

Book Review

Developing a loving pedagogy in the early years: How love fits with professional practice by Grimmer, T.

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Developing a loving pedagogy in the early years: How love fits with professional practice explores the perceived uneasiness, fears and tensions of love in early childhood settings. In this book, the author discusses the issues and obstacles that educators may face in actioning a loving pedagogy and provides guidance to kaiako to reflect upon what a loving pedagogy might look like in their settings.

The beginning of the book focuses on exploring the definitions of love. The author considers the various meanings such as romantic love, love as seen through the lens of ancient Greeks, contemporary religions and an overview of a range of cultural perspectives on love. Grimmer develops this and examines the tensions in the educational sector around the word 'love' and how it intersects with professionalism in early childhood settings. For example, loving actions can be misinterpreted which could result in child protection and safeguarding concerns. Such concerns may lead to fears that sometimes override kaiako views on natural methods of care and affection. Grimmer suggests that children should be held by teachers in 'loving kindness', encouraging kaiako to be responsive, warm, loving and kind while still setting boundaries, a pedagogical stance Grimmer suggests could be developed as a policy to be unpacked and implemented by the teaching team. Grimmer also recommends to use the term 'professional love' to define the parameters of the loving relationships in the early childhood education context which helps to address many of the complexities and problems related to various interpretations of love.

Citing Chapmans and Campbell's (2012) work on love languages, Grimmer considers how this approach can be applied and extended in early childhood teaching practice to support a loving pedagogy. This discussion on love language unpacks the use of language and how kaiako might adapt their teaching practice and discourse to fit the needs and competencies of each child. In later chapters, Grimmer focuses on the rights of children and how a loving pedagogy can empower tamariki and enhance their mana. This thread of children's rights is further developed through Read's (2014) idea of 'holding children in mind', an idea from developmental psychology that promotes tuning into children's ideas and respecting their agency with love and care. Grimmer also examines loving relationships that kaiako can engage in with parents and whānau to support improved outcomes of tamariki.

Grimmer's loving pedagogy aligns well with the aspirations and learning outcomes of *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum (Te Whāriki)* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017) and incorporates aspects of Māori concepts of care, such as the importance of whakawhānaungatanga (building relationships), whakamana (empowerment), tautoko (support) and manaakitanga (care).

This book has the potential to transform early childhood practice by inspiring kaiako to reflect on and confront difficult issues that might incur when incorporating a loving pedagogy. Multiple examples of practice, policies, philosophies, and vision statements are included in the book to inspire kaiako to develop their approaches to

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professional love. There are also reflective questions at the end of each chapter with an extensive reference list for further readings.

The book offers stories of a loving pedagogy in various formats through an extensive assortment of personal and professional anecdotes, educators', whānau and children's lived experiences, photos, and case studies, making it a heart-warming read. This is available as an ebook for New Zealand Tertiary College students.

References

Chapman, G., & Campbell, R. (2012). *The 5 love languages of children*. Moody Publishers.

Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa early childhood curriculum*. Ministry of Education.

Read, V. (2014). *Developing attachment in early years settings: Nurturing secure relationships from birth to five year (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.