Editorial

Early Childhood Education: Politics, Policy and Curriculum Issues

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This edition of He Kupu is in a new revised format divided into three sections. The first section is dedicated to practitioner researchers, the second forms the Special Edition and the final section comprises book reviews. As the description suggests the practitioner researcher section is predominantly written by teachers writing on a variety of topics of their choice. We are delighted to present in this edition three papers written by students from New Zealand Tertiary College, who are also full time teachers. Each paper is quite different in character: Marilee Pretorius has written on child care for the very young, Debra Ross writes about the protection for children in early childcare and Mamta Sen Gupta has produced an examination of partnerships in education.

When writing about issues connected with politics, policy and curriculum in early childhood education, the discussion can get lost as to why certain policies have been adopted. Researching policy and curriculum reveals key ideological positions that have lead to the adoption of particular policy frameworks. These frameworks derive from global policy decisions that are interpreted locally, in ways that often do not match with local circumstances (De Alba, González-Gaudiano, Lankshear & Peters 2000). This disconnect between global and local policy forms one of the underlying themes of this edition that includes papers on: early childhood tertiary providers working in a transdisciplinary environment, welfare and care in early childhood education and the interpretation of policy in Africa and the United States of America.

The research papers all take very different perspectives on the Special Edition theme of politics, policy and curriculum. Kym Mcfarlane writes on early childhood education, care, and the politics of existing ‘in between’. Macfarlane concentrates on the way in which the complex transdisciplinary nature of early childhood educators is too often overlooked. With reference to the degree programme offered at Griffiths University, Macfarlane outlines the interconnections that have been made in the Bachelor of Child and Family Studies. It is in this course that early childhood education, health and community are offered for intending professionals seeking to encompass the wide variety of roles called upon by the professions. The discussion and the political ramifications of such positioning ‘in between’ is carefully analysed by Macfarlane in her paper.

The broader outlook of early childhood care inclusive of welfare, health and education is discussed by Helen Butcher and Richard Eke, from the University of the West of England. With the reduction in welfare provision in the United Kingdom they write on the want of ‘kindness’, demonstrated by the withdrawal of services and apparent disdain shown by different political bodies and organisations within the social fabric of the country. The authors consider the
effect of social deprivation in the light of the recent civil disturbance in the U.K., and the response of the politicians and media to these events. The political rhetoric reveals for Butcher and Eke the lack of kindness, and the short sightedness in the current funding cuts. The implications for early childhood education and the effects of the inspectorate in ignoring the need to consider respect and ‘care’, are elaborated on with reference to the kindness shown by children and the impact that kindness is seen to have on children’s learning.

This edition emphasises the complexity of local conditions for early childhood education when seen in the context of global policy. Global organisations such as United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Bank or the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are discussed in the paper by Mark Nagasawa of the Erikson Institute and Beth Blue Swadener of Arizona State University. Having outlined three different approaches to global change and identified the dominant ideologies in global education, Nagasawa and Swadener address the situation in Kenya, where the “common sense” global solutions have impacted negatively - as “bad sense” in the local setting. The need for greater co-operation and development of policy with stakeholders is vividly described in the account that follows of educational policy in Arizona. The paper summarises the dilemma of acknowledging global political systems without sufficient acknowledgement of local diversification.

This edition includes three book reviews by staff from New Zealand Tertiary College reflecting the diverse interests of the staff. Evonne Philips has written a review of the book by Christensen McFadyen and Lois Aldridge, entitled Critical pedagogy for early childhood and elementary educators. Continuing with the themes in the four special edition papers this book examines the impact of global political discourse on classroom practice. Pearl Da Silva has chosen a book by Linda Miller, Carmen Dalli and Mathias Urban with the title Early Childhood Grows Up. This is an international overview of the lives of early childhood teachers, where policy is implicated in practice within each setting. The final review is by Sujatha Gomathinayagam who reports on Science Education during Early Childhood by Wolff-Michael Roth, Maria Inês Mafra Goulart and Katerina Plakitsi. This book provides an introduction to science activity in early childhood education for teachers and teacher educators.

The next edition of He Kupu will be focus on ‘gender issues’ in early childhood education with papers to be received by September 2013. The editors invite contributions from practitioners and educational researchers. For further details please contact the editorial team at He Kupu: hekupu@nztertiarycollege.ac.nz

References