

Editorial

Inclusive early childhood education: Pedagogy and practice

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The Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum (Te Whāriki)* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017) defines inclusion as comprising gender and ethnicity, diversity of ability and learning needs, family structure and values, socioeconomic status and religion. The *Te Whāriki* definition of inclusion is reflected in this *Inclusive early childhood education: Pedagogy and practice* edition of *He Kupu*. The articles featured in this edition cover the broad spectrum of inclusion.

The Practitioner section comprises four articles that offer teaching strategies to assist teachers to create inclusive classroom environments for children. This section commences with an article by Binky Laureta that emphasises the importance of teachers recognising the diverse familial backgrounds of children in the twenty-first century. Laureta offers three evidence-based strategies to assist teachers to recognise and respond to the needs of children from diverse families.

This is followed with an article by Elizabeth Hargraves who reflects on her teaching practices. Written as a narrative, Hargraves shares her learning and teaching journey as an emerging teacher assisting a young boy with special needs in the development of his verbal language proficiency. Christine Vincent-Snow's article complements that of Hargraves. In her article, Vincent-Snow offers strategies that teachers can use to create outdoor classrooms to provide a calming environment in support of children with diverse needs.

The last article in this section, by Kim Jenson, provides an account of the challenges and opportunities she faced as an Aotearoa New Zealand (Māori and Pākehā descent) teacher in an early childhood centre in China. In her article, Jenson discusses the cultural barriers that can often hinder practices of teachers who are not from the dominant culture. She offers a number of strategies that teachers can use in that situation to engage with their colleagues, students and their families.

Moving into the Special Theme section of the issue, Priya Subasinghe's commentary focusses on a centre's response to the cultural diversity of children and their families and teachers. In her article, Subasinghe outlines event-based strategies used to implement an inclusive culture of global citizenship. Picking up on the global theme, Galina Stebletsova's article advocates for the creation of learning spaces that accommodate the diversity of families, including those from distinct religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. The diversity of families in the twenty-first century, she suggests, calls for teachers to be aware of new understandings of identity construction of children in their inclusive teaching approaches and environments. Stebletsova's article looks at inclusion through a human mobility paradigm, which implies that all places are part of inter-connected networks and hence no one lives in isolation.

Moving closer to home, Janice Pennells' article based on her master's thesis research critically questions parent inclusion in the assessment of children's learning. Findings from her research noted a disparity in knowledge levels regarding the sociocultural approach to learning; and the inherent tensions relating to two-way communication between teachers and parents.

The last two papers in this section discuss the discourses of disability and creating culturally and linguistically rich learning environments. In her second article in this edition, Kim Jenson draws attention to two different discourses of disability vis-à-vis the medical model and the social model and how society perceives individuals with impairments.

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The last article by Chelsea Bracefield calls for early childhood education teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand to be responsive in creating rich learning environments that are culturally and linguistically accommodating for Māori learners as well as English as additional language (EAL) learners.

This issue of *He Kupu* concludes with three book reviews: Maxine Dyer has written a review on *The Exceptional Child: Inclusion in Early Childhood Education* by K. Eileen Allen and Glynnis E. Cowdery; Galina Stebletsova has reviewed *Tūrangawaewae: Identity and Belonging in Aotearoa New Zealand* edited by Trudie Cain, Ella Kahu and Richard Shaw and lastly, Fiona Woodgate has reviewed *Inclusion in Action* edited by Phil Foreman and Michael Arthur-Kelly.

I hope that the articles in this edition encourage you to reflect on inclusive pedagogies and practices.

Please note that we invite submissions for our upcoming special edition on:

Transitions and life changes for children by 7 February 2019 - 3pm

Please check the website for the call for papers.

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