

reflections

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EDITOR

Josephine Musumeci

DESIGN

Angela Reeves

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Centre Staff

PRINTER

TTR Print Management



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Feedback, suggestions and contributions are most welcome. Please contact Gowrie Australia to discuss ideas or to submit an article email: info@gowrie-tas.com.au

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POSTAL ADDRESS

228 St Paul's Terrace,
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
Telephone: 07 3252 2667
Facsimile: 07 3252 2258
Email: jane.bourne@ladygowrie.com.au

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CONTACT DETAILS - Gowrie Australia

Gowrie SA

39a Dew Street
Thebarton SA 5031

Ph: 08 8352 5144 **Fax:** 08 8234 1217
Email: train@gowriesa.org.au
Website: www.gowriesa.org.au
Contact: Christine Burgess

Gowrie NSW

Level 3, 215 Euston Road
Alexandria NSW 2015

Ph: 02 8571 9745 **Fax:** 02 8571 9790
Email: natalie.grenfell@gowriensw.com.au
Website: www.gowriensw.com.au
Contact: Natalie Grenfell

The Gowrie (QLD) Inc.

228 St Paul's Terrace
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

Ph: 07 3252 2667 **Fax:** 07 3252 2258
Email: jane.bourne@ladygowrie.com.au
Website: www.gowrieqld.com.au
Contact: Jane Bourne

Lady Gowrie Tasmania

229 Campbell Street
Hobart TAS 7000

Ph: 03 6230 6800 **Fax:** 03 6230 6811
Email: info@gowrie-tas.com.au
Website: www.gowrie-tas.com.au
Contact: Ros Cornish

Gowrie Victoria

Cnr Newry & Canning Streets
Carlton North VIC 3054

Ph: 03 9347 6388 **Fax:** 03 9347 7567
Email: melodied@gowrievictoria.org.au
Website: www.gowrievictoria.org.au
Contact: Melodie Davies

The Gowrie (WA) Inc.

61 Lowan Loop
Karawara WA 6152

Ph: 08 9312 8200 **Fax:** 08 9313 1827
Email: toniaw@gowrie-wa.com.au
Website: www.gowrie-wa.com.au
Contact: Tonia Westmore

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome everyone, to our first edition of *Reflections* for the year. As always, it is a pleasure to share with our readership, a series of articles which will certainly promote and inspire conversation and possibilities for practice in early childhood settings.

Our first article discusses the success of PEAP, an early year's program dedicated to improving mathematics for young aboriginal children. The cultural content brings together the children, their teachers and researchers in a way which promotes excitement, new skills and problem solving for all.

Leadership is a topic that we continue to examine. ACECQA has introduced a new position, National Educational Leader and Ms. Rhonda Livingstone has taken on this new role with a commitment to listen to our sector and show support for our commitment to the profession. We hope you enjoy the two articles in this edition that examine the role of the leader from different perspectives. Ros Cornish compares leadership and management, while Rod Soper takes a broader view, focusing on the importance of relationships with practical ideas for making changes in ourselves, and in our workplaces.

In a quest for new beginnings, Osanna Giang from Nanbarree Child Centre, shares an inspiring story of pushing the limits and examining preconceptions in an effort to make a totally indoor, inner city environment into a vibrant and flexible learning space that will support children, staff and parents to find enjoyment and challenge in this unique early learning setting.

An international early year's project combines the skills and vision of staff from a Queensland University, teachers from local early childhood centres, and academics from the University of Iceland to examine children's views on play. In an article that shares a small insight into this project, we join educators and researchers in listening to children's view.

Second language learning is examined in some detail as we consider children who come from multi- or bi-lingual backgrounds. Dr Ana Mantilla shares knowledge both from her own studies, and from her home life, to give us some insight into the misconceptions that surround this area, and the real benefits of supporting children to have exposure to a second language from an early age.

In our final article, Desley Jones, shares some of the highlights of the 'Infant and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing Conference' which was held in Canberra late last year. The role that early childhood can play in both intervention and prevention in this area is examined, with particular emphasis on early relationship development.

Reflections is a magazine that brings to the fore relevant issues in the Early Childhood sector and we look forward to your comments, ideas and of course, any articles that you may wish to submit for publication.

On behalf of the *Reflections* Committee, I would like to thank Ros Cornish for her time and effort in writing the *Reflections'* editorials and overseeing content for many years. It is now my privilege to take on this position for Gowrie Australia.

I look forward to 'walking with you' through the next series of *Reflections*, and to sharing with you different points of view and areas of interest in all aspects of Early Childhood Education and Care, a truly wonderful and inspiring profession.

Until next time,

Jane Bourne
on behalf of Gowrie Australia



Rhonda can be contacted by email at
Rhonda.Livingstone@acecqa.gov.au

A recent ACECQA newsletter announced the appointment of Rhonda Livingstone to the role of National Education Leader. Rhonda, who has over 20 years' experience in early childhood (including at The Gowrie Queensland Inc), will provide national leadership, policy advice and recommendations on pedagogy and educational program and practice to enhance learning and development of children attending education and care services across Australia. Rhonda is looking forward to working collaboratively with the sector, peak organizations and regulatory authorities to further support best practice and assist the sector to implement the National Quality Framework.



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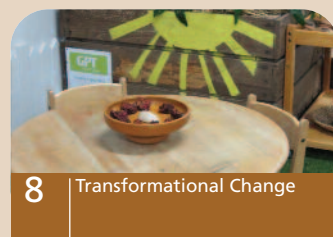
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Improving Mathematics Learning Outcomes for Young Aboriginal Children

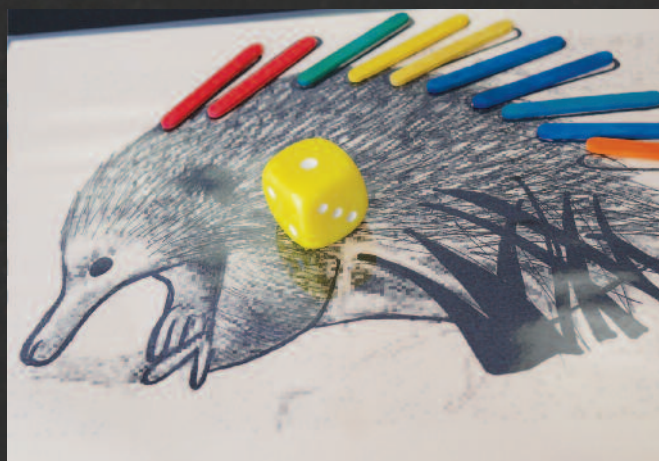
Authors:

Marina Papic

Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University

& Judy McKay-Tempest

Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU), Gowrie NSW



Children's learning experiences in the early years play an important role in setting foundations for lifelong learning (Clements & Sarama, 2011). Research shows that high quality developmentally appropriate early childhood programs produce both short and long-term effects on children's cognitive and social development (Barnett, Hustedt, Hawkinson, & Robin, 2007). In relation to mathematics, the quality and quantity of mathematical experiences in the early years are the main factors in determining future mathematical success.

PEAP: An early numeracy program

Macquarie University, in partnership with Gowrie NSW, implemented a three year numeracy program in fifteen early childhood services across NSW and the ACT, including thirteen Aboriginal-community controlled early childhood education and care (ECEC) services with a high percentage of enrolments from Aboriginal families. The numeracy program, *The Patterns and Early Algebra Preschool (PEAP) Professional Development Program*, engaged 66 early childhood educators and 255 children aged between four and five years. The aim of the program is to improve mathematics learning outcomes for young Aboriginal children as they transition into the first year of formal schooling. The program incorporated culturally appropriate resources and pedagogies that involved the use of both hands-on materials and imagery.

The program was designed to advance the content and pedagogical knowledge of early childhood educators who participated in intensive professional learning, which included:

- three training days;
- nine support visits;
- two follow-up support visits the year after program implementation;
- continuous online support.

All professional learning sessions took place in the individual centres where learning was practical and culturally appropriate.

Staff commented that they “loved the cultural content”; that the program was “culturally appropriate and supported a positive cultural identity for the children” and that it has provided them, as educators, with a new perspective to their teaching:

“I have been teaching for over twenty years ... this [PEAP] has reopened my eyes to teaching. It has given me that love back of teaching”.

The program, while developing broader mathematical knowledge, thinking and reasoning, focused specifically on developing children’s patterning skills. Research shows that ‘patterning is an essential skill in early mathematics learning particularly in the development of spatial awareness, sequencing and ordering, comparison and classification’ (Papic, 2007: 8). Research also shows that early development of pattern and structure positively influences overall mathematical achievement. Throughout the program children engaged in various patterning tasks where they copied, continued and created various patterns made with blocks, tiles and natural materials such as shells and pebbles. They explored spatial patterns through dice games, made hopscotch patterns, explored border patterns and three-dimensional patterns.

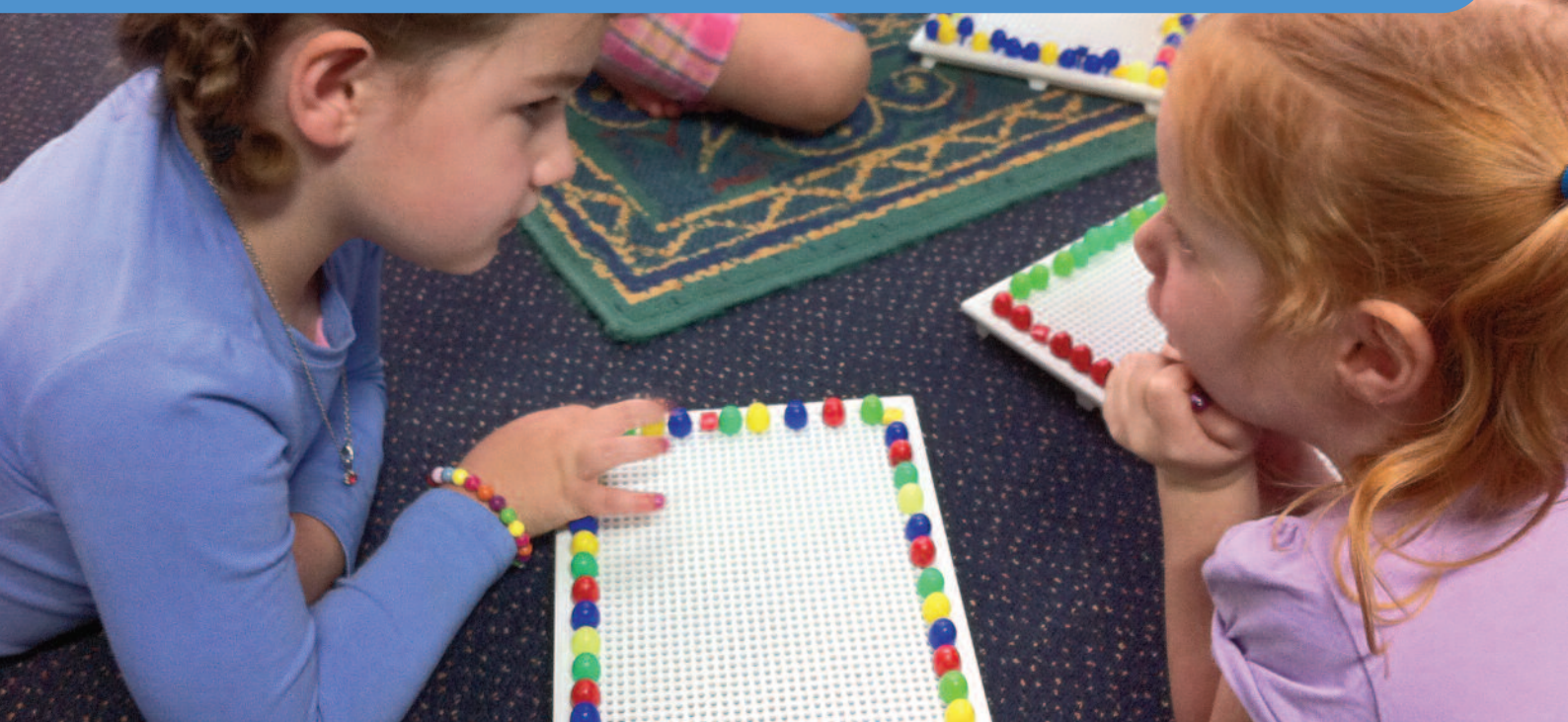
Children solved various problems and looked for similarities and differences between patterns. They were encouraged to explain their solution strategies when solving problems and to represent their patterns through drawings.

Through ongoing professional development, educators were supported to identify opportunities to integrate patterning and engage children in mathematical experiences throughout the day within the context of the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009). Teachers were supported through professional learning to document children’s mathematical explorations, learning, problem solving strategies and skill development so that they could plan appropriate experiences to build on children’s current mathematical skills and interests.



While block play provided opportunities for the exploration of measurement and play dough provided an opportunity to explore number, an interest in dinosaurs provided opportunities for building tower patterns.

Educators documented episodes of children communicating with one another about patterns: why it was a pattern, the number of times it was repeated, and what came next in the pattern. "The pattern is red, blue, yellow, green, I've made it many times. I had to put the green here as it wouldn't fit, but it's the pattern. What's your pattern?"



The impact of the program

The PEAP Professional Development Program had a positive impact on the early childhood educators. The professional learning addressed the personal fears and apprehensions educators had towards mathematics. Educators became more aware of the importance of patterning in early mathematics learning and on children's long-term mathematical development. They were also more aware of the mathematics children were engaging with through their play and they intentionally supported this by providing appropriate resources and materials. Educators frequently commented at the focus groups (conducted three times throughout the implementation) that they were a lot more aware of their role as an educator "to stimulate mathematical thinking" and "to model mathematical language." Educators had a greater understanding of early mathematical concepts and how to support these through their everyday curriculum. They also commented that "the program enhanced our confidence in sharing children's learning with families as we felt more knowledgeable ourselves [about what the children were capable of mathematically]".

The early childhood educators' documentation of children's mathematical learning over the twelve weeks of the program implementation, along with interview data from kindergarten teachers the year after implementation, highlighted the children's range of mathematical skills. These included number, counting, subitising (ie recognising the number of objects in a small group without counting), addition, subtraction, multiplication, comparison, measurement and, as would be expected, well developed skills in identifying, creating and representing patterns.

In analysing the kindergarten teacher interviews four additional themes were identified in their responses:

1. children displayed confidence in the classroom;
2. children were happy and settled;
3. children actively engaged and participated in activities;
4. children exemplified leadership in the classroom.

Most importantly, it was recognised that key to the success of the program was the strong relationship developed between the researchers, educators within the selected early childhood centres and the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) staff within Gowrie, NSW.

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The PEAP Professional Development Program is supported by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkages Grant (Papic, Mulligan, Highfield, McKay-Tempest, Garrett, Mandarakas, & Granite, 2011-2013). The authors would like to acknowledge the early childhood educators and children from the fifteen participating settings for their engagement and commitment to the project.

LEADERSHIP – the Art of People Leaders

Author:
Ros Cornish
CEO
Lady Gowrie Tasmania

Most people know a story about a highly intelligent, highly skilled person who has been promoted into a leadership position and has failed at the job. Those same people would also know a story of someone with solid, but not extraordinary intellectual abilities and technical skills that was promoted into a similar position and soared. Such anecdotes support the widespread belief that identifying people with the 'right stuff' to be leaders is more art, than science.

Leadership is different from management. Leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action, and both are necessary for success. Most organisations are 'over managed' and 'under led' and need to develop their capacity to exercise leadership. Successful organisations do not wait for leaders to come along but actively seek out people with leadership potential and expose them to career experiences designed to develop that potential. Talent selection and promotion establishes a path for career advancement and retains employees through motivation and satisfaction. With careful selection, nurturing and encouragement, many people can play important leadership roles in an organisation.

While improving the ability to lead, organisations should remember that strong leadership with weak management is not better, and is sometimes actually worse, than the reverse. The real challenge is to combine strong leadership and strong management and to use one to balance the other.

The difference between leadership and management is that *leadership* is about dealing with change, setting the direction of the organisation, the vision for the future and strategies for achieving that vision. *Management* is about dealing with complexity through planning and organisation.

The table below highlights these differences:

LEADERSHIP	MANAGEMENT
Setting direction	Planning and budgeting
Aligning people	Organising and staffing
Motivating and inspiring	Controlling activities and solving problems

But leaders cannot succeed on their own. Without strong relationships to provide perspective, it is easy to lose your way. Support teams help leaders to stay on course – they counsel at times of uncertainty, help in times of difficulty, and celebrate in times of success. Leaders need to develop mutually beneficial relationships - giving as much to their supporters as they get from them. Many leaders have had a mentor who changed their lives. The very best mentoring interactions spark mutual learning, exploration of mutual values and shared enjoyment. It is the two-way nature of the connection, which sustains it.

Leaders recognise that leadership is not about success or getting loyal employees to follow them. They know the key is having empowered leaders at all levels, to inspire those around them and empower other individuals to step up and lead. No one person can stay on top of everything – a model of distributed leadership has the potential to unleash expertise, ideas, vision and innovation. Even the most talented leaders require the input and leadership of others.

Leading can be high stress work. When you are responsible for people, children, families, organisations, outcomes and the constant uncertainties, one cannot avoid stress. Authentic leaders are acutely aware of the importance of staying grounded and balancing personal and professional responsibilities. This is essential to their effectiveness as leaders, enabling them to sustain their authenticity.



Transformational Change

Author:
Osanna Giang
Nanbaree Child Centre
Margaret St, Sydney CBD

The National Quality Standard (NQS) in Quality Area 3 (ACECQA, 2013) emphasises the importance of the physical environment. Nanbaree Child Centre is an inner city centre with a 'simulated' outdoor space. A transformational change was required to provide children with many and varied opportunities for meaningful experiences in the simulated outdoor environment. With any change, there is a gradual process over time that requires the input and contribution of all team members to ensure a sense of ownership and responsibility. We began a journey of transformational change in the outdoor environment about ten months ago and we are still continuing on this journey. It has been interesting and challenging to watch the space change and evolve over this period.

Background and the beginning

Nanbaree Child Centre is located in the Sydney CBD in a high-rise building. We do not have open windows or access to any outdoor space and as it is in an office building, the centre is not purpose built. There are many challenges with the physical layout of the centre that cannot be changed. However, despite the drawbacks, we are able to see the positives of being in this unique space. We are never affected by weather and are able to use the space all day everyday. Being in the city, it is also a benefit that we are indoors so we are not exposed to the smog left by heavy CBD traffic.

At the start of 2013 when I became Centre Director, the simulated outdoor space consisted of synthetic grass and soft fall, a sandpit, large bright coloured waffle blocks and a jumping balance beam. There were some small learning areas set up but there appeared to be little thought given to making these areas interesting and aesthetically pleasing. There were a number of other resources and pieces of equipment available but it seemed that educators were not motivated or interested in setting up an engaging outdoor environment. The overall feeling was that the outdoor space was not as important as an indoor space and was primarily a place for children to run. The attitude of the educators was to use the simulated outdoor space as an easy 'escape' where children could be wild and where educators did not need to engage with them. My feeling was that the physical environment was ordinary and that we needed to make it extraordinary and unique.

The vision

Everyone in the team contributed to a vision. We needed to be able to see a direction for what we wanted the environment to be like. Some changes were to happen immediately, but I also provided a timeframe of 12 months to allow for long-term changes to take place. The development of the simulated outdoor environment is an ongoing journey that will always be adapting and changing depending on the educators and children who attend the centre. As Rodd (2006: 26) states, "vision provides direction for and sustains action in the team, can boost morale and self-esteem and acts as a buffer against stress during periods of change".

Throughout the journey, we have met regularly to discuss and reflect on what we have achieved and changed. There are also consultations with families about what they want to see in the environment and children are involved in the process as it is essentially their space, their learning and working environment.

The required changes

The first change was the introduction of natural resources and plants into the environment. The bright coloured plastic resources needed to be replaced with natural resources and equipment to reflect an outdoor environment. Large wooden logs

were brought in and children were instantly attracted to them. Large garden boxes and plants were also purchased. As it is an indoor, air-conditioned environment, research was carried out to ensure that the correct plants were purchased for the environment. The planting out of the garden boxes involved the children and families who were encouraged to bring a plant in to add to the garden boxes. Edible herbs and vegetables were included for children to pick and graze on throughout the day. There was such a great sense of ownership and community surrounding these new garden boxes.

As we have a unique indoor/outdoor space, educators needed to read and research on how to engage children in physical play that encourages the use of gross motor muscles. In addition, because the space is shared between the two to three year room and three to five year room, educators needed to communicate with each other, to discuss and share, and to develop a communal sense of ownership and responsibility for the space.

Sustainable practices needed to be explored, discussed and promoted with children and families. Room routines needed to be developed to allow for flexible use of indoor and outdoor space across the centre. Overall, staff needed to understand and accept that change is inevitable and that critical reflection of the environment and practices is essential in order for continuous improvement (Rodd, 2006).

The benefits of this change

There are many benefits of changing the physical environment. The first, and most important, is children's increased engagement. This means fewer incidents and injuries, fewer behavioural problems and happier and more engaged children and educators.





Another benefit of the change is simply that it is more aesthetically pleasing. It engenders a greater respect for the resources provided and it becomes a place where educators and children want to be. Educators benefit from understanding the importance of the physical environment and the difference it can make to children's behaviour. Overall it will improve our rating of National Quality Area 3 (ACECQA, 2013).

Organisational culture and expectations of staff and teams

The NQS will guide and support the required changes with its focus on a physical environment that is considered, meaningful and engaging. There was a need for a shift in the workplace culture and attitudes. The culture has gradually changed through the recruitment of passionate and motivated educators and teachers who share in the vision and importance of an engaging physical environment. Educators' expertise and interest in areas has contributed to a change in practice through the allocation of areas of responsibility to specific people. Overall an appreciation of care and respect for the environment as a whole is growing. Just as care of the indoor environment has been embedded in everyday practice, so the outdoor space and resources are being promoted as deserving the same respect.

A clear vision and expectations of teachers and educators has been required, and continues to be important, followed by a transparent performance management process. The team is guided by the NQS, Regulations and clearly defined position descriptions which set out these expectations. Schrag, Nelson and Siminowsky (cited in Rodd, 2006) suggest six strategies to help staff cope with change. These strategies include communication, commitment, challenge, control, confidence and connection. It is essential that staff feel a sense of ownership to see the importance and reason for change.

Professional learning

As Centre Director, and in my capacity as a leader, I empower members of the team to be autonomous and thoughtful while in the workplace, so they remain passionate and responsible (Carter & Curtis, 2010).

Professional learning opportunities have included:

- Educators and teachers have engaged in professional learning sessions on how to set up engaging environments for children.

- Educators have visited other centres in the community for ideas and discussions with peers on creating innovative inspiring 'wow' environments for children.
- An ongoing supply of readings and textbooks on inspiring spaces for children from Australian and International publishers has been made available.
- Reflection exercises have occurred with educators and teachers leading to 'inquiry' questions, and to seeing things from a child's perspective.

Evaluation and celebrations

Success, however small, needs to be celebrated and our Quality Improvement Plan has proved invaluable in documenting the journey we are on. Families, community members, educators and teachers have the opportunity to view and comment on our progress.

Our success is measured in various ways:

- when educators walk into a space and feel that they too want to play;
- when children are engaged in experiences for lengths of time facilitated by educators using open ended questions;
- when children's experiences are visible through meaningful authentic documentation of the learning that has occurred each day;
- when families and community visitors recognise and comment on the environment and the engagement of children and educators.

Providing an engaging and natural environment in a simulated outdoor environment is definitely a long and challenging journey. At the same time, it is an invigorating challenge that brings great rewards. There is no end to our learning journey, once we reach our vision, it will be time to reflect and look towards a new vision for the physical environment at Nanbaree Child Centre.

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Teachers and Academics Researching Together: **children's views on play**

Authors:
Dr Maryanne Theobald
& Prof Susan Danby
School of Early Childhood, QUT



An international early years project led by QUT and University of Iceland researchers has investigated children's accounts of play and the teacher's role in play in kindergarten settings. While most commonly associated with young children's activities and the 'work' of childhood, play is recognised also as an activity that extends over the life span, from early childhood to adulthood, and across cultures, worldwide. Play, often described as an essential part of childhood, is viewed as a time for independent and shared exploration, problem solving and creativity.

As shown in national and state policy and curriculum documents, play is being subjected increasingly to specific guidelines that address the physical environment and educator involvement in early years settings. Parents and educators have strong opinions regarding the value and place of play. Children also have strong views about play, although little is known about their views and what they think play encompasses, and the value of play in their everyday lives.

The study

This study involved a collaborative effort with experienced senior teacher-researchers in centres in Australia and Iceland examining comparative understandings of young children's views on play across the two countries. The Australian project was a joint initiative with teachers from Gowrie Queensland affiliated kindergartens, and initially designed in collaboration with Jane Bourne, CEO of The Gowrie (QLD) Inc. The research team were Jane Bourne, Claire Carter-Jones, Desley Jones, Helen Knaggs, and Sharon Ross (The Gowrie QLD); Maryanne Theobald and Susan Danby (QUT); and Johanna Einarsdottir (University of Iceland). One aspect of involvement was the opportunity for shared professional interactions that promoted professional renewal through reflection and research.

The research questions of the project were:

- How do children account for their activities in kindergarten?
- What counts as everyday play practices for children?
- What do children like or dislike about play?
- What is the teacher's role in play activities?

In 2013, the teacher-researchers video-recorded segments of children's play in their classrooms. They then selected video extracts to play back to the children involved to explore their views on what was happening. These interviews with the children were

video recorded. Collaborative workshop sessions were held where teacher and academic researchers came together to plan, share and discuss their experiences and to collaboratively analyse the video-recordings of children's play and also the children's views. These discussions provided multiple perspectives and insights into what counts as play, working to reframe, rethink and redefine the role of play and also educators' roles in educating young children.

Children's views of play

The children's views of play discussed below were taken from an interview with a group of children at one centre. The teachers, on initially viewing the video-recordings, commented on how surprised they were that the children did not use the term 'play' to describe their activities in the classroom and playground. This observation led to quite a lot of discussion and reflection.

Extracts 1 and 2, below, show the children's responses after they viewed a video recording of themselves involved in making a pretend party that day. We introduce these two extracts as a way of thinking about how children might view play, and how teachers might view play, with a view to realising that there may actually be different understandings being generated. Pseudonyms replaced the names of the participants in the extracts below.

Extract 1

- T-Researcher: All of those things you were doing for the party, what would you call that?
- Henry: Build...
- T-Researcher: Have you got a word that you'd call it? Building?
- Henry: Yep. We build the thing up so the wood couldn't break.
- T-Researcher: Yes, I saw that big building part you'd done with lots of repairs.
- T-Researcher: Is there anything else that you do at kindy that you call playing?
- Henry: What else would you do at kindy that would be playing?
- T-Researcher: Playing in a mud patch.
- Henry: That's playing, isn't it?
- T-Researcher: Yeah.
- Henry:

In Extract 1, the teacher-researcher opened the discussion with a question that encouraged the children to name the activity they had been doing. Henry initially responded by describing his actions of building. At this point, he did not describe the activity as play. When the teacher-researcher introduced the term 'play', Henry took up this term in his response, "playing in a mud patch". Play, after the teacher used this concept, now became part of Henry's description of the activity. Before that, he had described a much more specific and work-oriented activity, that of building. In the next extract, Extract 2, the teacher-researcher continued probing what was meant by play.

Extract 2

T-Researcher: Anything else that can be - when you're painting, Katie, because I know you like painting, do you call that playing or not?

Katie: No.

T-Researcher: No? Would you - what would you call it?

Katie: I'd call it painting.

T-Researcher: You would call it painting, okay. What about when we're on the carpet and we're doing music together or we're sharing a story together? Do you call that playing?

Katie: No.

T-Researcher: What about you, Nina? Would you call it playing?

Nina: I would call it listening.

T-Researcher: You'd call it listening. That's probably a good word for it. We say we have to listen on the carpet, don't we? Okay, thank you for that.

After the teacher continued to ask the children about what activities constituted play, similar to Extract 1, Nina and Katie distinguished between 'play' and 'not play.' Nina resisted naming the teacher's suggestion that the activities were play. Nina rejected the teacher's suggestion that play included activities such as reading stories and listening to music; rather she named these activities as 'listening'. Similarly, Katie provided a more specific description, naming the activity as 'painting' rather than as 'play'.

In showing these two extracts, we see that the children and teacher describe play from different standpoints, highlighting how children's own perspectives can disrupt everyday concepts such as play used in early childhood education. The children only used the term 'play' after it was introduced by the teacher.

Reflections

Investigating children's views builds evidence to support practice and enhance professional understandings. Evidence-based practice involves "engagement with emerging evidence for understanding issues relevant to our work as educators" (Busch & Theobald, 2013: 318). As found in this study, such an evidence base provides a foundation for professional renewal. As the teacher-researcher from Extracts 1 and 2 commented in her reflections:

I still feel that perhaps their play is so much a part of them, at this age – an extension of what they are thinking and feeling, that they do not name it as you might a separate thing that you do. Play is part of who they are. I felt, in all the interviews, that their naming of what they were doing as "playing" or their identification of what was "play" came from my input rather than their understanding.

These discussions by the children, and the teachers' responses during the workshop, open up possibilities for considering the role of play in early childhood classrooms. Why did the children not describe their activities as play? Was it because they were more focused on the specifics of the activity and were orienting to that? Both extracts suggest that play is a category established by the teacher, and used only by the children when introduced by the teacher, as shown in Extract 1. In this, we are reminded of Denzin's (1982) view that play is the work of children; but is this an adult construction? What would the children make of that?

Acknowledgments

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Relationships always leave a mark - like the wake of a ship!

Author:

Rod Soper

Senior Associate
Semann & Slattery

Do you remember that teacher at school who you felt just chewed you up and spat you out? Do you remember that other teacher who inspired you to try and to succeed? We all have stories to tell, some incredibly funny now that we look back, and others, which are deeply painful. One of the things these experiences have in common is the fact that these relationships left us with a lasting legacy and we were powerfully influenced by them. As adults, we have to ask ourselves, what do we leave behind when we exit a space, what kind of 'wake' do we leave?

The concept of the 'wake' may be familiar when you think of a boat powering through the water. It is the track it leaves behind. When a boat is travelling in a straight and focused direction, the wake is clear and straight. When a boat is out of control the wake is chaotic. Tornadoes and bushfires also leave a chaotic 'wake'. Our daily relationships are exactly the same.

Dr. Henry Cloud (cited in Mertz, 2012) outlines two sides of a 'wake' - tasks and relationships. This dual concept centres around firstly what was accomplished, and secondly, how people were dealt with. He explains, "the wake is the results we leave behind. And the wake doesn't lie and it doesn't care about excuses. It is what it is. No matter what we try to do to explain why, or to justify what the wake is, it still remains. It is what we leave behind and is our record."

I was speaking to a retired CEO of a multinational organisation about this idea of what we leave behind. He told me about his merchant navy days and his first day on the bridge on a large container ship. He recalled what the ship's captain had advised him to remember when checking on whether the ship was on track, "Once the coordinates have been put in correctly and the ship has set sail, turn and look behind you. If the wake of the ship is clear and straight then all the applied effort has been worthwhile." We need to apply this same idea to our professional and personal relationships. We need to look behind us and look at what remains. Do the people you have just interacted with look like they are regrouping after a hurricane, or do they look energised and their actions demonstrate purpose and influence?

It is a tough question as it means we have to be brutally honest with ourselves and sometimes it is not always great news. I remember working in an environment where staff members cheered when a particular person went home for the day. The comments highlighted to me that this particular staff member simply did not check his 'wake', leaving a path of broken relationships behind every interaction.

I have also been in the opposite environment where a staff member brings people to life, energises them to be great and unlocks their passions. These experiences are summarised in the notion of, 'you reap what you sow'! Three questions always help me when I am preparing tasks and considering relationships:

1. What am I going to sow into me?
2. What am I going to sow into others?
3. What am I going to sow into my workplace?

When I am purposeful around these questions there is a greater chance that I will reap greatness and my 'wake' is purposely inspired.

The question I have for you is, 'Which will you be'? Will you lead yourself and others from good to great, or will your interactions and behaviours leave them deteriorated and lifeless? The great thing is YOU get to decide the outcome. You and you alone!

With these thoughts in mind here are some ideas to help you make some changes where they are required:

1. Have a mind that is open to everything and attached to nothing.

We need to let go of the instinct to be right all the time, or the desire to win at all costs. We need to have an open mind which resists these attachments, so that we can see what might be possible, rather than insist on what is currently available.

2. To solve a problem, a new mindset is required.

We need to change the way we think about challenges. If our thoughts are filled with problems, it is highly likely that we will perpetuate them.

3. Justified resentments = zero, nitch, nil.

There is never a time when it's okay to hold on to resentment. Anytime we are filled with resentment, we're turning the controls of our emotional life over to others to manipulate. There is no wisdom in this action!

4. Activate passion.

The passions that bubble inside us, urging us to take risks and follow our dreams are the intuitive connections to the purpose of our hearts. We must remain true to who we are. We must let it flow out of us and be the change we want to see.

5. Invest in strengths.

Rath and Conchie (cited in McMolitor, 2012) observe that when an organisation fails to focus on an individual's strengths, the chances of an employee being engaged are dismally low. However, when the focus is on staff strengths, the odds soar. What a turn around in one simple step!

6. Understand the needs of your team.

Rath and Conchie (cited in McMolitor, 2012) identify four basic needs of team members. These are: trust, compassion, stability and hope. As we develop and demonstrate these characteristics within ourselves, so we develop them in others.

7. Ontology (the study of the nature of existence) matters.

Our sense of self and who we are is so important. We must know what inspires us and what draws us on. We need to be able to measure our being, becoming and belonging. When these three elements are in balance and have traction in our life we will have a new sense of purpose and resilience.

8. Pursue excellence.

What we pursue will determine the paths we travel, the people we associate with, the character we develop, and ultimately, what we do or don't leave behind. The manner, method, and motivation behind any pursuit will determine our 'wake'. A great list to get us on track includes values like: excellence, elegance, truth, the 'what if', courage, values, quality relationships, service to others, knowledge and something bigger than oneself.

These ideas, when applied deliberately and consistently will have an amazing impact upon your tasks and relationships, and ultimately your 'wake'. In my experience, applying these ideas has resulted in significant growth within myself, while those around me have found new possibilities in our relationships and in the tasks we turn our hands to collaboratively.

It is time to be brave, to look over your shoulder and see what you have left behind. If you really want a challenge, ask your co-workers, teammates and family the following question: "What 'wake' do I leave in my actions and in our interactions?" Start with those who care deeply for you so that you can learn and grow but remain safe and cared for too. Then start on the more challenging job – those whom you are challenged by, or with whom you have strained relationships.

This kind of critical reflection is a deeply personal one with the potential for powerful, life changing results. It's time to check your coordinates and position so that you can move actively and strategically ahead. If you want your ship to be on course to great things, then you must look back, check your 'wake', and actively make the right adjustments so that all future relationships are deliberate, purposeful and effective.

Rod Soper leads the research and professional learning teams at Semann & Slattery. His expertise and research interests include critical thinking, transformational pedagogy and leadership design.

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Learning More than One Language as a Young Child: the misconceptions versus the real advantages

Author:
Dr Ana Mantilla
Executive Assistant
Centre for EC Futures
Australian Catholic University

I have a five year old son who is chatty with close friends but otherwise a quiet, reserved child. Having completed a doctoral thesis in second language learning in early childhood, I find it fascinating that many well intentioned friends and relatives, educators and medical practitioners seem to feel that my son's reserved demeanour is a language issue caused by the fact that he speaks two languages. The question that I often hear is, "**Does he speak English?**" And, to clarify, he does, he has been learning Spanish (at home with my husband and me) and English (at child care, kindergarten, everywhere else really) simultaneously from birth, and is fluent in both languages. It is clear to those of us who are part of his privileged circle that the **issue** here is not language. It seems then that what is hidden behind the question asked can be the preconceived idea that his quietness is **due** to bilingualism. So, my hope with this article is to discuss why words like 'silence', 'confusion', and 'delay' should *not* be associated with bi(multi)lingualism and to focus on explaining the multiple positive advantages associated with learning more than one language from an early age. My aim - as a passionate language advocate - is to reach families who are raising bi(multi)lingual children, and encourage monolingual families and educators (in early childhood and beyond) to recognise the value of second language teaching and learning.

Young children and second languages

There are many ways for children to learn two languages - the languages can be learnt simultaneously (usually from birth), or a second language can be learnt after learning the first (usually after three years of age). Within both groups, there are some who have many opportunities to practise both languages (e.g. a child who learns a second language at home that can also easily be used with an extended network of people and in a variety of places, or a child who migrates to a new country) and those who have fewer opportunities to use the language (e.g. a child who uses a minority language at home with one parent and can thus sometimes understand this language but not speak it, or a child learning through formal schooling).

Interestingly, despite these differences, young children are viewed as "easy learners" who learn rapidly, with little effort and in a similar manner. The process of learning for them however is influenced by individual learner factors including age, aptitude, personality traits, attitudes and motivation, individual learning techniques, situational factors like the different scenarios described before, cultural styles of learning and teaching environments (usually language schools or lessons at home or school). Consequently, not all children will learn a second language quickly but, inevitably, in the long-term, there are important benefits in starting early. Young children "are better at hearing and producing new sounds" (Lotherington, 2000: 20) and will generally have more time to practise and more years of exposure to the second language, thus allowing them to build an academic proficiency in that language. Most researchers agree that, in the long run, early starters become more proficient (Singleton, 2002) and do better in all aspects of language use (Rado, 1991).

The multiple benefits of learning two languages (or more)

Speaking more than one language is associated with linguistic and non-linguistic benefits. Research shows that individuals who are competent in more than one language - in comparison to monolinguals - have superior:

- concept formation (general reasoning, divergent and creative thinking and problem-solving abilities, analytic orientation to language, superior semantic development, linguistic awareness, categorization skills, etc.);
- cognitive flexibility (i.e. the ability to adjust thinking to cope with different situations and/or respond to stimuli); and
- symbolic and visual-spatial skills.

Even learners with limited contact with a second language, show more positive attitudes to other languages and the people and culture of those who speak them and also have "greater flexibility in adapting to new linguistic systems" (Moore, 2006: 135). The latter, can help explain why Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993: 423) found that young children in a primary school in Melbourne who received Italian classes for one hour per week for six months at school had a "significantly higher level of word awareness than their monolingual counterparts", which was likely to advance the age of reading readiness in English (the first language for this particular group of students). So, in brief, individuals who learn two languages or more, not only become

knowledgeable in another culture and way of communicating, but they also gain all the multiple fascinating benefits I have listed. And, to top it all, bi(multi)lingualism is steadily becoming "critical to [societies'] economic success, national security, and international relations" (Rhodes & Pufahl, 2009).

The misconceptions about bilingualism

Research keeps getting better for second language learners. So, shouldn't we be pushing for child care centres, kindergartens and schools to ensure a high quality provision of second language teaching for our children? Yes, but given the questions that I get asked, it seems clear to me that many of the misconceptions that surround bilingualism are based on outdated studies from the first half of the 20th century. In brief, these studies were mostly done in the United States and compared bilingual immigrants with monolinguals, without controlling socioeconomic variables or considering differences on the level of bilingualism between participants. These flawed studies 'demonstrated' that bilinguals had less verbal abilities and vocabulary, and less competence in written work. Some studies even suggested negative effects like "mental confusion, intellectual retardation, academic difficulties and emotional problems" (cited in Makin et al., 1995: 38). As a result, bilingualism was wrongly associated with language (and developmental) delays and confusion. It is unfortunate that some of these misconceptions still prevail, even though current research has highlighted the inconsistencies of these findings and proved multiple individual and cultural benefits.

Final Thoughts

If you have contact with children who are learning a different language at home, I would encourage you to support this, learn more about the process (and the options depending on the number of languages spoken and the opportunities to use these languages outside the home) and use facts to counteract any negative feedback. If you are interested in languages, try to get children started early, pay close attention to the local primary school's LOTE (languages other than English) program and make sure to advocate for it. These programs are sadly, to date, the dispensable parts of the curriculum, despite the outstanding advantages explained here. When it comes to second language in Australia, we (families, second language teachers and advocates) need to ensure these get the place they should have in children's lives, and in the early childhood/ primary and secondary curriculum.

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Promoting Mental Health in Early Childhood

Reflections from the Infant and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing Conference (IECSEW) Canberra, 2013

The Infant and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing (IECESW) Conference held in Canberra in 2013 highlighted the state of mental health in Australia. With fifteen percent of four to fifteen years olds diagnosed with a mental health issue, the role that early childhood can play in prevention and intervention was addressed.

The conference took a multidisciplinary approach with participants coming from various fields including education and psychology, as well as medical specialties such as child psychiatry, nursing, occupational therapy, social work, play therapy and more. Local and international keynote speakers, workshops and poster presentations explored the range of research and innovative practices being pursued in the quest for the social and emotional wellbeing.

This article will draw on the presentations of two of the keynote speakers: Professor Jude Cassidy, Professor of Psychology, University of Maryland (USA), and Doctor Deborah Weatherston, Director of the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (USA).

In an address titled, *Secure Attachment: A Foundation for Children's Healthy Development*, Professor Cassidy discussed the importance of secure attachment for "healthy child functioning". In large part, this importance is a result of the cognitive and emotional learning that takes place within secure relationships.

Secure attachment relationships result in 'statistical learning' for infants and young children: learning the probability of what will happen in relationships and what can be expected. Cognitive learning takes the form of representations of others based on experiences and generalisations of other people, and of the self, with an over-riding recognition that 'I am loved and lovable'. Emotional learning centres on emotional regulation, which is learnt by infants and young children when they have someone to help them experience the hidden regulators of humans: touch, warmth, smell, movement, stillness, synchrony of breathing, texture, softness and stroke.

Professor Cassidy elaborated on how positive cognitive models and emotion regulation skills are important for healthy development, particularly in the areas of:

- **Relationship functioning**

By preschool age, children vary in their capacity for successful peer relationships. Children who feel secure will behave 'better', are more pro-social and less aggressive. A lack of security can lead to risky behaviour and a higher tendency to drop out of high school.



Author:
Desley Jones

Director
Ballymore
Kindergarten,
Brisbane

• **Psychopathology**

While psychopathology can result from predisposition genetics, attachment can also play a role. Cognition contributes to depression and anxiety insofar as the principle issue is the ability to make and maintain affectionate relationships. When psychopathology results from poor emotion regulation, secure relationships can provide a protective factor.

• **School readiness**

Professor Cassidy stressed that school readiness is so much more than literacy and numeracy skills. Emotional competency, relationship skills and self-regulation are all imperative for a successful transition to school. Secure attachments can contribute to each by enhancing:

1. representation of others as trustworthy;
2. positive representations of self;
3. positive peer relationships;
4. social competence;
5. emotional regulation;
6. exploratory competence through problem solving, being calmer and more focussed;
7. executive functioning.

According to Professor Cassidy, it is never too late to change a pattern of attachment. Reflective functioning, which involves being mindful of one's own state and having empathy with the mental and emotional state of others, is a primary skill for practitioners to develop in promoting secure attachment. The foundations of a child's social development will rest on the child's self-regulation, sense of agency and psychological security.

Doctor Deborah Weatherston's address was titled, *Developing Professional Capacity to Foster Infant and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing*. Dr Weatherston also placed emphasis on reflective practice and on using relationships to promote social and emotional wellbeing. She considers social and emotional development to be the cornerstones of healthy development, providing the foundation upon which all future development rests, including physical growth, health, cognitive skills and communication. She concedes that we have to work hard to make people understand just how important it is to our health and development. The early years represent an unparalleled opportunity for true prevention policies that promote positive healthy development that will resonate throughout a child's life.

Dr Weatherston asserts that we need professionals who understand the importance of early relationship development to social and emotional health and who attend to, support, nurture and enhance early developing relationships in diverse settings. Dr Weatherston suggests that in order to support children's and families' social and emotional wellbeing early childhood professionals require:

- Understanding and recognition of the significance and complexities of early brain development, developmental competencies in infancy and attachment theory.
- Well developed observations skills in order to understand relationships for, with, and between children.
- Trusting relationships with families in order to develop both formal and informal skills in offering developmental guidance.
- Time for reflection that supports professionals to:
 - examine their own thoughts and feelings, strengths and growth areas;
 - consult regularly with supervisors to understand their own experiences and vulnerabilities;
 - share the feelings experienced in the presence of children and families;
 - allow feelings to inform the relationship work;
 - remain open, curious and emotionally available to families, to supervisors and to themselves.

Dr Weatherston's closing remarks reiterated that relationships should be the overarching theme in all work with children and families, and that reflection is essential because it encourages practitioners to be curious and to stay the course, not to give up when things get too hard.

The conference succeeded in combining both a sobering realisation of the scope of mental health issues in our community and a sense of possibility for change, particularly when practitioners within and between professional fields share strengths to work together towards common goals. Prevention and intervention in the early childhood years have the potential to impact significantly on the mental health of children now, and into the future.

National and International CONFERENCE UPDATE



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The Gowrie (Qld) Inc 2014 Conference

Ways of Looking "Exploration of learning and celebrating individuality"

5 April 2014

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Qld

<http://www.gowrieqld.com.au/conferences/>

2014 World Forum on Early Care and Education

6 – 9 May 2014

San Juan, Puerto Rico

<http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/get-involved-2/2014-world-forum/>

2014 Early Childhood Education Conference

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Caulfield Racecourse, Melbourne, Vic

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Unique International Trauma Conference

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<http://wired.ivvy.com/event/CTC14/>

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