
COMMENT

This 13th issue of *Early Childhood Folio* represents the diversity and quality of research being undertaken in New Zealand through university theses, and by researchers and teachers working together in collaborative partnerships. All of the articles present research-based evidence from New Zealand early childhood settings.

The articles address a range of themes that relate to key contemporary issues in early childhood education. Children's learning, identity and wellbeing are embedded within family and community contexts, and three of the articles examine how relationships with these wider contexts can be strengthened and utilised. These include supporting the transition from early childhood to school, finding out about the "funds of knowledge" parents hold about their children's literacies and an examination of how to strengthen responsive and reciprocal relationships in an integrated early childhood centre. Several articles offer insights and challenges about particular pedagogical practices. Lesley Rameka discusses the journey of participants in a bilingual early childhood centre in developing an assessment framework that embeds Māori epistemologies, ideas of valued learning and cultural norms and understandings. Alexandra Gunn's article on heteronormative discourse in government reports and policy challenges participants in early childhood education to use a wider view of "parent" that does not marginalise families with lesbian or gay parents. And Ann Hatherly examines the "human element" of ICT use, arguing that the motivation and courage of teachers to examine their own practice and philosophy is what counts in opening up possibilities for children's learning. Another main theme is educational leadership, an area that has been under-researched in the early childhood sector.

The collaborative partnerships that have been the basis for many of the articles in this issue represent a relatively new way of researching in early childhood education, with teachers and researchers working together to explore

and promote teaching and learning processes. Such partnerships have been made possible by government policy initiatives, in particular the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative, Centres of Innovation, the ICT Strategic Framework for Education and assessment exemplar development. The research partnerships have promoted an exciting focus on critical enquiry closely linked to theoretical thinking. Such enquiry is contributing to a transformation in New Zealand's early childhood education landscape, and a greater willingness to experiment, to share good practice-based research and to think about what might be possible in promoting teaching and learning.

The May 2009 government budget halted the Centres of Innovation programme and removed professional development funding support for the implementation of the assessment exemplars and ICT framework. The loss of support for these programmes has dismayed many in the early childhood sector and represents a challenge as to how the culture of research-based enquiry, collaboration and dissemination can be sustained and built on. These were early childhood education strategic plan initiatives. Janette Kelly, whose review of *Politics in the Playground* appears in this issue, reminds us of Helen May's words: "we needed to ensure that we were active" in the construction of the blueprint for early childhood education. Kelly argues that "concerted and cohesive advocacy" must continue.

Early Childhood Folio will continue to play a role as a respected peer-reviewed journal that is primarily targeted to practitioners. We now have a solid subscription rate of over 1,000. Next year we move to two issues a year and publication of a special issue. We encourage contributions from experienced and emerging researchers.

Linda Mitchell
Managing Editor