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EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CARE

Special Issue: - EARLY CHILDHOOD PEDAGOGY –

Early Childhood Pedagogies: Spaces for young children to flourish

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Abstract

This paper introduces the Special Issue of *Early Child Development and Care* focused on *Early Childhood Pedagogy*. It opens by considering past and present discourses concerning early childhood pedagogy and focus is given to established philosophical underpinnings in the field and their translation to contemporary guidance, alongside research and policy. It is argued that early childhood pedagogy is a contested, complex and diverse space yet these factors are entirely appropriate for supporting young children to flourish as valued individuals in different contexts. Building on this argument, it is posited that it may be more appropriate to discuss early childhood pedagogies rather than early childhood pedagogy. The paper goes on to critique a range of established early childhood pedagogies, before introducing eighteen papers from across the World that make exciting new contributions to the discourse. It is intended that this collection will inspire new debates and fresh endeavours concerning early childhood pedagogies.

Introduction

It has been my pleasure to edit this Special Issue of *Early Child Development and Care*, devoted to *Early Childhood Pedagogy*. The life period up to the age of 8 is recognised as critical for lifetime outcomes (UNICEF, 2012) so that pedagogies experienced by young children during this time may be particularly influential for their development and learning, now and in the future. The Special Issue is a collection of fascinating insights concerning early childhood pedagogy, in the form of discursive papers and reports of empirical research conducted by experienced and new researchers in Africa, America, Australasia, Europe, and Asia. An international landscape of twenty-first century early childhood pedagogy is revealed, characterised by diversity, complexity and challenge, yet retaining at its heart, the qualities of nurture that enable young children to develop, flourish and learn, today and in their future lives.

National and international investment in early childhood development has increased exponentially over recent decades, and consequently, policymakers' focus on early childhood

pedagogy has intensified globally. Yet government interest is a relatively new phenomenon for early childhood pedagogy which has a rich and long history. The word ‘pedagogy’ derives from the Greek for child (pais) and leader (agogus) (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999) so in the simplest terms, early childhood pedagogy is about leading young children. Laminations of tradition, values and principles accumulated over hundreds of years through philosophy and praxis inform contemporary views of early childhood pedagogy. Yet rhetoric and realities surrounding early childhood pedagogy are drenched in complexities: they are dynamic and multi-faceted. Equally, we perceive early childhood pedagogy through the different lenses of purpose attributed to early childhood provision: childcare that allows parents to work, education for preparing children for school or integrated care and education that focuses on the child as both being and ‘becoming’ (Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010; Qvortup, 1994: 18). More recently, understanding and developments in early childhood pedagogy have been increasingly predicated on research, derived through multiple disciplines which inform the new academic field of early childhood. It is some of this research – particularly from the fields of neuroscience and economics – that has proved compelling to policymakers, resulting in impositions of increased policy, increased investment and increased regulation on early childhood pedagogy. Complexity is not appealing to policymakers – they want ‘what works’ (Oancea and Pring, 2008) and they seek to impose simplistic measurable imperatives targeted to their perceived notions of ‘effectiveness’ in early childhood pedagogy, characterised by investment return (Heckman and Masterov, 2007).

This opening paper for the Special Issue begins by considering the complexities and contested spaces that occupy *The Past and Present of Early Childhood Pedagogy*. Discussion then turns to a range of established *Early Childhood Pedagogies*, before a short section - *Transitioning towards New Discourses* – paves the way for an introduction to the new contributions in this issue: *New Perspectives on Early Childhood Pedagogies*.

The Past and Present of Early Childhood Pedagogy

Although theory, research and policymaking inform constructions of early childhood pedagogy (Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014), traditionally it has been steeped in principles and values. In particular, western philosophers’ beliefs and attitudes have permeated early childhood pedagogy historically and internationally, though they have not been confined to western cultures (Ng’asike, 2014; Nutbrown and Clough, 2014). Rousseau (1762), Pestalozzi (1801) and Froebel (1826) have been especially important - though by no means the only –

philosophical influences on early childhood pedagogy around the world. This may be due to strong synergy between the three philosophers' views. All advocated that the child's development should be viewed holistically and that children learn best through experience and activity, particularly play. All viewed the child in the context of his or her own family and community, all believed in the importance of environment – particularly the natural world – and all saw the child as a good and unique individual. The tenets held by these early philosophers are still discernible in contemporary guidance on early childhood pedagogy, which is often included in early childhood curriculum guidance (Council of Australian Governments, 2009; Finnish National Board of Education, 2010; ISSA, 2010; NAEYC, 2009; UNICEF 2015).

Yet there is some divergence between the three philosophers' views regarding the role of adults in children's learning. Pestalozzi (1801) believed the adult should provide a programme of teaching, whereas Froebel (1826) thought the adult should 'encourage and guide' the child (p.2) and Rousseau (1762) advocated that children '...should be taught by experience alone' (p.46). This dissonance regarding the adult role was reflected in the work of two other figures who have also strongly influenced early childhood pedagogy: Piaget (1929; 1955) and Vygotsky (1962; 1978). While both endorsed constructivism and both were advocates of play (Piaget, 1945; Vygotsky, 1976), Piaget (1955) saw children as autonomous agents; indeed emphasis on children's autonomy is well rehearsed among other theorists – for example, Montessori (1916) and Freinet (1996). Nevertheless, Vygotsky (1978), a social constructivist, believed that we construct learning through our interactions with 'more knowledgeable others'. Reflecting this variable positioning of adult and child within pedagogic engagements, Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell, (2002) identify three major approaches to early education in an influential review of early years pedagogy which subsequently influenced the persuasive EPPE project (Sylva et al., 2010):

- *'The teacher-directed, programmed learning approach.*
- *An open framework approach where children are provided with 'free' access to a range of instructive learning environments in which adults support children's learning.*
- *A child-centred approach where the adults aim is to provide a stimulating yet open-ended environment for children to play within' (p.12).*

While constructivism has undoubtedly influenced policy and practice concerning early childhood pedagogy – (see, for example, Central Advisory Council for Education 1967), social constructivism has tended to enjoy wider - and more enduring - popularity. Internationally, contemporary guidance on early childhood pedagogy tends to favour the latter, for example in its *Pre-Primary Core Curriculum*, the Finnish National Board of Education (2010) advocates that ‘The teacher should support learning and guide children to become conscious of their own learning’ (p.9). Equally, HighScope pedagogy ‘...emphasises adult-child interaction... Teachers and students are active partners in shaping the educational experience’ (HighScope Educational Research Foundation (HERF), 2015). Moreover, ISSA (2010) advocates early childhood pedagogy in which ‘The educator interacts with children in a friendly and respectful manner that supports the development of each child’s construction of self/identity and learning’ (p.23). In UNICEF’s child-to-child projects, where it has not been possible to establish early childhood education and care (ECEC) provision, school-aged children help pre-primary children to develop ‘early learning competencies’ (UNICEF, 2015). In recent years, the value of social constructivism for early learning has also been endorsed by neuroscience (Perry, 2002): babies’ and young children’s brains are highly sensitive to interactions with other human beings. Positive interactions in infancy stimulate brain capacity for learning, whereas negative interactions trigger cortisol release in the brain, shutting down capacity for development and learning (Gerhardt, 2015).

Children’s interactions with their physical environments are also identified as an important feature of early childhood pedagogy (Featherstone, 2011). Vygotsky (1978) recognised that ‘more knowledgeable other’ may allude to physical environment. This idea has been well developed in the Italian Reggio Emilia nurseries where the environment is itself regarded as an ‘educator’ (Gandini, 1998:177). HighScope (HERF, 2015) also recognises the potential of the environment as a pedagogic tool, particularly for encouraging play, and for supporting young children’s development of conceptual understanding. Moreover, the environment is regarded as potentially valuable for supporting young children’s communication and language development as well as their self-esteem and independence (Jarman, 2007). Echoing Rousseau (1762), Pestalozzi (1801) and Froebel (1826), Louv (2005) re-emphasises the importance of young children’s experiences of natural outdoor environments, though he alerts us to the damaging effects of ‘nature deficit disorder’ that many children experience in the twenty-first century, particularly in western cultures. Furthermore, from a neuro-physiological perspective, Goddard-

Blythe (2005) identifies the value of early gross motor-experiences for healthy brain development.

It is evident, then, that some agreement exists regarding what is important for early childhood pedagogy, and much of this is deeply embedded in current policies and practices. Equally, while much of the accord has emerged from a basis of philosophical reasoning in western cultures, in more recent years, psychological and neuroscientific findings have endorsed those philosophical views. There is now much international consensus based on robust research evidence that ECEC is desirable and consequently, international policy on ECEC has developed exponentially in recent years (Britto, Engle and Super, 2013; OECD, 2014). Nevertheless, the consensus reached at policy level is not universally or fully realised in *practice* across the world (Allen, 2011; Li, Wang and Wong, 2011; Ulkuer and Petrovic, 2011). UNESCO (2014) articulates that

‘Where appropriate curricula exist, there can be problems with implementation with the emphasis remaining on early primary education and preparation for formal schooling due to pressure from parents and the fact that it is easier for teachers than child-centred learning’.

Moreover, national government policy and regulation may pressurise early childhood practitioners to pursue imperatives that are inappropriate for many young children - for example the narrow literacy and numeracy requirements that currently characterise the English early years’ framework (Department for Education (DfE), 2014). This pressure amounts to colonisation by external agents of the pedagogic relationship and is often termed ‘schoolification’: ‘...emphasis on the acquisition of specific pre-academic skills and knowledge transfer’ (Doherty, 2007:7). Such practice is likely to inhibit early childhood practitioners’ capacity to support children to learn in ways that are appropriate to individual children’s needs. Moreover, schoolification disrupts the ‘strong, equal partnership’ advocated between early childhood provision and education provision (OECD, 2001).

Equally, dissonance regarding the purposes that are attributed to early childhood pedagogy is visible in the terminology that is applied to provision; as Gunnestad, Mørreaunet and Onyango note in their paper for this Special Issue, different terms are adopted for provision. For example, whereas a kindergarten is likely to embody the Froebel’s philosophical ideals of child-centredness and integrated education and care, daycare is likely to focus predominantly on providing care. Equally, the purpose and nature of early childhood pedagogy may depend

on what adults deem appropriate according to children's ages. Internationally, children of different ages up to the age of eight attend early childhood provision; precisely what age depends on a range of issues, including government policy on school starting age and parental employment patterns.

Across many countries, however, we have seen increasing penetration of 'schoolification' into family life (Murray, 2013; de Carvalho, 2014). Garnier (2012) exemplifies the encroachment of schoolification on family life as '...the development of a market of educational products, such as special activity books for the école maternelle and their uses in families homes' (pp.43-44). Yet the imposition of schoolification on family life is often far more: it can be the expectation that parents should mirror the professional educator's role in the home. This imposition intrudes on the family's private space (Saunders and Williams, 1988), and may be regarded as an incursion on the human right to a family life (see, for example, Council of Europe, 1953; OHCHR, 1989). Schoolification of home denies children time and opportunity for an authentic family pedagogy: learning about life and the real world as they observe and experience it among their family members.

Colonisation also intrudes in other ways on appropriate pedagogies for young children. Cultural dissonance is an issue for many young children experiencing early childhood provision in post-colonial countries. Gupta (2006) describes the 'marginalised, non-western early childhood teacher who strives to be the "right" teacher' (p.2), according to constructions of early childhood education that prevail in English speaking western countries. Equally, Ng'asike (2014) observes that many African governments have committed to developing and implementing ECEC policy, yet have tended to sideline their own countries' strong childcare traditions in favour of western models, subjugating African children's cultural heritage and inhibiting their chances for 'a good start in life' (Ng'asike, 2014; Pence and Nsamenang, 2008: 21-22). Ng'asike (2014) proposes a new approach that draws on African children's indigenous cultures as the basis for developing early childhood pedagogies for those children; indeed, his proposition aligns with the UNICEF model for Child Friendly Schools (Shaeffer, 2013).

Early Childhood Pedagogies

As noted, pedagogy is a contested and dynamic space, defined and experienced in different ways. For example, Bruner (2006) *sought* for pedagogy, Dewey (1897) *believed* in

pedagogy and Krishnamurti *challenged* pedagogy (Thapan, 2001): their engagements with pedagogy were diverse. It may therefore be more helpful to consider ‘pedagogies’ than ‘pedagogy’. This section discusses five pedagogies that are particularly relevant to early childhood: didactics and pedagogy, social pedagogy, family pedagogy, relational pedagogy and critical pedagogy. Other early childhood pedagogies are conspicuous by their absence, for example, play pedagogies, creative pedagogies and heuristic pedagogies, *inter alia*: quite simply, coverage cannot be exhaustive in this short paper. It is hoped that the range addressed provides a strong flavour of the extant discourses surrounding early childhood pedagogies.

Didactics and Pedagogy

Watkins and Mortimore (1999) define pedagogy as ‘any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another’ (p.17) while Alexander (2000) suggests that ‘pedagogy encompasses the performance of teaching together with the theories, beliefs, policies and controversies that inform and shape it’ (p.540). These views of pedagogy are predicated on the (powerful) teacher as transmitter of knowledge to the (deficient) learner. However, as Siraj-Blatchford (1999) notes, ‘this simply cannot be taken for granted’ in the context of early childhood (p.20). In a later publication, she posits an alternative definition for early childhood pedagogy:

‘...that set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and to the learning environment (which includes the concrete learning environment, the family and community) (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002: 28).

Whilst this definition accommodates some of the subtleties necessary for working with young children, it cleaves to the teacher as the empowered partner in the pedagogic relationship. Conversely, within the definition of early childhood pedagogy that Moyles, Adams and Musgrove (2002) posit, the pedagogic relationship is equalised:

‘Pedagogy in the early years operates from a shared frame of reference (a mutual learning encounter) between the practitioner, the young child and his/her family’ (p.5).

English and US perspectives on pedagogy tend to be narrow (Stephen, 2010). Andrews (2007) describes the English view of pedagogy as anti-intellectual, while Bruner (1996), speaking

from a US perspective, warns that ‘in theorising about the practice of education... you will have to compete with, replace or otherwise modify the folk theories that already guide both teachers and pupils’ (p.46)’. The English / US model of pedagogy aligns more closely with *didactics*, a subset of European pedagogy, whereas elsewhere – for example in most European countries and Russia - pedagogy is seen as ‘broad and eclectic’ (Alexander, 2000:542; Andrews, 2007).

Social pedagogy

Although Moyles *et al.* (2002) is an English perspective, their definition for early childhood pedagogy steps away from this: it is congruent with the broader European tradition of pedagogy: ‘both the act and the idea of teaching’ (Alexander, 2000). Moyles *et al.* (2002) identified ‘Effective Early Years Pedagogy’ as multi-faceted, comprising principles, practice and professional elements. Equally, while Marton and Booth (1997) suggest that European pedagogy is about ‘learning in an academic context’, ‘gaining knowledge about the world (and) coming to experience aspects of the world’, they also note that pedagogy for most Europeans includes ‘development of health and bodily fitness, social and moral welfare, ethics and aesthetics’ and the organisational structures that ‘facilitate society’s and the individual’s pedagogical aims’ (p.178). This fits the OECD view of social pedagogy, ‘combining care, upbringing and learning without hierarchy’ (2006: 59). Social pedagogy is seen as

‘...theory, practice and profession for working with children (but often young people and adults). The social approach is inherently holistic. The pedagogue sets out to address the whole child, the child with body, mind, emotions, creativity, history and social identity. This is not the child only of emotions... not only of the mind... For the pedagogue working with the whole child, learning, care and more generally upbringing are... inseparable activities at the level of daily work. These are... interconnected parts of the child’s life’
(OECD, 2004:19)

Social pedagogy prevails in a number of Northern European countries, though it presents differently in different countries (Petrie *et al.*, 2009). Nevertheless, Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011) propose four key principles underpinning social pedagogy: wellbeing, holistic learning, relationships and empowerment. In social pedagogical models, the ‘strong and equal partnership’ between ECEC and compulsory schooling is reified (OECD, 2001; Moss, 2013). Equally, because education is seen ‘in its broadest sense’ in the social pedagogic tradition, it

is integrated with care to place the child as the central focus (Kaga *et al.*, 2010: 11). As Kaga *et al.* (2010) go on to note, where care and education are not integrated, there is no shared vision for the child: different services have different approaches to funding, workforce, regulation and access, so children, their parents and practitioners experience discontinuities.

Petrie *et al.* (2009) observe that the role of a social pedagogue in ECEC is demanding on many levels. They must focus on the child's overall development and on building an equal relationship with the child; they operate practically and creatively yet must also apply theoretical knowledge to their work. Social pedagogues reflect critically and must integrate deep understanding of children's rights into their work; equally, they operate as members of teams bringing up children with other community members, other professionals and the children's families. OECD (2004) observes that that all ECEC workers included in the research for the German country note pronounced 'without hesitation that they were "pedagogues", different to school teachers' (p.19). However, the term 'pedagogue' tends to be viewed disparagingly in England (Andrews, 2007).

Family Pedagogy

The importance Moyles *et al.* (2002) place on family in defining early childhood pedagogy is taken up by European educators (Catarsi, 2012; Pati, 2011) in their focus on 'family pedagogy'. In ecological terms, 'family pedagogy' may refer at exo- and meso-levels to extended families or services that support the family institution (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Petrie *et al.*, 2009). Alternatively, family pedagogy may refer to the micro-level: the space, time, culture and opportunities a family provides to support its children to flourish (Catarsi, 2012; Dorion, 2010).

Catarsi (2012) notes that the 'pedagogy of the family' has become highly dynamic in recent years, as family structures have adapted in response to significant social and economic change. Catarsi's observation (2012) refers to Europe, but it has some global resonance. Whilst children living in Asia and the Middle East are still likely to live with two parents, and children in sub-Saharan Africa still live in extended families (Child Trends, 2013), in many countries, marriage rates are declining, two-parent families are becoming less common, women are having fewer children and are working outside the home more (Borodaevskiy, 2012; Child Trends, 2013; Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Livingston, 2014). This means young children

now spend longer in ECEC provision than previous generations (UNICEF IRC, 2008) and consequently have less access than previous generations to ‘cultural practices that support informal learning as children observe and pitch in with everyday activities that are integrated into family and community life’ (Paradise and Rogoff, 2009: 102). New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum attempts to overcome this situation by including family – and community – as an integral element (Ministry of Education, 1996) yet Royal Tangaere (2012) emphasises that this is only effective where family and ECEC provision work in equal partnership. Family pedagogy at micro-level supports young children to gain understanding about ‘ways of living and systems of meaning’ (Brooker, 2002:1); it may be regarded as ‘...an effective way of sharing traditional teachings, values, skills...allow(ing) children to set their own pace of learning, ensuring that our children are set up for success, not failure’ (Dorion, 2010:13) yet many children growing up in the 21st century experience this type of family pedagogy far less than their parents and grandparents did.

Moreover, Singer *et al.* (2009) identified in their international study that many children’s experiences in their homes have undergone change early in the twenty-first century. They found that children now tend to spend most of their free time at home watching television; however, if children are watching television, they are not observing and actively engaging with activities that connect them to their family culture. Equally, 92% of primary aged children worldwide are now enrolled in school (World Bank, 2015): as Paradise and Rogoff (2009) observe, when education and/or care provision outside the home increases, children’s participation in family life is reduced – as is the informal learning they may gain from this.

Relational pedagogy

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) reflect that ‘Young children are of and in the world; their lives are constructed through interaction with many forces and in relationship to many people and institutions’ (p.10). If we accept the premise posited by Fumoto *et al.* (2012) that ‘social relationships have been seen as the foundation of early childhood pedagogy’ (p.2) it may be argued that a relational pedagogy for early childhood is an oxymoron. Nevertheless, there has been a surge of interest in ‘relational pedagogy’ in ECEC in recent years (see, for example, Papatheodorou and Moyles, 2009). This interest may have emerged as a balance to increasing national and international policy focused on ECEC: macro-level policy remains extrinsic to the intimacies of micro-level social engagements, yet Loe (2014) highlights the value of ‘relational proximity’ as ‘the functional and experiential closeness of a good, strong, healthy

working relationship'. Gold (2005) describes relational pedagogy as 'relationships at the heart of learning' and he goes on to frame a taxonomy for relational pedagogy that includes dynamic relationships between people and their environments, awareness of cultural histories, inclusion, listening, responsiveness to learners' interests, identification of patterns in learning, knowledge co-construction and emphasis on experiential learning, language and self-reflection.

Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) describe a space where the children and adults participate together in the creation of knowledge: a 'meeting place' (p.2) that serves as both axis and catalyst for knowledge co-construction. Equally, Kaufmann (1998) recalls the value Malaguzzi attributed to relationships as an underpinning philosophy for knowledge co-construction in the Italian Reggio Emilia nurseries: 'There is no possibility of existing without relationship. Relationship is a necessity of life' (p.289). Malaguzzi's philosophy emerges in Reggio Emilia's valorisation of children's 'Hundred Languages' and the adoption of 'a pedagogy of relationships and listening' (Fielding and Moss, 2011). Against this backdrop, while the child is positioned centrally, learning is co-constructed democratically through the interactions of *pedagogista*, *atelierista*, children, families, the wider community and the physical environment in interaction; this is learning for all, by all (Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1998).

Other 'pedagogies of relationships and listening' present in the literature. Schaffer (1992), for example, identifies 'joint involvement episodes' in which social interactions between adults and children are framed by '...a specified object, event or other environmental feature that is incorporated into social interaction, becoming a focus for the partners' joint involvement' (p.101). Equally, Bancroft, Hay and Fawcett (2008) emphasise 'respectful relationships' (p.46) in which adults and children learn together through 'reciprocity'... 'dialogue and discussion' in creative projects (Bancroft *et al.*: 16-17). Furthermore, the *Project Approach* is a 'research effort' in which the children and teacher decide on what they want find out in investigation and 'children and teachers work collaboratively' (Helm and Katz, 2001: 78).

On the face of it, '*Sustained, Shared Thinking*' (SST) (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002) may present as a pedagogy of relationships and listening. It is defined as

'An episode in which two or more individuals "work together" in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities,

extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend.'

(Siraj-Blatchford, 2002:8).

However, as Farquhar and White (2014) observe, the purpose to which SST is put means this cannot be. It tends to be used as a tool for measuring children's progress against centrally defined standards: any investment a child may have in an event where SST features is therefore subjugated to adult colonisation of the event for measuring progress.

Conversely, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) promote the pedagogy of listening in ECEC as an 'ethics of encounter' characterised by mutual respect in which people invest time and energy in each other without any expectation of a 'rate of return' (Heckman and Masterov, 2007). In such a pedagogy, there is genuine affirmation of children's 'theories, interpretations and questions' (Rinaldi, 2006:125) and children's rights, abilities and interests are recognised and respected (New, 2000). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) point out that 'pedagogy of listening' 'means struggling to make meaning from what is said without pre-conceived ideas of what is correct or appropriate' (Dahlberg and Moss, 2006:15).

One last word on Reggio Emilia: no matter how tempting it may be to view the Reggio Emilia 'brand' as transferable to different countries and cultures, it is important to remain alert to the dangers of accepting this *prima facie*. The model originated because of a particular social cultural history – and it has grown and developed similarly. It is not a commodity to be franchised wholesale (Gothson, 2010).

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy synthesises critical theory and pedagogy and has some connections with other pedagogies. For example, it can be argued that critical pedagogy highlights barriers to relational pedagogy. As Giroux (1999) suggests, critical pedagogy '...illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority, and power' (p. 125); as part of this function, critical pedagogy rejects constructs that subjugate the learner. Equally Akinyela (2006) correlates critical pedagogy and family pedagogy by establishing a 'critical approach for practising African-centered pedagogy' to support African-American families (p.164). In the realm of early childhood, critical pedagogy may be a way to debate education (see, for example, Kincheloe, 2005; Cannella, 2002), as well as a way to engage young children in their own critical inquiry as a mode of learning (Kuby, 2013). At the basis of critical pedagogy lies

Freire's assertion (1970) that dialogue is not possible if some '...deny others the right to speak their word' (p. 69). However, Cannella (2002) points out that the voices of young children are 'silenced under the weight of "adult" psychological, educational and policy constructions of and for them' (p.162), which have emerged in the field of early childhood education. In other words, young children have become victims of the success of the field of early childhood. As Farquhar and White (2014) note, 'well-meaning adults...claim to know what constitutes valued knowledge' and their claims are used as a template for young children's 'desired outcomes' (p.821). When adults identify outcomes for children, they create a template that young children are required to emulate, yet Freire (1970) argues that

'No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors' (p. 36).

The claims to 'valued knowledge' in the field of early childhood identified by Farquhar and White (2014: 821) include the increasing abundance of research evidence, valued by policymakers. However, as Cole (1996) points out, early childhood policy has taken great heed of psychological researchers who tend, as a group, to sideline culture. This may be especially problematic for children growing up in emerging economies; assumptions cannot be made that their daily lives mirror those of the subjects in psychological research undertaken in western contexts which then informs policy in emerging economies. The practice of predicating 'valued knowledge' on homogenous constructs – for example, developmental 'norms' (Soto, Hixon and Hite, 2010) - may be dangerous: it disregards young children as singular individuals. Basing assumptions on such limited constructions may elicit flawed policy and practice, resulting in young children being 'controlled, oppressed, labelled and limited' (Cannella, 2002: 162) in ways that are developmentally, personally or culturally inappropriate.

Transitioning towards New Discourses

So far, this paper has drawn on extant discourses to discuss *The Past and Present of Early Childhood Pedagogy* and distinctive features of a range of contemporary *Early Childhood Pedagogies*. Lenz Taguchi (2010) identifies two opposing facets of education that currently prevail. On the one hand, she suggests, the backgrounds of children and their families who enter ECEC settings are increasingly diverse and complex and practitioners seek out and value new ways to embrace the opportunities and challenges this situation presents. On the

other hand, local national and global standards, targets and strategies imposed on the field attempt to reduce diversity, complexity and heterogeneity in as many ways as possible. The latter model relentlessly seeks ways to measure quality (Wesley and Buysse, 2010) yet as UNESCO (2014) acknowledges, ‘...there are no universally agreed criteria for quantifying ECCE quality’.

Indeed, Dahlberg *et al.* (1999) observe that, in the context of ECEC, quality cannot be measured because it is ‘a philosophical issue of value and dispute’ (p.6). They advocate that we should go further than seeking to measure quality in early childhood, and should concentrate instead on ‘meaning making’ (p.6). Such a model requires informed policymakers who are committed to children’s holistic wellbeing now and for their future, light-touch curriculum frameworks and practitioners with the capacity and capability to devise and consistently adapt early childhood pedagogies grounded in their own values, research evidence and deep understanding of the children and families with whom they work.

It is with such an approach in mind that this Special Issue was conceived. It is intended to provoke further debate and discourse concerning early childhood pedagogy, to trouble important concerns in relation to this and to ask significant questions of policymakers, practitioners and others who may influence early childhood pedagogy.

New Perspectives on Early Childhood Pedagogies

The final part of this opening paper, then, introduces the rich seam of new contributions to the field afforded by this Special Issue. The papers have emerged from many different international contexts yet they fall into themes that provide a framework for the Special Issue: *Care in Early Childhood Pedagogy*, *Proximity in Early Childhood Pedagogy*, *Agency in Early Childhood Pedagogy*, *Ways of Early Learning*, *Parents in Early Childhood Pedagogy* and *Pedagogical Places in Early Childhood*.

Care in Early Childhood Pedagogy

This initial section opens with Belinda Davis and Sheila Degotardi’s paper ‘*Who Cares? Infant educators’ responses to professional discourses of care*’. Presenting this Australian multiple site case study, Davis and Degotardi explore how university qualified infant educators working with very young children have navigated a new curriculum framework in which care practices are not explicitly foregrounded. Findings indicate that the educators

conceptualised care as an ethical duty and regarded it as integral to their pedagogy. The second of the two papers in this section comes from England. In *‘Maternal Thinking and Beyond: Towards a care-full pedagogy for early childhood’* Paulette Luff and Mallika Kanyal report findings from two case studies and conclude that values, practice and thinking steeped in an ethics of care are key tenets for a contemporary early childhood pedagogy that can contribute to a sustainable and more equitable world.

Proximity in Early Childhood Pedagogy

Peter Elfer and Jools Page open this section with their paper *‘Pedagogy with Babies: Perspectives of 8 nursery managers’*. They report on the perspectives of English nursery managers whose daily work brings them into close proximity with babies. Interview data reveal the rich practical wisdom of these managers. This practical wisdom is inherent in their deep understanding of the babies with whom they work, alongside their acknowledgement of the contradictions in personal beliefs, aspirations and policy objectives that they experience within themselves and among staff members and parents. The second paper in this section comes from E.J. White and Bridgette Redder in New Zealand. They adopted mixed methods for their work concerning *‘Proximity with Under Two Year Olds in Early Childhood Education: A silent pedagogical encounter’*. Their empirical findings highlight the importance of proximity as an element of a silent pedagogy that contributes to attachment for infants and toddlers younger than two years in early childhood provision. Marilyn Fleer’s paper follows, again focused on proximity but this time in Australian early childhood provision for 3-5 years olds: *‘Pedagogical Positioning in Play: Teachers being inside and outside of children’s imaginary play’*. The paper reports on a study that adopted video observation to analyse play pedagogy in five Australian childcare centres. Fleer’s findings afford a new typology of play.

Agency in Early Childhood Pedagogy

A three-country study - *‘Child-initiated Pedagogies in Finland, Estonia and England: Exploring young children’s views on decisions’* – opens the third section. Leena Robertson, Jarmo Kinos, Nancy Barbour, Maarika Pukk and Leif Rosqvist report on part of a longitudinal qualitative study concerned with child-initiated pedagogy within co-constructed learning experiences in early years settings. This paper explores perspectives of children aged 3-6 years concerning their own decision-making and that of adults in the settings; findings indicate the children to be adept in sharing responsibility with adults and their peers. The second paper in this section is from Doris Cheng, Jyrki Reunamo, Paul Cooper, Karen Liu

and Keang Vong and concerns '*Children's Agentive Orientations in Play-based and Academically Focused Pre-schools in Hong Kong*'. The paper reports on a comparative case study in which Cheng *et al.* found that play seemed to enable the young children in the study to develop flexible social tools and strategies likely to be important for their success as learners when they reach the social environment of school. The third paper in this section on *Agency in Early Childhood Pedagogy* focuses on '*Estonian Pre-school Teachers' Aspirations for Curricular Autonomy: The gap between an ideal and professional practice*'. In their empirical study, which analysed pre-school institutions' curriculum documents and the perspectives of pre-school teachers concerning the Estonian national curriculum, Maire Tuul, Rain Mikser, Evelyn Neudorf and Aino Ugaste revealed contradictions which included the teachers' preference for curricular autonomy, alongside their desire for guidance concerning aims, methods and content.

Ways of Early Learning

Another internationally authored paper opens the fourth theme in this Special Issue. Jan Georgeson, Verity Campbell-Barr, Éva Bakosi, Magdolna Nemes, Sándor Pálfi and Paolo Sorzio adopted a multiple site case study in Hungary, Italy and England to ask '*Can We Have an International Approach to Child-Centred Early Childhood Practice?*' The concept of 'child-centredness' is explored in the context of cultural-historical backgrounds underpinning early childhood provision in each of the research sites. Findings indicate that 'child-centredness' is valued in all three countries and that value is predicated on democracy, child development and individuality, *inter alia*. The second paper for this theme is an evaluative paper from the USA. Kathleen Harris focuses on '*Developmentally Universal Practice*' as an early childhood pedagogic model for 'meeting the needs of all diverse learners'. Characteristics of the model are explored, alongside its links to relational pedagogy. In the paper that follows, Arve Gunnestad, Sissel Mørreaunet and Silas Onyango provide '*An international perspective on value learning in the preschool, exemplified by the value forgiveness*'. This cross-cultural qualitative study, concerned with the value of forgiveness in kindergartens in Kenya, Swaziland and Norway, highlights the role of teachers' authentic beliefs in values they introduced to young children and storytelling was identified as a useful method for work on values with the young children in the study. In a second paper from the USA in this section Christian Winterbottom and Philip Mazzocco's '*Empowerment through Pedagogy*' reports on an empirical study examining the effectiveness of a service-learning training approach based on constructivist principles that was undertaken with early childhood

education teacher training students in Ohio, USA. Winterbottom and Mazzocco's study reveals positive reactions from the student teachers, aligned with goals concerned with pedagogy. Karin Franzén's paper completes this section. In her non-empirical review of theories of learning in a Swedish context, Franzén asks if pre-school teachers should focus on *'Being a tour guide or travel companion on the children's knowledge journey'*. Through critical discussion of competing theories of learning in the Swedish pre-school, Franzén is able to advocate for a multi-dimensional approach to learning that starts with what young children already know.

Parents in Early Childhood Pedagogy

A paper focused on a Chinese heritage family living in Australia is the first of three concerned with the theme of *Parents in Early Childhood Pedagogy*. Li Liang and Marilyn Fler consider *'Family pedagogy: Parent-child interaction in shared book reading'*. Their paper reports on an empirical study that adopted a dialectical-interactive visual research approach to investigate family storytelling practice in order to understand how parent-child interaction contributes to heritage language development. Findings indicated that 'two-way' engagement within the study child's 'zone of proximal development' was beneficial for development of her heritage language. Eleonora Teszenyi and Denise Hevey address *'Age Group, Location or Pedagogue: Factors affecting parental choice of kindergartens in Hungary'* in their paper that draws on a case study that gathered the views of parents of children in twelve kindergartens regarding how they selected their children's settings. The study found that geographical location and pedagogues who stay with children in mixed-age settings from kindergarten entry to primary school were important factors for parents. However, parents who had selected 'same-age' groups for their children were more satisfied with their choice than parents of children in 'mixed-age' groups. The final paper in this section focuses on *'Pedagogic Strategies': A conceptual framework for effective parent and practitioner strategies'*. Penny Lawrence and Tracy Gallagher present their findings from a participatory empirical study in England investigating the strategies practitioners and parents use to support children's learning. Video observations of interactions between adults and children younger than three years were analysed to reveal new strategies, indicating that understanding of 'effective pedagogy' can be constructed by – and for – individual educational communities.

Pedagogical Places in Early Childhood

Rune Storli and Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter provide the penultimate paper for the Special Issue. In their paper '*Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of Children's Rough-and-Tumble Play in Indoor and Outdoor Environments*' they report findings from a study that explored 138 Norwegian pre-school teachers' beliefs and practices regarding children's dramatic play themes. The teachers reported that they were less likely to restrict children's rough and tumble play outdoors than indoors. A comparative study from Tim Waller and Kwi-Ok Nah - '*Outdoor play in preschools in England and South Korea: Learning from polyvocal methods*' – concludes this Special Issue. The paper reports findings from an empirical study that investigated South Korean and English practitioners' perspectives regarding the pedagogy of outdoor play and learning in both countries. Findings reveal similarities and differences in the practitioners' approaches to outdoor provision in terms of safety, organisation and pedagogy and they also indicated the value of practitioners adopting polyvocal methodology to reflect on familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

Conclusion

This opening paper for the Special Issue on Early Childhood Pedagogy has considered *The Past and Present of Early Childhood Pedagogy* and the nature of some established *Early Childhood Pedagogies*. The way is paved for *New Perspectives on Early Childhood Pedagogies* from across the World. In regard to Early Childhood Pedagogy, the papers in the Special Issue indicate some consensus but perhaps more importantly, they highlight the diversity and complexity that are inherent in *Early Childhood Pedagogies*. This international set of papers provides an excellent basis for continuing debate and consistent endeavour in 'meaning making' (Dahlberg *et al.*, 1999: 6) within heterogeneous contexts where policymakers, leaders, practitioners and parents are committed to enabling young children to develop, flourish and learn as valued individuals and members of their families and communities, today and in their future lives.

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