), Disney's notion of individualism is 'advancement through self-help, strict adherence to the work ethic, and the supreme optimism in the possibility of the ultimate improvement of society through the progressive improvement in humankind' (p. 14). However, Disney's individualism is closely intertwined with, and facilitated by, the concept of innocence and fantasy, in which the world is always seen as optimistic, easy and safe (e.g. Giroux, 1999; Hahn, 1996). Furthermore, Giroux (1999) argued that the world as represented by Disney allows an individual to escape from a harsh reality by providing new and enjoyable adventures. Disney is therefore inclined to describe the world as a place in which children can explore whatever they want without fear. Moreover, there is always great romance in Disney films, and this often begins with someone falling in love at first glance and ends with a happy marriage. This kind of romance often leads the protagonists, such as Ariel of *The Little Mermaid*, to get married so as to leave their 'home.' The Disney's representation of romance and marriage thus illuminates the observation of Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1996), in which marriage is considered a symbol of a person's, particularly a female's, autonomy and independence in American culture, because the person is supposed to leave home and family and subsequently find and establish his or her own way of life.

However, the concept of marriage can be interpreted differently by young immigrant children living in a double-cultural zone. This paper thus examines young Korean girls' interpretations of Disney heroines' marriage. It also connects these perspectives to the Korean cultural value of family, which influenced their interpretations. Finally, the paper provides some suggestions and implications for research on popular culture and young children.

Methodology

Film selection

Two Disney animated films have been chosen as the primary focus of this study: *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin*. First, the choice of these films was based on a careful analysis of their relevance to the issues the study deals with, such as marriage and family. These so-called 'classic Disney' films (Byrne & McQuillan, 1999; Wasko, 2001), which are based on fairy tales or folklore, have been more severely criticised than any other Disney films because of their skewed representations of the female marriages. The two films were selected in order to understand how such representations are interpreted by Korean immigrant girls. The films' wide distribution and popularity with many Koreans (Lee, 2006) was also considered, since the study sought to consider these recent immigrant children's perceptions of the films within their Korean cultural context.

Participants

Ten Korean immigrant girls aged five to eight participated in this study. They lived in mid-western areas of the United States. I first contacted at least 20 Koreans who knew immigrant girls, through local churches, schools, and a university. However, the actual number of participants ended up as 10 because of the children's various situations: For example, their complicated schedules for academic work outside of school or for after-school programs, interfered with their participation in this study. After selecting the participants, I met each girl and her parent(s) before starting the actual interviews. At these meetings, I explained what would be expected of them during an actual interview. Two of the participants were Korean-Americans and eight were relatively recent immigrants who had been living in the United States for approximately two to three years. Their parents were all Korean citizens who were born and raised in South Korea before they immigrated. These families were mostly from Seoul, Korea, and all were middle-class.

Data collection

In this study, I, a Korean woman who, at the time had lived in the United States for six years, collected the

data, and organised the interviews into five pair groups. As several researchers (e.g. Graue & Walsh, 1998; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996; Mauthner, 1997) have noted, the pair or small-group interview is one of the most effective methods of conducting a study with primary grade children.

During the data collection, however, I had to settle on a suitable role for myself in order to avoid dominating the young informants, because of my physical size, age, and status as an authority figure. At the same time, it was important for me to respect the Korean parents' expectations, in which I was considered a responsible, mature, and professional Korean woman capable of taking care of their children. Considering these situations, I carefully attempted to balance being a knowledgeable researcher and a responsible adult without being too formal and authoritarian.[1]

Each pair of girls watched a film in my presence and then took part in a semi-structured interview with me. Over a period of six months, each group participated in three to four interviews, which lasted approximately 90 minutes each. Each group watched a film together, but some girls could not finish watching a film in one sitting because of the limited time. They continued watching the rest of it at a later stage, and then had the interviews.

During the interviews, the informants' use of language was quite dynamic and complicated. Many of them spoke in Korean when an interview began but their language often shifted to English in the middle of the interview. Sometimes, they discussed their ideas with each other in English, and then told me about the synthesis of their discussions in Korean. I thus used either Korean or English, depending on the informants' choice for each interview.

Each interview was audio-taped, and transcribed immediately after it was finished. These strategies helped me to verify my understanding of a discussion, correct my misperceptions of it, and double-check possible missing points, thereby making it possible to determine meaningful questions for future interviews. The group interviews were held in public but comfortable places where the children and the researcher could stay separate from other people without being disturbed— for instance, in a small classroom, or a lounge in a university building.

In addition to the interviews, I sought other ways of clarifying the childrens descriptions and interpretations of the films (Denzin, 1978). Thus, I gathered additional information from several informal meetings and discussions with each child, each pair of children, and/ or their parents. I also collected the children's notes and

drawings as a supplemental tool in analysing the data, since several children wrote about or drew their ideas in notebooks during the interviews or at home. This study thus used different types of data to develop interrelated hypotheses about the meanings of the films as these girls saw them.

I started each interview by asking 'grand tour questions' (Spradley, 1979) about each film, such as the following: 'How was this film?'; 'What was interesting or fun to you?'; and 'Was it much more fun than the previous film(s)?' Once I asked these questions, the direction of the interviews was determined by the participants. On the whole, the participants supported, corrected and added to each other's opinions, and encouraged each other to find the appropriate questions and answers by themselves. However, if the specific issues related to this research were not brought up by the informants themselves, I would eventually raise them for discussion. Some sample questions included: 1) What do you think of [a protagonist's] marriage? 2) What do you think about [the protagonists] and their families? 3) Why do you think [a protagonist] wanted to get married or to marry [a particular person]? 4) Why do you think [a heroine's] father wanted/did not want her to get married? and 5) If you were [a protagonist], what would you want to do?

Data analysis

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) 'constant comparative method' of grounded theory was used as a guide for analysing the data. I read all the transcriptions several times in order to look for the children's shared perceptions, concerns and interests, and also for each child's unique perspective. I also examined the verbal and non-verbal expressions the children repeated, and constructed several possible themes from my interpretations, which is what Carspecken (1996, p. 96) has called the 'meaning field.'

I continually revised and modified the themes initially chosen for this study. In doing so, I looked at theoretical discussions in the relevant literature previously mentioned (e.g. Bell, Hass & Sells, 1995; Hahn, 1996; Giroux, 1995), which have investigated the issues of marriages in American popular culture—particularly Disney films. I then compared them to the themes which emerged from the field work in order to generate the themes of the study more clearly. For instance, some—'reasons for marriage' and 'obstacles for marriage'—emerged early on in the study. As more information about these themes was recorded and linked with the theoretical arguments, the themes were used to develop a more pertinent category such as 'parental love in marriage.' And the findings from these investigations were compared to the initial ideas on the themes. Therefore, the data was newly reviewed

and categorised according to more appropriate themes in order to render my interpretations more truthful and accurate (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As the sole researcher of the study, I tried to view the children's perspectives from as many angles as possible by having different sources of data. In order to reduce possible misinterpretations of the children's responses, I checked my perceptions by means of triangulation (Carspecken, 1996; Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My interpretations were also clarified by the informants and their parents. The so-called 'member checks' were conducted during interviews with the children and through informal discussions with their parents. In this way, my interpretations of the data were often reconstructed and modified based on the reflections of both the informants and their parents.

Familial love in marriage

It was remarkable that, when discussing a Disney princess's marriage, the informants said certain familial factors were inevitably involved in a heroine's marriage and love. They first pointed out the significance of parental love, particularly during conversations about *The Little Mermaid*. For instance, Youri and Joona discussed this type of love when talking about a film scene in which Triton was angry at Ariel and destroyed her entire collection of human artefacts because of her repeated contact with the human world.

Youri said, 'Triton broke Ariel's things because she kept trying to go up on land and meet humans even though it's very, very dangerous. That's why he didn't want her to marry the prince! So he got angry.'

Joona then said, 'My dad gets really mad and scary, too, if I don't listen to him. When I just looked at him at that time [wearing a tearful face], it was so scary and I cried. But he's my dad so he can do that. It [his doing this] is for me. Ariel's dad did the same thing [he did it for Ariel], like my dad.'

These girls did not simply blame Triton for his violent scolding of Ariel because of her love for a human, which was strongly presented in the scene. Rather, they inferred the cause-and-effect relationship of Triton's reaction by comparing the experiences with their fathers to reflect on why he would become so angry as to take such an action. In this conversation, Youri also attempted to attribute Triton's 'scarier' action to his trident, not to Triton himself. Therefore, the troubling violence of Triton's action derived merely from his using too strong a tool for rebuking Ariel. The responsibility for his seemingly tyrannous reaction was transferred from Triton's original intention to his mistake of choosing 'so powerful' a tool, which 'broke everything.' Put differently, Youri analysed Triton's response by identifying the source of his anger as Ariel's careless behavior.

Similarly to Joona, Minhee argued that Ariel should have considered 'what was in his heart' in order to fully understand Triton's action, since it initially stemmed from a concern for her safety, not his own. Minhee even perceived the sadness in Triton's facial expression in the movie, so she criticised Ariel for her inadequate understanding of her father and his true intentions.

From this standpoint, Triton's harsh treatment of Ariel was not merely interpreted by several informants as his fault or his 'abuse' (Trites, 1991, p. 150) of adult power. These girls considered it to be another form of parental love; it was natural and essential for him to force Ariel to realise what was good or bad for her. These girls thus understood that parental interference and even reprimands were a different means by which parents expressed their love, which included their desire for children to be safe and well behaved. They attempted to respect, rather than blame, the parents.

These girls' perspectives could illuminate a Korean cultural aspect; severe scolding and punishment in Korean culture is often a mechanism that affirmed parental affection, attention and concern, and thus enhanced the relationship between parents and children. They thought Ariel's father's 'more stringent, controlling' and therefore, more loving approach' could give a child a 'reason for doing something' (Gonzalez-Mena, 2001, p. 121). Unlike most white, middle-class American children, who perceive such control mostly as parental hostility, these Korean immigrant girls tended to understand the parent's rigid control as an indication of great parental concern, which was a powerful force in shaping a child's good behaviour (Kim & Choi, 1994; Rohner & Pettengill, 1985). They thus saw such a parental approach as indispensable for themselves and their successful futures (Rohner & Pettengill, 1985).

Furthermore, the girls often mentioned Jasmine's family situation as an impediment to her finding a loving marital relationship, as she did not have a mother or siblings. They pointed out that such an absence was an important reason for her father wanting her to get married soon. Sunjoo articulated this viewpoint:

> He [the sultan] tried to get Jasmine married because she was gonna be lonely. Jasmine's dad loved her and so wanted her to get married and live happily with a family. Jasmine didn't have any sisters. Her mom's gone, too. And after her dad dies, she will be left all alone to live by herself, but that would be too hard for her.

Like Sunjoo, several other informants considered marriage an effective way to begin a new family. As Ahjin put it:

> Her father [the sultan] was really worried about her because…she would live without a family even after she is gonna get old. That was why he would want her to get married.

Hence, they thought the sultan wanted her to marry because of his apprehension about her lonely future. According to the informants, the importance of a family was applicable not only to ordinary people's lives, but also to members of royalty; everyone would feel lonely without a family. It was then assumed by these girls that, if Jasmine already had other family members, her father would not be trying to force her to marry. Even though her father's attempt to force her to marry was understood by the participants as an obstacle to Jasmine's own ideal of marriage, it was still considered reasonable for her father to help her have a family of her own.

The personal needs of a Disney princess, such as love and freedom in marriage, were not seen by the girls as simply an individual concern for the princess; instead, such values were extended to and shared with the person's family. Hence, most of the informants defined a father's objection to a Disney princess's love and desire to marry not as a severe obstacle which deprived her of her freedom and love, but rather as an important way to protect her from danger and suffering.

Marriage and separation anxiety from family

These girls' discussions about the princesses' marriages were related not only to the importance of families, but also to their anxiety about separation from their families. They explicitly associated themselves with apprehension about married life by placing themselves in the Disney princesses' situations. Their anxiety was particularly intense when they discussed the ending of *The Little Mermaid*. Even when they clearly understood that Ariel's marriage was initiated by Ariel herself, they still saw the marriage as 'sad' because it would mean separating her from her family. Heesun insisted:

> If I were the Little Mermaid, I would just stay with mom and my family. [I would] just send the boy [Prince Eric] away! There are a lot of other boys out there! Or I could just play with him [Prince Eric] in the playground or some places like that, and then go home and stay with my family. I think that would be the best. Ariel married him because her father let her do that [marry], making her legs at the end! If he didn't, she wouldn't marry the prince and would have lived with her dad.

However, for some of the informants, who could not easily dismiss marrying Prince Eric, the dilemma of either marrying a man or staying with one's family seemed to be more complicated. Certainly they would miss their families because of marriage, but they also thought of exploring new worlds, having novel experiences, and living with the man they love as bringing happiness. One girl, Joona, described such a conflict: For her, a girl who often dressed in pink and said 'I am so pretty' to her image in the mirror, marriage would be 'cool' and 'wonderful,' since she could enjoy 'a party' and have 'a pretty dress'. In this regard, although

her first priority was pleasing her mother and getting her permission to marry, Joona could not completely abandon her dream of getting married, saying, 'I wanna marry.'

Given this ambivalence, some of the girls started to think of how they could disentangle themselves from such a complicated situation. For instance, Narim and Haana discussed the ways of dealing with the dilemma of leaving home to marry or staying with their families for as long as possible.

Narim said, 'I would go to live with Prince Eric because my mom and dad have my little sister! [laughs].'

Haana laughed and said, 'But your sister will grow up too. Then if she wants to go away with a prince, your mom and dad will be all alone. And also, if you go with the prince, do you think you wouldn't miss your mom? That's a problem. When I would go with the prince, I would come back very often to my parents or have them live in my house together.'

Narim responded, 'Haana, if you would live with him and your parents in your home, what about the prince's parents? They would miss each other!'

Haana answered, 'That's right, Narim! They would, too! It would be too hard for him to come to my house by himself. Well, then I wanna bring the prince's mom and dad, too [laughs]. So all our families could live together! [laughs].'

Discussing various ways to solve their difficult situations, Narim and Haana found that the prince might have problems similar to theirs. Although the movie did not contain a scene that showed or mentioned the prince's family, these two girls assumed that, like them, he also had a family, which would be important to him. Several other informants also realised that their happiness might cause another's misery through the absence of family. They were concerned about the prince when they thought of bringing him to their imagined living place, the sea world. Such a concern was related to one of the factors that made them hesitant to insist that Prince Eric live under the sea.

Closing this discussion, Narim and Haana confessed their anxiety once again. Haana said, 'I want to get married later like *the Little Mermaid*, too. But I'm worried about my parents because they would be sad. I have to leave them [if I get married].'

Even to these girls who wanted to marry some day, their parents were still the centre of their concerns; their anxiety was still palpable, despite any possible alternatives in which they maintained marriage with a man while staying with their family.

As a result, many of the girls tended to defer or avoid expressing their thoughts, concerns and aspirations regarding marriage by saying it 'will happen much, much later, so it's okay now.'

Reflection: Korean value of family in marriage

The informants' understanding of Disney's marriage was clearly related to their ideas of parental love and familial life. One could say that these girls' concerns and conflicts about marriage possibly resulted from being too young to think of their marriages as being more important than their parents and families. However, their interpretations of marriage can also be understood through consideration of the Korean culture and family norms. Considering that Korean parents traditionally have high expectations of and great devotion to their children, which are likely a significant part of Korean children's very early life (Armbrister, McCallum & Lee, 2002), the girls' interpretations could derive in part from their understanding of this. Leaving their parents, who have sacrificed their whole lives for these girls, might constitute for them an act of betrayal and immorality, and thus guilt.

Moreover, the girls' responses to marriage might involve the Korean cultural attitude of parental involvement in their children's marriages. These girls possibly saw a person's marriage as a family matter, not solely that of an individual. This possibility could be more plausible when one considers that arranged marriages are still not unusual in a Korean cultural context. Such an attitude to marriage could already have begun to develop in these girls, given that most of their families were recent immigrants who had a strong connection to their native culture without sufficient time to adjust to American culture. Although the girls may have learned and accepted such American values as independence and autonomy more quickly than their parents, the influence of Korean cultural values could still be quite significant for them. Whereas the idea of 'leaving home' is a symbol of individual accomplishment in American culture, it can be seen as problematic in Korean culture by suggesting the forsaking of one's family, which has hardly drawn the attention of Disney critics.

Therefore, it is not suprising that marriage was not merely considered 'happily ever after' for the participants in this study; rather, it was seen as a complex matter with which they had to wrestle, without losing their love of either their parents or spouses. The informants did not completely accept nor highly value the protagonists' marriages as portrayed in Disney films. Their different understandings of marriage disclose that Korean cultural influences, which have emphasised a person's community life with family, seem to have more impact on them at this stage in their lives than those of the American culture.

Suggestions and implications

For the girls in this study, a person's marriage could not be considered separately from one's family. Therefore, the concept of family was one of the significant forces in these girls' internalisation of messages presented in Disney's marriages. Thinking about such messages of marriages also raised another issue—separation from their families—for them; these girls mostly understood that marriage in Disney films was described as a life lived apart from one's family, which made them feel sad and ambivalent about their marriages.

Although this paper revealed some young Korean immigrant girls' perspectives about Disney's marriages, it would not be possible to generalise about them in respect of all Korean immigrant girls, because of the small-scale nature of the study. Instead, as an in-depth qualitative study, it was an attempt to disclose the unique and meaningful voice of each informant in order to understand what she considered personally and culturally valuable in interpreting the Disney messages of marriages.

Acknowledging the limitations of this research, I discuss some suggestions for future research. First, it is essential for researchers to pay attention to children's own interpretations of popular culture. The informants of this study were not simply passive receivers who absorbed every message of the Disney marriages without reflection or analysis. Rather, like the children in Dyson's (1997) study, they were actively engaged in understanding those products: they reframed and recreated a cultural text by selecting and organising its elements by means of their own experiences, assumptions, concerns and desires. From this perspective, without paying proper attention to children's voices about popular culture, researchers will only make unfounded assumptions about popular culture and its effects on children.

Second, further research should consider the diverse meanings of popular culture that can be derived from young children who have different socio-cultural experiences. As this paper shows, the Korean girls' understanding of marriages in Disney films were entangled with cultural aspects of a Korean context different from that of the United States. It suggests that the various meanings attributed to a piece of popular culture can be often modified by and negotiated among different audiences (Götz, Lemish, Aidman & Moon, 2005; Robertson, 1994), because they may have different purposes for consuming popular culture (e.g. Dortner, 2001; Lemish, Liebes & Seidmann, 2001). Depending on a child's personal situation and experiences, various forms of popular culture will have a variety of different meanings and uses (Derrida, 1976; Fiske, 1992; Hall, 1980). In this regard, the dynamic of global consumption of popular culture is not a simple one-sided process in which cultural artefacts always flow from one site to another. Instead, the two cultural sites always influence each other in such a process. Hence, future studies should consider the local socio-

cultural factors that have an impact on children. Such a research consideration can be accomplished by including diverse cultural groups of children.

Finally, it is valuable to conduct longitudinal studies which explore how recent young immigrant girls' perceptions on marriage and concepts of family can change and develop. These recent Korean immigrant girls' views about a Disney heroine's marriage can be modified according to the extent to which they experience and are exposed to American society. Furthermore, it is possible that there could be a variety of struggles or conflicts in order to maintain their own cultural values as they adjust to a new society. Hence, examining how their perceptions about popular culture can alter, and what factors hamper them from preserving their native cultural views, can provide a deeper understanding of these children and their experiences of acculturation.

References

Ali, S. (2002) Friendship and fandom: Ethnicity, power and gendering readings of the popular. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 23*(2), 153-165.

Alvermann, D., & Xu, S. (2003). Children's everyday literacies: Intersections of popular culture and language arts instruction. *Language Arts: Popular Culture and Media Literacy, 81*(2), 145-154.

Änggård, E. (2005) Barbie princesses and dinosaur dragons: Narration as a way of doing gender. *Gender and Education, 17*(5), 539-553.

Armbrister. R., McCallum, S., & Lee, H. (2002). A cross-cultural comparison of student social attributions. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*(1), 39–49.

Bell, E., Hass, L., & Sells, L. (1995). *From mouse to mermaid: The politics of film, gender, and culture.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bellah, R., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. (1996). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brooker, L. (2003). Integrating new technologies in UK classrooms: Lessons for teachers from early years practitioners. *Childhood Education, 79*(5), 261-267.

Budd, M, & Kirsch, M. (2005). *Rethinking Disney: Private control, public dimensions.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Byrne, E. & McQuillan, M. (1999). *Deconstructing Disney.* London: Pluto.

Cannella, G., & Kincheloe, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Kidworld: Childhood studies, global perspectives, and education.* New York: Peter Lang.

Carspecken, P. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide.* New York: Routledge.

Cheung, C. (2005) The relevance of media education in primary schools in Hong Kong in the age of new media: A case study. *Educational Studies, 31*(4), 361-374.

Denzin, N. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology.* London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dockett, S., Perry, B., & Nanlohy, P. (1999). Computers in early childhood services: A part of the educational program or less them for play? *Journal of Australian Research in Early Childhood Education, 6*(2), 165-176.

Donald, S. (2005) Little Friends: Children's *Film* and Media *Culture in China.* Landon: Rowman & Littlefield.

Dortner, K. (2001). Global media through youthful eyes. In S. Livingstone & M. Bovill (Eds.), *Children and their changing media environment: A European comparative study* (pp. 283-305). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Dyson, A. (1997). *Writing superheroes: Contemporary childhood, popular culture, and classroom literacy.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fiske, J. (1992). Cultural studies and the culture of every day life. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp. 154-173). New York: Routledge.

Giroux, H. (1995). Animating youth: The disneyfication of children's culture. *Socialist Review, 24*(3), 23–55.

Giroux, H. (1999). *The mouse that roared: Disney and the end of innocence.* New York: Rowman & Littlefiled.

Glaser, G. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine Press.

Glaubke, C., Miller, P., Parker, M., & Espejo, E. (2001). *Fair Play? Violence, gender and race in video games.* Children Now. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 463092)

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2001). *Diversity in early care and education: Honoring differences.* (4th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Gotz, M., Lemish, D., Aidman, A., & Moon, H. (2005). *Media and the make-believe worlds of children: When Harry Potter meets Pokémon in Disneyland.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Graue, E. & Walsh, D. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hahn, D. (1996). *Animation magic: A behind-the scenes look at how an animated film is made.* New York: Disney Press.

Hall, S. (1980). Introduction to media studies at the centre. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis, *Culture, media, language* (pp. 117–121). London: Hutchinson.

Hill, M., Laybourn, A., & Borland, M. (1996). Engaging with primary-aged children about their emotions and well-being: Methodological considerations, *Children and Society, 10*, 129-144.

Kasturi, S. (2002). Constructing childhood in a corporate world: Cultural studies, childhood, and Disney. In G. Canella & J. Kinchella (Eds.), *Kid world: Childhood studies, global perspectives, and education* (pp. 39–58). New York: Peter Lang.

Kim, U., & Choi, S. (1994). Individualism, collectivism, and child development: A Korean perspective. In P. Greenfield & R. Cocking (Eds.), *Cross-cultural roots of minority child development* (pp. 227–257). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lee, L. (2006). *"Becoming an American princess?": The Interpretations of American Popular Culture by Young Korean Girls Living in the United States.* Unpublished dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Lee, L. (2008). Understanding gender through Disney's

marriages: A study of young Korean immigrant girls. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(1), 11-18.

Lee, L. & Goodman, J. (2009). Traversing the challenges of conducting research with young immigrant children: The case of Korean children. *Interchange, 40*(2), 225-244.

Lemish, D. (2007). *Children and television: A global perspective.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Lemish, D., Liebes, T., & Seidmann, V. (2001). Gendered media meanings and uses. In S. Livingstone & M. Bovill (Eds.), *Children and their changing environment: A European comparative study* (pp. 263-282). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* London: Sage.

Luke, C. (1999). What next? Toddler netizens, playstation thumb, techno-literacies. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 1*(1), 95-1000.

Marsh, J., & Millard, E. (Eds.). (2006). *Popular literacies, childhood and schooling.* London: Mauthner, M. (1997). Methodological aspects of collecting data from children: Lessons from three research projects, Children and Society, 11, 16-28.

Olsen, L. (1997). *Made in America: Immigrant students in our public schools.* New York: New Press.

Pyke, K. (2000). The normal American family as an interpretive structure of family life among grown children of Korean and Vietnamese immigrants. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*, 240-255.

Robertson, R. (1994). Globalization or globalization? *The Journal of International Communication, 1*(1), 33-52.

Rohner, R. P., & Pettengill, S. M.(1985). Perceived parental acceptance-rejection and parental control among Korean adolescents [Special issue]. *Child Development, 56*, 524–528.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Steinberg, S., & Kincheloe, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Kinderculture: The corporate construction of childhood.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Taxel, J. (1982). *A literature review of the impact of Walt Disney Productions Inc. on American popular culture and children's literature.* University of Georgia. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 213648)

Tobin, J. (2000). *Good guys don't wear hats: Children's talk about the media.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Trites, R. (1991). Disney's sub/version of Anderson's The Little Mermaid. *Journal of Popular Film and Television, 18*(4), 145–152.

Walkerdine, W. (1997). *Daddy's girl: Young girls and popular culture.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wasko, J. (2001). *Understanding Disney: The manufacture of fantasy.* Malden, MA: Polity.

Yelland, N. (1998). Empowerment and control with technology in the early childhood years. *Educational Practice and Theory, 20*(2), 45-55.

Changing schools:
How policy implementation can impact on the literacy learning of mobile students

Andrea Lynch

James Cook University

SINCE 2002 QUEENSLAND state schools have been required to document a 'whole school literacy plan' built around eight essential aspects. This document is to be reviewed annually and updated to reflect the current community profile and the school's literacy curriculum (Education Queensland, 2006). This research project investigated the different ways three early years teachers (Years 1-3) from three adjacent state schools have implemented this policy and what this may mean for students who change schools – particularly the significant number of students known to move between these schools (Hill & Lynch, 2007). Previous research based on test data has shown that changing schools can disrupt learning, particularly in the early years (Strand & Demie, 2006; Temple & Reynolds, 1999) but there has been little or no research into what it might mean for students as literacy learners.

Using a case study approach within a critical theory framework, the current research project found that policy is interpreted and enacted differently in different contexts, creating different ways of doing school and doing literacy. This can result in mobile students having to renegotiate what doing school and doing literacy means.

Introduction

QUEENSLAND STATE SCHOOLS have been part of a significant literacy teaching reform agenda with the stated intention of 'achieving excellence in literacy education, for the benefit of all students' (Education Queensland, 2006, p. i). These reforms appear predicated on the belief that students arrive on the first day of the school year and attend that school for at least the full school year. However, recent research undertaken in a Queensland regional city (Hill & Lynch, 2007) indicates that significant numbers of early years student movements occur throughout the school year—with some students attending multiple schools in the course of a year. While previous research has not demonstrated a causal link between mobility and achievement (see Strand & Demie, 2006), some researchers suggest that changing schools in the early years may be highly disruptive to learning and closely related to academic achievement (Heinlein & Shinn, 2000; Strand & Demie, 2006; Temple & Reynolds, 1999). Other research into literacy development has found that students who fall behind in the early years rarely 'catch up' (Hill, Comber, Louden, Rivalland & Reid, 2002).

Background on whole school literacy planning in Queensland

As part of the Queensland government's education reform agenda, whole school literacy planning has been mandated in Queensland state schools since 2002. Whole school literacy planning is a system-wide response to the comprehensive review of literacy teaching in Queensland, *Literate Futures: Report of the literacy review for Queensland state schools* (Education Queensland, 2000); referred to as the *Literacy Review* from here on. The report recommended four key areas of priority: student diversity; whole school programs and community partnerships; the teaching of reading; and future literacies. It also identified eight essential inclusions to be considered in whole school literacy planning. These are: community profile; shared vision; standards and targets; assessment and monitoring; classroom organisation and pedagogy; intervention and special needs support; leadership, coordination and professional learning; and strategic community partnerships (Education Queensland, 2000).

After the release of the *Literacy Review* the state government implemented the report's recommendation

to mandate whole school literacy planning and established the 'Literate Futures project' to support state-wide reform to literacy teaching. This support included professional development packages on CD ROM, web-based resources and support through Literacy Development Centres in each district (many of which were closed when state-wide funding ceased in 2004).

Each school was required to have a whole school literacy plan in place by the end of 2002 (Education Queensland, 2002).

Methodology

This research uses critical theory as a methodological framework, particularly the notion that research stemming from a critical theory perspective has a 'focus on social inequality and injustice produced through the practices of schooling' (Popkewitz, 1999, p. 3). A qualitative case study was used to explore the intersections of education reform, high mobility and literacy learning.

Participants

This research project was conducted in 2007, in three regional Queensland schools located within a six-kilometre corridor. The three schools were already involved in a collaborative action research project investigating innovative interventions in schools experiencing high student mobility (Hill & Lynch, 2007). The project explained in this paper sought to describe the impacts of current policy on mobile students and contributed to the development of strategic interventions at the school and classroom level. The participating teachers volunteered their involvement after the researcher held a staff briefing calling for expressions of interest. The schools are identified by pseudonyms – Kingfisher, Acacia and Riverside state schools – as are the teachers – Jane, Jenny and Holly.

Method

Documentary analysis

Whole School Literacy Plans [WSLP] from each school were examined along with state policy documents, *Literacy the key to learning: Framework for action 2006-2008* and Whole school literacy planning guidelines. Teachers provided copies of their current planning documents.

Interviews

The research project was presented to early years teachers at each location. One teacher at each location volunteered to be interviewed on their literacy practice.

These interviews were semi-structured to provide an opportunity to access the beliefs, opinions and values that underpinned each participant's literacy teaching. The questions were provided in advance to enable teachers to consider their responses.

Observations

Passive observations of a literacy session in each classroom (up to 90 minutes) were conducted after the interviews. Field notes were recorded during and immediately after each observation. An observation schedule focused on the following areas: classroom setup, classroom talk, lesson plan, teaching and learning resources, and student engagement.

Analysis

A two-part a *priori* thematic analysis was conducted (Freeman, 1998). In Part A, all data sets were examined to see what patterns may exist as policy moves through from macro to micro level. The data was compared and contrasted to indicate the expressed intention of the systemic policies, how these were interpreted by each school and enacted in each classroom. The categories used were: recognition of context, approaches to teaching literacy, shared vision, and response to mobility.

To drill deeper into the data and establish similarities/differences at the classroom level and juxtapose these with the macro level, further a priori analysis of the teacher interviews and observations was conducted under two categories: similarities to other classrooms, and differences from other classrooms.

Results and discussion

Creating a school climate: Policy framing practice

In each of the schools involved in this study, all eight essential aspects of whole school literacy planning are attended to in their WSLP. However, a particular aspect appears to be foregrounded in each school, indicating that they have conformed to the prescriptive guidelines of the policy but in nuanced ways which have created distinctly different ways of doing school and literacy in each of the classrooms visited.

At Kingfisher state school literacy pedagogy dominates the landscape. Jane's teaching of literacy at Kingfisher aligns very closely with the position espoused in systemic documents, that a teacher's repertoire of approaches should include 'a balance of skills approaches, whole language approaches, genre approaches and socio-critical approaches…based on explicit instruction' (Education Queensland, 2006, p. 2). The school's WSLP states that 'students are presented with a balanced literacy program' and the identified professional development tightly aligns with that

produced by the Literate Futures project, including *Literate Futures: Reading* (Anstey, 2002), a resource that strongly advocates the Four Resources model as a framework for planning, teaching and evaluating literacy programs. Jane has placed these teaching approaches at the centre of her literacy teaching practice. Observations of her planning and practice reflect the use of the Four Resources model as a framework for planning, teaching and evaluating her literacy program. Jane's planning documents explicitly identify her use of the Four Resources model, and I observed that this was clearly translated to her practice. I noted that posters in her classroom explain the 'reader roles' and strategies for their implementation. In my observation of Jane's practice, her implementation of an activity involved the explanation of the task, including the process and outcomes, relating the written activity to the earlier reading activity and, through her production of differentiated worksheets, ensuring students were engaged in work that reflected their needs and abilities. I noted 'everyone knows what they are doing and why'.

Evidence that Jane has integrated these approaches into her classroom practice was further reinforced in the interview when she referred to her use of the Four Resources model and explicit, child-centred approaches as her personal approach to teaching literacy:

> … *making sure it's developmentally appropriate … I do a lot of 'what you know' and build from there … I use it [Four Resources model] as a planning tool and it guides me in the types of questions I ask the kids, in, say, reading groups. Sometimes I do activity sheets with the kids as, say, a text user or another role.*

Jane made no reference to any other methods or approaches to teaching literacy, and it would appear that she has accepted the approach required by policy and prioritised by the school.

At Acacia State School, data collection, assessment and accountability exert a strong force on the literacy climate. Jenny's term plans are directed towards producing specified assessment items that are moderated and used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers' programs.

Throughout her interview Jenny makes several references to the use of test data in evaluating teacher's work and for targeted professional development. For example:

> *I guess when results, school results, come out from different tests that are run, teachers are certainly looked at and probably rapped over the knuckles...*

> … *the school certainly does try to pinpoint what it is exactly that teachers aren't doing—give us PD (professional development) on it and try to get us all doing—the whole school—talking the same language, doing the same thing.*

It appears that Jenny has placed the product at the centre of her program, largely because she needs to meet the school's assessment schedule and accountability framework. This schedule controls 'what' her students produce, but 'how' she approaches this production comes from her beliefs about what a literate person does. Jenny appears to have a traditional view of literacy, very much based on her own school experiences. This is evident when Jenny speaks of her beliefs about literacy:

> *I think that it is really important that these kids know how to punctuate and write a sentence, and make sure it makes sense … and using those beliefs of mine, like you are judged by your handwriting, you must be able to spell correctly … and you fall back to what you know, what the basics are … than doing a lot of the airy fairy stuff …*

In regards to new technologies Jenny thought that:

> … *all the things that kids get given as presents are TVs, DVD, PS2s. You don't hear of games—you know, bat and ball or books. So it's all just sit back and let the world entertain me; I'm not going to entertain myself by reading or writing a story … I don't know where it's going, I really don't.*

While Jenny complies with Acacia State School's program she uses the autonomy afforded to her as a professional and exercises her own views about what is important in a literacy program when designing activities that comply with the school's assessment priorities. This can be seen when Jenny describes her programming:

> *We get a lot (of autonomy). As long as we arrive at that (assessment item), how I get my kids to achieve that is down to me, but the outcome is set.*

At Riverside state school, connecting with the community is central. The Riverside WSLP identifies a large array of data collection tools to ensure a comprehensive community profile is developed. These include parent surveys, student discussions and questionnaires, parent occupation data, school opinion survey data, and literacy and information workshops for school community groups. While there is no current WSLP that documents the community profile and the school's response in terms of literacy programming, Holly perceives that Riverside is responding very well to community needs and that connecting with the students' lived experiences is an important part of the curriculum. In her interview she discussed how, guided by the new principal, the school was moving away from prescribed units towards negotiating with children to make learning more meaningful for them:

> … *it was like that (prescribed units) but in the last year or so we've been moving more towards negotiating with the children … we're just trying to make it more meaningful for the children ...*

My observation of Holly's classroom and classroom practice highlighted her commitment to a child-centred approach and connecting school and home. This observation was supported by Holly's interview, during which she characterised her personal approach to teaching literacy as, 'very child-focused and directed by them, and I plan the work with them … because you want it to be meaningful for them.'

Again we see the school's priorities matching very well with the teacher's beliefs and the teacher integrating the school's priorities without resistance.

Each school, through the work of the principals, deputy principals and heads of curriculum, appears to have complied with the systemic requirements to develop and implement a WSLP. How 'whole school' the process was (or continues to be), is not revealed in this research and, as previous research around teachers' mediation of policy (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) suggests, this may well have played an important role in how the policy has been valued and enacted by teachers. Also important to the way policy is enacted may be the time and space provided to teachers to enable them as *bricoleurs*, and to reflexively engage with theory and policy as they construct their pedagogical approaches (Honan, 2004).

However, the data does reveal that the priorities given to different aspects of the WSLPs have created very different literacy environments in each school. This means that different resources are made available in each setting, requiring teachers to find ways of accommodating the state policy documents. The ultimate flow-on is that mobile early phase learners moving among these schools are required to adjust their developing understanding of what 'doing school' means each time they enter a new school environment.

At the classroom level

Analysis of the data from the interviews and observations has revealed a number of similarities and differences in teacher practice. The impact of these similarities and differences play out in particular ways for students changing schools.

The similarities include:

- professional development through the Literate Futures project
- a low level of awareness of their school's WSLP
- Reading Recovery teachers as strong influences on pedagogy
- the belief that they have a high level of autonomy in planning and practice
- their perceptions of, and response to, mobile students
- and the perception that their school has a unique 'way of doing school'. (These are further described in Table 1.)

While some of these similarities provide students with similar experiences, others effectively create differences in their experiences. For example, each of the teachers has undergone professional development as part of the Literate Futures project. Through this they are aware of the Four Resources model as a framework for planning, teaching and evaluating literacy programs, and explicit teaching as an approach to address diverse cultural and linguistic resources. Yet this common professional development has had varying levels of influence over their practice. The differences in take-up may relate to the method of providing the professional development and the distance between the school's priorities and the teachers' personal beliefs.

Table 1: Similarities in Teacher Practice			
	Kingfisher SS Jane	Acacia SS Jenny	Riverside SS Holly
Professional Development in literacy	Literate Futures (systemic) Primary connections (external)	Literate Futures (systemic)	Literate Futures (systemic)
Awareness of WSLP	Is under review —not at all familiar with document	Not at all familiar with document	Is under review —not at all familiar with document
Autonomy in classroom practice	Yes—but content broadly prescribed Syllabus outcomes negotiated within and across year levels	Yes—but content and assessment items are prescribed Syllabus outcomes negotiated within and across year levels	Yes—content not prescribed Syllabus outcomes negotiated within and across year levels
Way of doing school	Perceived as unique Noted as challenge for incoming students	Perceived as unique Noted as challenge for incoming students	Perceived as unique Noted as challenge for incoming students

Table 2: Differences in Teacher Practice			
	Kingfisher SS Jane	Acacia SS Jenny	Riverside SS Holly
Teacher's conceptualisation of learning	Work Learning framed within behaviour	Product Learning framed within behaviour	Fun Learning framed within life experience
Approach to teaching literacy	Based strongly on Four Resources model Teacher directed, based on what students know and can do Highly explicit	Strong skills and genre focus —with some reference to Four Resources model Teacher-directed and teacher-centred Implicit	Real life problem solving Student centred, based on what students know and can do Explicit
Core references for approach to teaching literacy (in decreasing order of influence)	Current theories about teaching and learning gained from systemic professional development and external professional development. Experiences as a childcare worker	Experiences as a school student Need for 'the basics' Influence of respected colleagues Systemic professional development	Experience as an early childhood educator Influence of respected colleagues Systemic professional development
Content based on …	Broadly prescribed by school, planned in coordination with teachers at same year level Limited negotiation with students	Narrowly prescribed by school, planned in collaboration with other year level teachers to meet prescribed outcomes No negotiation with students	Broadly prescribed by school. Evolving from planned experiences, negotiated with students
Classroom environment	Highly structured—explicit, charts for behaviour, reading strategies, daily schedule Social charts—birthdays Both teacher and commercially produced charts displayed Student artwork as decoration Large number of books in classroom on stands Computers not integrated into teaching space but on and in use. Open plan but separated into two classrooms—clearly separate Desks in pairs in rows	Somewhat structured —some charts for sounds, handwriting, proofreading Student art work as decoration (little displayed) Social charts—birthdays One book stand with some books for silent reading Computers covered (at time of visit), not integrated into teaching space. Open plan with some shared teaching, barriers to separate spaces Desks in long rows	Highly structured—explicit, charts for 'jobs', daily schedule, reading/maths groups Social charts—birthdays Many student-generated learning charts; sounds, numbers, animals, etc. Many student made books and large display of library books—fiction and non-fiction—student work as learning Computers part of teaching space Open plan with some shared teaching—no barriers Desks in groups

w

Each teacher has indicated a high degree of professional autonomy in how they plan for literacy learning in their classrooms, although, in light of the regulatory discourse in the policy documents, this is perhaps more a false perception than reality (Apple, 2006).

Analysis reveals several significant differences in the practices of the three teachers. These differences include:

- their conceptualisation of learning;
- their approaches to teaching literacy;
- the core references informing their approaches to teaching literacy;
- the basis for content; and
- the classroom environment.

(These differences are further described in Table 2.)

Differences in how these teachers view learning may mean that, in moving between their schools, students would need to move from learning as work with Jane at Kingfisher to learning as a fun life experience with Holly at Riverside. At Acacia with Jenny, students would need to accommodate learning as the production of a series of print-based products. At Acacia there is no negotiation of content, while at Riverside content is fully negotiated. Students would experience an explicit, balanced program at Kingfisher and an implicit program, top-heavy with skills and genre work at Acacia.

The different approaches to teaching and beliefs about literacy, evident in Table 2 mean different pedagogies and different versions of what counts as literacy in each classroom. This then requires the incoming student to 'read the educational setting and the teacher to work out what counts as literacy' (Comber & Cormack, 1997, p. 28), and what is required of them. This is particularly difficult for students who have different experiences of literacy from that preferred in the new classroom environment.

The identified similarities and differences stem from the way teachers have managed to merge their own identities with the discursive resources made available to them in the school. Each of these teachers comes to the classroom with a different set of experiences shaping their personal and professional identities. Holly has many years experience in early childhood in different systems; Jane, while having several years experience in child care, is a beginning teacher; and Jenny is working for the first time in Year 2 after four years in upper primary classes. These varying experiences position each teacher differently to comply with, or resist, the discourses made available through policy documents and the school's interpretation of them. How they have managed to merge these resources determines the literacy curriculum for their students.

Conclusion

Schools are complex places with variously dominating features acting to create particular environments for teachers. This in turn makes available different versions of literacy that serve to shape the identities of the young people who attend schools.

The ways a school interprets policy has a great impact on the experience of all its students—and it is how schools interpret policy *differently* that has an impact on the experience of mobile students.

The documents supporting Queensland's reform agenda supply schools with conflicting discourses—centralised, managerial and regulatory on one hand and locally responsive, inclusive, and equitable education on the other. How these discourses are taken up by schools and then negotiated by teachers is crucial to the outcomes of reform and the schooling experiences of all students, particularly those experiencing combinations of risk factors compounded by high mobility.

In these three schools the data has shown that, while all mandatory aspects of whole school literacy planning are evident in the WSLP document, in practice schools are foregrounding different aspects. Different climates for teaching and learning literacy develop, requiring mobile early years literacy learners to renegotiate what doing school and doing literacy means every time they move.

For teachers of mobile students, this means that explicit articulation of their methods is essential if incoming students are to have an understanding of what doing literacy means in this new classroom. All aspects of classroom life 'speak' to new students about what counts as literacy (Comber & Cormack, 1997). Classroom talk, teaching and learning resources, and classroom setup must all convey clear messages about what students need to know about literacy teaching and learning in *this* classroom. Teachers of mobile students need to have a repertoire of strategies that enables them to 'work fast to learn about students' cultural and linguistic resources, repertoires of literacy practices and gaps in academic and discursive knowledge' (Comber, 2003, p. 32) and to immediately engage students in the curriculum.

While schools may interpret policy differently, thus creating a range of differences for mobile students to negotiate, ultimately it is what happens in the classroom that creates either a barrier or a bridge to literacy learning for mobile students.

References

Anstey, M. (2002). *Literate futures: Reading*. Brisbane: Literate Futures Project.

Apple, M. (2006). *Educating the "right" way: markets, standards, God, and inequality* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Comber, B. (2003). Literacy interrupted: ADHD, absence and mobility. *Look again: Longitudinal studies of children's literacy learning*. Canberra: Primary English Teaching Association.

Comber, B., & Cormack, P. (1997). Looking Beyond 'Skills' and 'Processes': Literacy as Social and Cultural Practices in Classrooms. *Literacy, 31*(3), 22-29.

Education Queensland (2000). *Literate futures: Report of the literacy review for Queensland state schools* (No. 0734519966). Brisbane: Education Queensland.

Education Queensland (2002). *Whole-school literacy planning guidelines: Literate futures*. Retrieved 23 June 2007, http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/learning/literate-futures/wsl-guidelines.html

Education Queensland (2006). *Literacy the key to learning: Framework for action 2006-2008*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.

Freeman, D. (1998). *Doing teacher research: From inquiry to understanding*. Pacific Grove: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Hargreaves, A., & Dawe, R. (1990). Paths of professional development: contrived collegiality, collaborative culture, and the case of peer coaching. *Teaching and teacher education, 6*(3), 227-241.

Heinlein, L. M., & Shinn, M. (2000). School mobility and student achievement in an urban setting. *Psychology in the schools, 37*(4), 349-357.

Hill, A., & Lynch, A. (2007). Let's stay put. One child, one school, one year. Retrieved 25 October 2007, www.soe.jcu.edu.au/Mobility_Web/index.html

Hill, S., Comber, B., Louden, W., Rivalland, J., & Reid, J. A. (2002). 100 children turn 10: A longitudinal study of literacy development from the year prior to school to the first four years of school (No. 0868039071 (set) 0868039053 (v.1) 0868039055 (v.2)). Canberra: Dept of Education, Science and Training.

Honan, E. (2004). Teachers as bricoleurs: Producing plausible readings of curriculum documents. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 3*(2), 99-112.

Popkewitz, T. (1999). Introduction. Critical traditions, Modernisms, and the "posts". In T. Popkewitz & L. Fendler (Eds.), *Critical theories in education. Changing terrains of knowledge and politics*. (pp. 1-16). New York: Routledge.

Strand, S., & Demie, F. (2006). Pupil mobility, attainment and progress in primary school. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(4), 551-568.

Temple, J., & Reynolds, A. (1999). School mobility an achievement: Longitudinal findings from an urban cohort. *Journal of School Psychology, 37*(4), 355-377.

EXPERT-APPROVED
EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCES

Every Child magazine

Ideas, inspiration and innovation ...

A vast range of topics and perspectives on a current theme which varies from issue to issue. Provides service-based activities, snapshots and profiles written by the field, for the field.

Australian subscription (4 issues)
Individual: $50 Institution:* $100
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/ec

Research in Practice Series

Practical, on-the-ground support ...

Experts provide easy-to-read guides on a unique approach or topical issue. Offers new ideas and advice for all service-based early childhood carers and educators.

Australian subscription (4 issues)
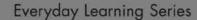Individual: $45 Institution:* $100
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/rips

Australasian Journal of Early Childhood

All the latest research and debate ...

Australasia's foremost scholarly journal within the early childhood field. Research-based articles analysing theory and practice, encouraging critical discussion among practitioners, academics and students.

Australian subscription (4 issues)
Individual: $70 Institution:* $200
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/ajec

Everyday Learning Series

Creative ways to enliven children's everyday experiences ...

For everyone involved in the care of children in the home environment. Each issue explores one topic, providing in-depth practical advice to 'make the ordinary extraordinary', while supporting children's growth and development.
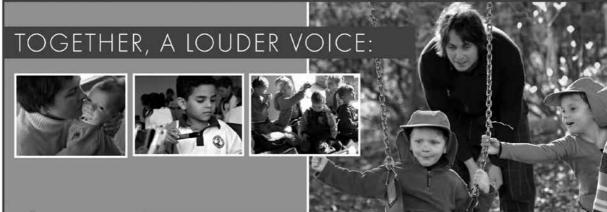
Australian subscription (4 issues)
Individual: $40 Institution:* $100
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/edl

Past issues and free samples available—see online for details.
Subscribe now: phone **1800 356 900 (freecall)** or email **eca@earlychildhood.org.au**
Don't forget: subscriptions for early childhood professionals are tax deductible.

*Institutions price:
For a tertiary institution or group of services, including government entity, statewide service, NGO, multi-service provider etc.

TOGETHER, A LOUDER VOICE:

Early Childhood AUSTRALIA INC.

BECOME A MEMBER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA
... A VOICE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Early Childhood Australia's capacity to do its work is dependent on its membership.
The quality and breadth of our work reflects the dedication and commitment of the volunteers who are our members.

Since 1938, Early Childhood Australia's main focus has been advocacy

Membership fees include an **advocacy contribution** that enable us to influence many significant issues relevant to the care, wellbeing and education of children in Australia:

- lobbying for improved staff–child ratios in early childhood services
- better treatment of children of asylum seekers
- the development and recent revision of the ECA *Code of Ethics*.

Your membership will strengthen our voice:

focusing on future policy changes to further enhance the care and education of young children and the wider early childhood sector.

Membership enables you to:

- network with others in the early childhood field
- stay up to date with the latest early childhood news and happenings
- actively participate in state/territory branch events, including voting for branch leaders
- save on publication subscriptions and registration fees for Early Childhood Australia conferences
- get the benefits of tax deductibility for early childhood professionals and Australian students working in the early childhood field.

WHICH MEMBERSHIP IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Bronze

Bronze members receive:

- *Every Child* magazine – a wide range of inspiring and easy-to-read articles
- *ECA Voice* member newsletter and state/territory branch newsletters
- *ECA WebWatch* e-newsletter – fortnightly updates with excellent information online
- Discounted rate for ECA conferences

Gold

Gold members receive all the benefits of Bronze membership, plus:

- *Research in Practice Series* – practical books supporting those in the field
- *Australian Journal of Early Childhood* – for all the latest research and debate

Membership category	Bronze membership price	Gold membership price
Individual	$135	$230
Service	$160	$255
Organisation	$245	$340
Concession	$45	$145
International members, add $30 for Bronze and $70 for Gold		

Become a member of Early Childhood Australia and be an active voice for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Join today, or request a free information pack:
1800 356 900 (freecall) or
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/membership

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

9 770312 503001

Early
Childhood
AUSTRALIA INC
... voice for young children.