



Editorial

Multiple Perspectives

Juliette Smeed
New Zealand Tertiary College

It was always hoped that the first “Multiple Perspectives” issue of *He Kupu* would elicit the views of various stakeholders with interests in the early childhood community of Aotearoa. This has certainly been the case. The issue has also brought to the fore a whole lot of passion for children, their cultures, their rights and their curriculum opportunities.

“Passion” is both a necessary and a paradoxical aspect of teaching the very young. Moyles (2001) writes: “Resolving this multi-faceted and affectively dominated role against the lack of clear perception in our society as to what kinds of values, respect, funding or time young children’s education and care should demand, presents challenges to early years practitioners which are not faced similarly by others in the statutory schooling system” (p. 85). Passion enables early childhood teachers to navigate their way through contradictory demands and mixed political messages. At the same time, as articles in this edition demonstrate, passion for educating young children frequently sits in tension with other passions held by professional individuals, such as passion for cultural or personal values; and for other interests that they champion. This tension can be enormously productive, however, and the knowledge, reflection and confidence (Moyles, 2001) it generates is one of the primary sources of innovation and pedagogical development in early childhood education.

This edition of *He Kupu* captures Manutai Leaupepe’s equal passion for her culture and her professional role in championing play-based learning; Rachel Hughes passion for the transformational opportunities afforded by Reggio-inspired learning; Evonne Phillips determination to teach adult learners with the same passionate commitment to care and holistic development that has long characterised early childhood pedagogy; Joy Stott’s passionate advocacy for upskilling early childhood teachers to support the visual arts curriculum; Robyn Stark, Diane Gordon-Burns, Kerry Purdue, Benita Rarere-Briggs and Karen Turnock’s exhaustive passion for inclusion *and* positive experiences for children with disabilities and their families within early childhood centres; Sarah Te One’s passionate advocacy for children’s rights to become an integral part of early childhood practice and discourse in the sector; Patisepa Tuafuti, Vaitulutulusinaolemoana Pua and Sonya van Schaijik’s impassioned defence against the policy makers who undermine and erode Pacifica peoples’ hard won gains of cultural and language recognition.

The passion of Robyn Stark, Diane Gordon-Burns, Kerry Purdue, Benita Rarere-Briggs and Karen Turnock for inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream early childhood services takes them into the area of parental attitudes – specifically the attitudes of parents of non-disabled children towards the participation of children with disabilities. Parent attitudes not only affect the families of children with disabilities as they participate in an early childhood



community; but, as the research reveals, can directly affect the experience of the “included” child. Teachers can also become implicated in parents’ negative attitudes, particularly when their goals for inclusion are contradicted by parents’ wishes for their children. This article provides teachers with a valuable insight into the views and experiences of diverse parents.

Manutai Leaupepe looks at the dilemmas and difficulties that arise when initial teacher education coexists in tension with deep-seated beliefs from student teachers’ childhood experiences and cultural values. Using data from research previously undertaken with Tongan and Samoan student teachers born in the Pacific Islands, Manutai explores how cultural and personal beliefs about the value of play may or may not shift during the teacher education experience. Manutai’s article is of interest to teachers and parents from more than just the Pacific Islands, because it addresses the issue of how alternative cultural pedagogies co-exist with play-based early childhood education in New Zealand. Additionally, Manutai puts theory into practice by giving space to the voices of Pacific Island-born early childhood teachers while advocating for the importance of listening to voices from other cultures.

Joy Stott shares how her passion for visual arts led her on a research and personal development journey that eventually required her to confront inconsistencies between her teaching practice in a curriculum area she loves and the principles underpinning her practice. Joy’s claim is that visual arts teaching in New Zealand – which frequently employs a child self-directed, non-intervention approach – has not kept up with developments in visual arts and visual culture theory and practice internationally. Further, these teaching practices do not, in her view, fit comfortably into the socio-cultural framework that underpins teaching practice in New Zealand. Joy’s article is a reminder of the difference that reflective practice linked to professional development can make to the learning of adults and the children they teach.

Sarah Te One is a passionate advocate for children’s rights in early childhood education. In “Defining rights: Children’s rights in theory and in practice,” Sarah provides an overview of the various dialogues that exist around children’s rights, and the complex range of issues that inform these dialogues. Sarah promotes the advocacy potential of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (UNCROC) for early childhood practitioners. However, aware of the complexity of the task of balancing and implementing children’s rights, she focuses on practical explanations and examples of how links can be made between theories of children’s rights, UNCROC, and good practice in a variety of early childhood settings in New Zealand.

Patisepa Tuafuti, Vaitulutulusinaolemoana Pua and Sonya van Schaijik write as spokespeople for the children and families in Pacifica communities whose resources and rights are, in their view, being eroded by current government policies and funding decisions. The ‘pausing’ of the Tupu Series reading materials, the introduction of National Standards and the accompanying powerful discourses around Pacifica children’s levels of literacy achievement have coalesced into a situation that is politically and culturally intolerable. Inspired by deep reflection on their roles as Pacifica educators and community members, the authors advance an impassioned, informed and deeply personal argument that is also a political act of community defence and advocacy.



Evonne Phillips, a passionately committed teacher of adults, writes about teaching adults holistically, a practice that is influenced by her background in early childhood education. Thoughtful adaptations of the learning environment and an ethic of care let students' know they are valued alongside their learning. Evonne's commentary is a timely reminder that lectures in teaching programmes have to model the practices and behaviours that they teach if they want students to value them in their early childhood practice.

Rachel Hughes reports on her personal experience of the 'Dialogue with Materials' exhibition and conference that was held at the Viaduct in downtown Auckland in August 2010. As a Reggio inspired teacher, Rachel attended the conference anticipating transformative learning experiences, and she wasn't disappointed. Opportunities to re-think being a teacher and re-experience exploring like a child were incorporated in the two day conference, and together ensured that the 'provocations' theme became her participant reality.

The next issue of He Kupu will focus on ICT in early childhood education. Dr. Chris Naughton, editor of the issue, invites scripts for consideration for this themed issue. A second Multiple Perspectives issue of *He Kupu* is planned for early 2012.

References

Moyles, J. (2001). Passion, paradox and professionalism in early years education. *Early Years*, 21(2), 81-95.