
Comment

This special issue of *Early Childhood Folio* focuses on developments and possibilities in early childhood research and pedagogies that can serve as a catalyst for thinking, discussion, and transformative practice. The articles respond to a call set within a contemporary context, and they consider how developments might respond to issues of our time. What are the pressures on those participating in early childhood education? How might research and pedagogy respond to these pressures? How do these responses link to values and the purposes of early childhood education? These were some of the questions raised in the call for papers.

Alison Clark's article "What's Time Got to Do with It?" brings an international dimension to *Early Childhood Folio* with findings from her 2-year study, "Slow Knowledge and the Unhurried Child" (2020–2021) funded by the Froebel Trust. Against the backdrop of concern about time pressures in early childhood education, Alison drew on interviews with educators, researchers and teachers from 11 countries to explore the concept of slow pedagogy, and what "slow practices" and "slow and patient research" might look like. Debate about the relationship with time is highly relevant to Aotearoa New Zealand. Pressures arising from the complexity of working in early childhood education exist across the whole sector, and some face additional pressures from inadequate staffing and working conditions. Alison's final commentary is highly relevant. "This is more a question of reclaiming opportunities for young children that places play at the centre and gives permission for educators and researchers to 'be with' children. This reclaiming may also involve resistance to policies that increase time pressures and that also perpetuate the image of 'the hurried child'."

Jacqui Lees, while researching on a TLRI project around children's relationship with land and place was captured by Alison's ideas and the concept of slow pedagogy. The teaching team at Pakuranga Baptist Kindergarten employs inquiry-based projects and the pedagogy of listening in their work with children. The concept of slow pedagogy and framing explored in Alison's book resonated with how they worked—in this approach they saw potential to deepen the pedagogy of listening. In her article, Jacqui explores the three interconnected themes in slow

pedagogies of "being with", "going off track", and "diving deep". She brings these themes to life by using concrete examples and images from children's regular walks around the Tamaki estuary and work in the kindergarten. Her article illustrates the depth of meaningful learning and children's relationship with place that can be supported in a slow pedagogy approach. The article will be inspirational for readers who are interested in exploring ideas of slow pedagogy within an Aotearoa New Zealand context.

"Refocusing Care as Central to Teaching within ECE" is authored by teacher education academics Sonya Gaches, Alex Gunn, Michael Gaffney, and Roberta Carvalho. Their article has some attunement with concepts explored in slow pedagogy in its focus on "care-full teaching" which the authors define as "an idea that [they] use to bring together ideas of teacher decision making, being and teaching carefully, and choice making by teachers, as they respond and reciprocate with children in close and meaningful interactions". In particular, these authors take a critical and political lens by visiting lecturers documenting moments of care and asking student teachers about "their views on what might have been happening for the child; what previous knowledge they were drawing on when they were in the moment; any particular learning dispositions or working theories that may have been in mind; and anything else they might think is relevant to what happened and why". Thematic analysis is then used to analyse the narratives, including the teacher's comments and reflections, to provide a comprehensive account of the teaching. The process is exemplified by two of these narratives. The authors then point ahead to potential use of the narratives and interview data to help student teachers "think about the multilayered and complex political decision making and relational ethics within moments of care-full teaching in early childhood education". The article offers insightful thinking about the purpose of education and the need to refocus care as central to education.

Amanda White explores the role of 1-year-old toddlers as story-makers in her article "Children at the Centre: Exploring StoryWeb Relationships across Home and ECE". The article offers new ways to think about stories, story roles, and relationships from a focus on story reading and print-based texts that has tended to dominate Western

literature to considering stories as “multimodal, relational, and collaborative”. Slow pedagogy also comes in to play here since teachers need to slow down and recognise toddlers’ “signs of meaning” and share these across settings. Amanda extends the ideas from Sommer et al.’s (2013) dual-socialisation butterfly model to construct a useful model that retains the importance of a child’s agency while making the complexity of relational connections visible. An example of one personal story interaction involving a child, a teacher, and a parent offers a useful illustration. The article ends with reflective questions that are highly relevant to teachers/kaiako in different settings and could be a useful resource for professional development and internal evaluations.

The article by Peng Xu and Jenny Ritchie, “The Expanding Conceptions of Child Citizens in the Early Years: Perspectives from Chinese Kindergarten Teachers” builds from an earlier article published in *Early Childhood Folio* that examined views of children’s citizenship held by kindergarten teachers in Aotearoa. This new article explores ways in which children’s

citizenship is understood and enacted from a Chinese world view. The article makes a valuable contribution to the field by offering insight into Chinese conceptions of child citizens, which is an area that has been less well researched. In foregrounding the values of local culture and history, teachers in the study pinpointed some shared aspects of cultural values “such as the Confucian value *ren* (benevolence) and the Māori value *manaakitanga*, both foregrounding care, respect and love”. The authors suggest it would be fruitful to further explore and understand these shared values. They might be woven into the local curriculum of early childhood settings, “shaping Chinese children’s perceptions as being citizens who are welcomed, respected, and included in Aotearoa”.

The final article in this issue, “Mentalisation in Aotearoa Early Childhood Education: A Content Analysis of Te Whāriki” responds to the complex and multifaceted work of early childhood teachers by focusing on the cognitive process of mentalisation, which the authors define for this analysis as “the cognitive processes utilised by teachers as they imagine

and make meaning of children’s psychological traits and experiences”. Authors Melanie Audier, Myron Dean Friesen, and E. Jayne White examined expectations for mentalisation through a content analysis of *Te Whāriki* and considered implications of their analysis for teaching practice. The process of their thorough and careful analysis is explained, and a very useful table illustrates the nature of text that was coded to each of the 11 mentalisation categories used. The analysis reveals that various ways in which teachers are expected to use mentalisation are embedded in *Te Whāriki*, particularly in the *Contribution*, *Belonging*, *Exploration*, and *Wellbeing* strands, and particularly related to cognition and emotion. The article ends with discussion of how this skill can be explicitly incorporated in teacher education, professional development, and teaching practice to enrich children’s learning experiences.

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Editor