

Concurrent paper session 5

Room 1

Advocacy in ECEC / Teaching professional learning/ ECEC pedagogy

The ignorant advocate and the reconceptualisation of early childhood advocacy in the age of strategic plans

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Keywords

Advocacy, Emancipation, Ignorance

Abstract

The purpose of this paper presentation is to critically explore and reconceptualise the concept of advocacy as it pertains to, and guides, the early childhood sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This reconceptualisation project is contextualised within the period of early childhood education strategic and action plans (Ministry of Education, 2002; 2019) and the broader Ministry of Education (2008) strategy for Māori achievement, *Ka Hikitia*. Each strategy document provides evidence of the perceived need for the early childhood sector to advocate for children, and for communities. As such they are critical to informing and supporting advocacy in early childhood education. However, these policies can also be understood to limit the possibilities of advocacy through failing to recognise the institutionalisation of the very conditions for which advocacy is required. In other words, and as a serious question for any discussion on early childhood advocacy: how might these policies lead advocacy towards more entrenched marginalisation of groups for whom they propose to advocate?

In this paper, the apparent paradoxes and limitations of advocacy are theorised through the philosophical work of Jacques Rancière and Georgina Stewart. Stewart (2020) offers a challenge to the “positions commonly taken by Pākehā in their dealings with Māori in education” (p. 1). This challenge includes a ‘typology of Pākehā Whiteness’ that is instructive for advocacy in terms of the possibilities, limitations, and realities of early childhood advocacy. The possibilities of advocacy are then explored in terms of the possibility for, to follow Krzyzosiak and Stewart (2019), disruption of the very idea, and the traditions, of advocacy.

For that disruption, this presentation looks to Rancière (1991; 2010) and his work with the concepts of ignorance, intellectual equality, progress, democracy, politics and explication, in order to challenge the meaning and experience of emancipation. If advocacy involves two or three relationships (decision makers, children/families/communities, and possibly an advocate) that all make some kind of sense in relation to these concepts, then what can Rancière’s work offer for shifting our thinking in relation to the nature and limits of early childhood advocacy?

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* Rancière (1991) reveals the nature and purpose of explication in Modern societies for whom Progress is the guiding ideology. Progress is shown to be not quite what we often imagine it to be. Looking carefully and critically at Progress reveals some of the dimensions and actions of colonisation. To challenge the apparent violence of Progress, Rancière looks to the idea of ignorance - an idea that this paper applies to the study of advocacy.

Now, the idea of an ignorant advocate seems both contradictory and dangerous. Surely an ignorant advocate cannot seriously expect to achieve the aims they share with those for whom they advocate? Following Rancière, the task here is to explore the positioning and relationships of the advocate to those for whom they advocate. In this presentation that task is then woven back into Stewart's (2020) five-point typology to imagine the characteristics of the advocate-as-Ally as the only "politically robust" (p. 296) position.

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Resisting neoliberalism in early childhood education: Stories of teachers' advocacy and activism

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Keywords

Advocacy, activism, teachers' professional identities

Abstract

With an 'economic rationalism' model in the governance of public sector organisations, the purpose of early childhood education (ECE), teachers' work and professional identities have been significantly changed in New Zealand and internationally (Arndt et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2019; Mitchell, 2017; Woodrow & Press, 2017). A new hallmark of 'professionalism' embedded in discourses of individualism, competitive entrepreneurialism and financial savvy (Gibson et al., 2015) have reshaped the culture of 'collegial authority', 'trust and confidence' and collectivism (Kamenarac, 2021; Sachs, 2016), formerly some of the key features of the teaching profession. Under pressure to align their work with the economic and enterprise interests, teachers 'knowingly and unknowingly' entangle with neoliberal discourses, constructing their work and professional identities in relation to the societal (power) structures and tensions (Arndt et al., 2020). In the time of neoliberalism imposing "a dictatorship with no alternatives" (Moss, 2010, p. 13) on teachers and the ECE sector, creating spaces for thinking differently to act differently (Giroux & Giroux, 2016), showing that the prevailing discourses are a choice, not a necessity, become of paramount importance.

This presentation draws on a qualitative study on how teacher professional identities have been (re)constructed in response to the shifting discourses in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE policies and practices over the last two decades. The study utilises theoretical ideas of feminist poststructuralists (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Baxter, 2016; Weedon, 1997) to explore the shaping of neoliberal discourses on teachers' work and professional identities. Specifically, the presentation focuses on examples of teachers' advocacy and activism to challenge neoliberal discourses inhibiting ECE from being a socially just, inclusive and equitable place for all children,

families and communities.

The study gained ethics approval from the institution's ethics committee. It consisted of three data sets, including some key Aotearoa New Zealand ECE policy documents, group and individual interviews with teachers, professional leaders and managers from both the community-owned and for-profit ECE services. By applying a discourse-analysis approach (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Gee, 2014; Kamenarac, forthcoming), data analysis focuses on how teachers discursively construct their understanding of the world (e.g. the purpose of ECE) and what “contextual configurations of meanings” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2013, p. 255) inform their identity constructions.

Research findings shed light on challenges and possibilities for strengthening advocate-activist capacities and identities in ECE when enterprise interests seem to be prioritised over the well-being of children and families. The findings suggest that building the capacity for critical engagement with discourses underpinning the neoliberal governance, structures, and decision-making in ECE may constitute a robust foundation for construing the advocate-activist teaching profession and advocate-activist teachers.

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Advocates, Compliant employees or entrepreneurs? Challenges to advocacy for ECEC teachers.

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Keywords

Teacher Advocacy, Teacher Identities, Privatisation

Abstract

Critical engagement with the politics of the sector, including advocacy for children, families and the profession, are important aspects of teaching work constrained by the current contexts of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Aotearoa. This presentation draws on findings from a recently completed doctoral study on ECEC teacher identities in Aotearoa. The main research question was: How do ECEC teachers understand and construct their identities? Specifically, the research aimed to examine how teachers understand their work, commitments and priorities in the diverse, highly regulated and privatised landscape of ECEC in Aotearoa. The research included a range of methods: a discourse analysis of key national ECEC policy texts, focus groups with ECEC teachers, and interviews with centre managers, owners, and teacher educators. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provided the theoretical frame and methodological approach of the research and was used to reveal and problematise the constitutive role of discourse in how teachers come to understand themselves and their work.

The findings highlight the impact of neoliberal discourses, including increasing managerialism, competition and consumer choice, on teacher identities in the sector. Two identities, prevalent in participant narratives, both of which diminish teachers' ability to undertake advocacy, are the focus of this presentation. These are The Compliant Employee and The Entrepreneur. The Compliant Employee identity emerged from participant discussions about the detrimental impact of highly managerial practices and strong expectations of compliance and loyalty in some ECEC settings, resulting in a lack of professional autonomy and reduced agency. Many participants expressed a view that teachers are individually responsible for their own work situations. As a result, in participant narratives, the responsibility for poor work conditions and low levels of teacher autonomy in many centres was shifted away from ECEC businesses and policy and onto individual teachers who were expected to be entrepreneurs of their own teaching careers.

Participant experiences suggest that rather than being agential within their centres, teacher agency was frequently exercised by switching centres and searching for better employment opportunities elsewhere, closing off opportunities for collective engagement with and advocacy for sector wide issues. The Entrepreneur identity arises from these individualised movements and from the new opportunities and challenges for professional recognition identified by participants in ECEC businesses. Participants working in private ECEC businesses strived to balance their business, education, and care commitments, reporting that opportunities for advocacy were usually limited to what was ultimately good for business. The findings raise concerns about the inwards-focused constructions of professionalism available to teachers in some ECEC settings, and the diminished potential for collective and critical political engagement by teachers in a market orientated ECEC landscape. Developing teachers' capacity to interrogate and challenge how professionalism is constructed for them, across different contexts is an important task for teacher education and the organisations that support teachers. Strategies that support collective engagement of teachers with each other and the politics of the sector, independent of their work contexts, are also needed.

Room 2

Teacher professional learning

Learning about and implementing a coaching approach in early childhood intervention, in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Keywords

Coaching, early childhood intervention, professional learning

Abstract

Coaching is a collaborative, conversational, and change-supporting practice. In Aotearoa New Zealand, coaching is one of the ways an Early Intervention Teacher works with parents, early childhood educators, and other members of the early childhood intervention (ECI) team (Ministry of Education, 2011; 2015). However, no specific policy or training guideline in coaching exists, and professional learning opportunities in the practice are few. Although literature in coaching in ECI is growing overall, data in professional learning and implementation are limited, particularly outside of North America.

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding about what and how ECI professionals learned about and implemented the practice of coaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. To do this, the following three key research questions were developed:

How are ECI professionals learning about coaching?

What understandings of coaching do ECI professionals have?

What implementation has occurred?

Utilising a qualitative descriptive design and underpinned by a socio-cultural framework, semi-structured interviews were held with 15 ECI professionals who described themselves as either emerging or practising Early Intervention Teachers, or as involved in the support or management of Early Intervention Teacher practice. Thematic analysis was applied to interview transcripts to identify key themes. Supplementary documentary analysis of legislative, policy and practice documents was utilised for triangulation where required.

Study findings showed that participants' readiness to learn about coaching was impacted by five factors: professional background, understanding of the relevance of coaching, professional interest and motivation, understanding coaching as a practice, and the professional learning context. ECI professionals were learning about coaching through a range of physical and psychological professional learning mechanisms. Professional learning in the routines-based interview and routines-based early intervention (McWilliam, 2010) had also supported learning in coaching.

Overall, there was general agreement in the data that coaching was a facilitative practice underpinned by humanistic, relational, conversational and solution-focused principles, and questioning was viewed as a critical coaching strategy. Most participants identified that coaching was not supervision, teaching, mentoring, or

consulting. However there was some discrepancy about whether teaching strategies such as instructing and modelling were seen as part of coaching. Although many participants stated practical implementation of coaching was still quite limited, reported changes in practice included being more positive and affirming, listening more, asking more questions, and advising, telling or instructing less. Four main areas of challenge were shown to have impacted the implementation of coaching: the ECI context, the practice of coaching, professional learning, and the professional and their practice.

Study findings offered an in-depth account of the professional learning mechanisms by which ECI professionals learn about coaching. Previous studies have not sufficiently captured the informal or incidental learning that occurs, nor the psychological mechanisms at play. The study also provided valuable evidence about ECI professionals' understandings of coaching in the context of the professional learning process, and extended the limited research in implementation of coaching by identifying key challenges. Findings have allowed for a number of recommendations to be made for policy and practice, particularly around professional learning.

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Coaching a teaching team to foster toddlers' social-emotional learning

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Keywords

Teacher professional learning; single-subject design; social validity

Rationale for the study

Professional learning and development (PLD) is critical in supporting teachers to foster toddlers' social-emotional learning, including supporting emotion understanding and expression, and interactions and friendships. Yet toddler teachers may not receive the types of PLD opportunities that effectively enhance their teaching (Clarke et al., 2020). Features of PLD that strengthen teaching include job-embedded support, a focus on explicit teaching practices, and provision of feedback—all of which are components of coaching (Kraft et al., 2018). Coaching involves a coach and teacher collaborating to build teaching capacity, achieve goals, and enhance teaching (Kraft et al., 2018). While international research affirms coaching as an effective PLD approach (Kraft et al., 2018), research gaps exist in determining whether coaching is effective, acceptable and worthwhile in New Zealand early childhood education (ECE).

Purpose and research questions

The research sought to examine the effects of practice-based coaching (see Snyder et al., 2015) and to explore teachers' perspectives of the coaching process and content, through the questions:

- 1) What are the effects of practice-based coaching on a teaching team's social-emotional teaching practices for toddlers?
- 2) What are teachers' perspectives of practice-based coaching and specialised social-emotional teaching practices for toddlers?

Brief Description of Methodology

A single-subject multiple-baseline design was used to examine the effects of a coaching intervention delivered to a small team of toddler teachers. Single-subject designs enable analysis of a relationship between dependent variables—such as teaching practices—and an independent variable—such as a PLD intervention (Horner et al., 2005). Data are recorded as graphs and analysis is visual.

The dependent variables were three teaching areas, specifically, teachers' use of teaching practices to foster: 1) toddlers' emotional literacy; 2) toddlers' friendships and peer play; and 3) toddlers' social-emotional learning through routines and expectations. Practice-based coaching (the independent variable) was delivered to the teaching team in each of the three areas over a 3 month period. Data collection and analysis were consistent with recommended single-subject multiple-baseline methods (see Gliner et al., 2017; Horner et al., 2005; Kennedy, 2005). Post-intervention, teachers were interviewed to explore their perspectives of the intervention's content, processes, and outcomes. Interview data were thematically analysed (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Summary of findings and implications

Findings indicate coaching strengthened social-emotional teaching practices in all areas, with considerable and sustained improvements in emotional literacy teaching. The teachers had positive views of coaching and social-emotional teaching practices. They felt the intervention improved their teaching and, in turn, toddlers' social-emotional skills. This study contributes to an emerging body of coaching research in New Zealand education (Aiono, 2020; Bishop et al., 2009; Carroll-Lind et al., 2016; Spee et al., 2016) and begins to build evidence of the social validity of coaching in New Zealand ECE, highlighting a promising PLD approach for toddler teachers.

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Visual arts in ECE: Developing intentional pedagogy through a network PLC approach

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Keywords

PLC, Arts, Leadership

Abstract

This presentation discusses my research into two under-researched aspects of ECE in Aotearoa NZ: visual arts pedagogy and the network professional learning community (PLC) approach to improving teaching practices. While intentional teaching has become widely accepted in NZ ECE pedagogy, visual arts teaching remains largely hands-off (Craw, 2015; Probine, 2014). International research suggests two common factors that perpetuate the hands-off approach: teachers' low self-efficacy in art, and the underlying belief that childhood creativity is sacred (Lindsay, 2020; Smyth, 2017). To improve teachers' confidence and intentional practices in ECE visual arts, my research focused on the use of a network PLC. The network PLC approach includes elements such as reflection, practice, collaboration, distributed leadership, and diversity of perspectives (Azorín, Harris, & Jones, 2020; Prenger, Poortman, & Handelzalts, 2020), all of which have been identified as having potential to develop teachers' ECE visual arts pedagogy (Smyth, 2017). This study aims to explore how a network PLC might affect ECE teachers' visual arts pedagogy.

This qualitative, interpretive study was designed and analysed from a combined framework of situated and social cognitive learning theories. The first stage of the research involved a national survey of NZ ECE teachers' visual arts practices and perceptions, developing a broad picture of what was happening in the sector. Following this, the case study centred on a nine-month project to improve art teaching through a network PLC. Seven teacher-participants in the community engaged in reflective dialogue and practical workshops with artists. Participants challenged long-held beliefs and developed confidence engaging in art with children, resulting in changed practices within their workplaces and teams.

The results of the study indicate a range of enablers and challenges in network PLCs, including conditions that enable application of learning in ECE settings. Distributed leadership across various roles emerges as a factor worthy of further consideration. The findings of the study lead to recommendations for visual arts professional learning with a view to transforming practice.

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Room 3 Professional practice

New Zealand early childhood teachers' practices for Middle Eastern families and their children

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Keywords

Teacher practices, Middle Eastern families, early childhood education

Abstract

New Zealand's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, is seen to be inclusive of all non-indigenous settlers in Aotearoa and this has implications for the educational system. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), the country's early childhood (EC) curriculum, urges kaiako/teachers to respond to New Zealand's changing demographic landscape through their pedagogical practices. As researchers have paid increasing attention to the experiences of different cultural groups within the context of early childhood education (e.g., Chan, 2011; Guo, 2010), Middle Eastern (ME) children and their families have received little attention. This paper draws on a two-phased study involving a national online survey of ME parents who had children enrolled in NZ EC centres and four follow-up case studies that investigated the hitherto neglected experiences of this ethnic group in NZ EC centres. Survey and interview data from both phases are used to answer the question: What are early childhood teachers' practices with respect to the Middle Eastern families and their children?

Thematic analysis of the data indicated that while some teachers were keen to learn about ME families and implement practices that were reflective of their individual needs, there were teachers who expressed essentialised views and perceived ME families as a homogenous group with similar needs (Bhabha, 1994; May, 1999). The presentation will elaborate on these findings and their possible implications for pedagogy in increasingly diverse early childhood educational contexts.

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Navigating religious diversity at meal times in early childhood education. A Norwegian case

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Keywords

Religion, diversity, meals

Abstract

Rationale for the study

As societies become increasingly religiously diverse due to increased immigration, so does Early Childhood Education (ECE). Consequently, staff navigate difficult practical and ethical issues, and their pedagogical choices may have a strong impact on children's identity formation and learning. Still, the navigation of religion in ECE has received limited scholarly attention (Aslan, 2020). This case study from Norway contributes to practice-based, theoretical and normative discussions of pedagogical practices in ECE that aim to create more inclusive spaces.

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the study is to explore how the pedagogical choices of staff may influence processes of exclusion and inclusion related to religion, investigating the following research questions: *How are religiously based eating regulations navigated by staff and children in a religiously diverse Norwegian ECE-center, and how does the pedagogical context influence the children's working theories about religion and belonging?*

Brief description of methodology

The study is designed as a qualitative case study. My material consists of ethnographic data collected during 37 days of observation conducted between April 2019 and June 2020. I observed 57 children aged 3 to 6 in three sections of the ECE-center, both at meal times and during other activities. 30 of the children aged 4 to 6 were interviewed in small groups, using photos from mealtimes as starting points.

I analyzed notes from observations and interviews using principles of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). While the initial coding used descriptive, data-driven codes, the next stage of coding consisted on developing categories based on interpretations of the findings in relation to relevant theories, such as the notion of conviviality (Gilroy, 2004) and the concept working theories (Hedges, 2011, 2014).

Summary

At mealtimes, children with Muslim family backgrounds often ate different food than their peers with majority backgrounds due to religiously based eating regulations. Staff deliberately downplayed these differences, in an attempt to create an inclusive environment. While several children seemed unaware of the food regulations, others seemed to create working theories linking the food regulations to national background, racialized differences or allergies. Notably, no children related the eating of halal food to religion. Drawing on Gilroy's concept of conviviality (2004), I argue that the ECE-staff contribute to a *convivial concealment of religion*. This avoids reducing children to their religious background, as well as reducing the danger of "othering", as warned by Schirilla (Schirilla, 2020). Indeed, this pedagogical approach enable the children to create connections based on shared experiences and interests. However, practices of convivial concealment of religion fail to give the children a deeper understanding of religious and cultural diversity, and fail to address problematic aspects of some children's working theories. Thus, the approach may contribute to subtle, but significant, processes of exclusion, potentially narrowing the space for what it means to be Norwegian.

The study contributes to discussions and developments of inclusive practices in ECE, as well as to theoretical discussions about everyday diversity in educational settings, coining the concept of "convivial concealment of religion".

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Demystifying whanaungatanga in practice

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Keywords

Whanaungatanga, Early oral language, Cultural competency

Abstract

When whanaungatanga / relationships are prioritised in early learning, so is the engagement and learning of tamariki (children) and their whānau (family). The presenter knew from the experiences of her whānau within education services that when trust, warmth and relationships were missing, it resulted in disengagement. Therefore, the presenter studied the perspectives of speech-language therapists to demystify whanaungatanga when working with Māori tamariki and their whānau. The presenter draws from this study in her work with Talking Matters – a kaupapa to enrich oral language environments that are culturally relevant for tamariki in the first 1000 days so that all tamariki thrive as thinkers, talkers and readers.

The purpose of the study was to explore the perspectives of speech-language therapists to identify how they nurture engagement and whanaungatanga with Māori tamariki and their whānau. A more culturally competent workforce will support Māori tamariki to thrive.

This study followed a Kaupapa Māori Research approach. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were undertaken with four speech-language therapists (three Māori; one non-Māori) who were known for their work with Māori whānau. The data were analysed using an inductive approach.

As part of this study four main themes were generated around nurturing engagement and whanaungatanga. These themes explored 1) attitudes and awareness that impact the relationship building process; 2) holding a holistic view of whānau to ensure tamariki are supported; 3) being prepared, such as collaborating with colleagues who have established relationships and; 4) drawing on the pōwhiri (welcoming ceremony) as a metaphor to guide the relationship building process.

These perspectives demonstrate simple ways speech-language therapists and teachers can nurture relationships with Māori whānau, however, it's not a tick-box situation. When whanaungatanga and relationship building is prioritised, so is engagement and therefore learning and thriving of Māori tamariki. There are not only implications for ongoing research but also for practice for working with whānau and teachers in the early years.

Room 5
ECEC pedagogy

Democracy or legacy? Boys' views on early literacy in three Maltese schools

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Keywords

Early literacy; democratic pedagogies; children's rights

Abstract

Malta, a former British colony, has inherited a legacy of formal education, which remains stubbornly in place even after almost sixty years of independence. Similarly persistent are arguments in research and policy highlighting: global concerns related to 'fairness' in early childhood pedagogic practice (Langford, 2010; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007); the need to honour young children's rights in practice (Berit Bae, 2010, 2009; Council of the European Union, 2011; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2007); and 'boys' underachievement' in literacy (Alloway et al., 2002; Cobb-Clark & Moschion, 2017; MEDE, 2016; Mifsud et al., 2000). To create new understandings of these widely discussed longstanding phenomena, this paper examines the lived literacy experiences of five- to six-year-old boys in three Maltese state schools through the dual lenses of children's rights and democratic practices. The paper discusses themes emerging from the boys' voices recorded through classroom observations and during focus groups. Both methods were part of a broader mixed-methods phenomenological doctoral study (Bonello, 2018). The project was underpinned by threads from several theoretical perspectives including emancipatory, socio-cultural, experiential education and childhood theories.

Findings revealed that the majority of the boys experienced undesirable reading and writing practices pointing to a need to roll back the highly formalised approach to literacy practiced in many early years educational settings in Malta. The paper argues for a shift from the narrow focus of decontextualised teacher-led literacy instruction towards a broader conceptualisation of meaningful early literacy learning through socially just pedagogies that enable teacher and learner agency. This paper questions whether countries like Malta will remain paralysed by a legacy of formal education or move forward to an actual realisation of children's rights through sustained democratic early childhood pedagogies

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Early childhood teachers' practices and discourses about gender in Chile

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Keywords

Teacher feminization, gender stereotypes, pedagogical practices

Abstract

Background

Children's interaction with their families and teachers reproduces practices and discourses related to gender stereotypes. This socialization provides rigid representations of what it means to "be male" and "to be female". Early childhood (EC) education is a crucial place for gender reflection and EC teachers have a critical role. EC teacher may reproduce differences between girls and boys and may influence families with gender stereotypes (Blaise, 2009; Brownhill & Oates, 2017)

Gender inequities in EC education have been an issue of concern for more than ten years. In Chile, curricular guidelines about gender were explicitly included in 2018 (Minister of Education, 2018) and promote EC teacher reflection about gender bias in pedagogical practices.

A relevant aspect in EC education is the predominance of women in the workforce. This situation may be analysed from a gender perspective, including issues related to professional identity, nature of childcare, among others.

In this context, gender is a relevant issue in EC education that should be analysed from EC teachers' voices and practices. To contribute to this topic, this research addresses the following research questions: What are the discourses identified in EC teachers in Chile related to gender stereotypes in EC, practices, EC teacher feminization and EC gender policy? What are the practices observed in EC teachers related to gender stereotypes?

Methodology

This research used an interpretative and qualitative approach to analyse EC teachers' discourse and practices related to gender, assuming a feminist approach. Participants include six EC teachers from a non-profit institution that provides education to 0-4 years old children. Participants were selected using two criteria: at least five years of professional experience, and work in classroom during at least three years. Participants signed an informed consent approved by the institutional ethical board. Data collection included non-structured interviews and non-participant observations, recorded by 20-30 minutes video. Interviews focused on gender discourses in EC, gender practices in EC, EC teacher feminization and EC policies related to gender. Observations were focused on practice and interactions between teacher and children, including teachers' language, resources and material, play, pedagogical strategies, among others. Data will be analysed by thematic content analysis oriented by codes that emerge inductively from data and from gender theory.

Results

Expected results will be focused on interpretative analysis of EC teacher discourses related to gender issues, with a focus on gender discourses in EC, gender practices in EC, EC teacher feminization and EC policies related to gender. Moreover, results related to EC teacher practices will be described. At this respect, preliminary findings from recorded videos show a predominance of male language during teacher – children interaction, using the term “boys” frequently when teachers are talking to the whole group. Besides, teacher' interaction differs with boys and girls during a reading activity. While questions to girls focused on behaviour, questions to boys referred to book content. About material used by teachers, the presence of gender stereotypes is observed, for example the book read only included female character cooking. These preliminary findings will be analysed and expanded.

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Provisions for planned physical activities in Malaysian preschools and affordances for fundamental movement skills

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Keywords

Integrated learning, fundamental movement skills, planned physical activities

Abstract

Planned physical activities engage not just the physical developmental domain but the cognitive and psychological domains as well. Most studies done in Malaysia focused more on the benefits of physical activity on reducing childhood obesity and increasing physical health. However, many studies have shown the significant benefits of planned physical activity which include cognitive development as well as psychological wellbeing (Becker et al., 2014; Blaydes and Mitchell, 2012; Burdette and Whitaker, 2005; Sattelmair and Raley, 2009 as cited in Lu and Montague, 2015). There is a need for integrated, planned physical activities in early

childhood education that are engaging for young children and which can develop integrated skills including physical-movement skills. The movement skills are stability, locomotor, manipulative, creative, and expressive skills with the first three being fundamental movement skills (Miller, Wilson-Gahan and Garrett, 2018).

Data collected from the South East Asian Nutrition Survey (SEANUTS) (as cited in Malaysia Active Healthy Kids Report Card, 2016) reported that children are involved in physical activities mostly through unstructured physical play with some spending around 2.2 hours per day. Although unstructured physical play which is not planned by teachers, allows for some form of movement skills, it does not guarantee the development of fundamental movement skills, sufficient level of recommended physical activity time for young children, neither cognitive nor social skills, which planned physical activities can provide.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the following research questions; What are the provisions for planned physical activities in preschools? What kinds of fundamental movement skills can be afforded from the physical resources in the preschool? What are the types of integration in planned physical activities in the preschools? The sample comprises 81 preschool teachers from private early childhood centres in Malaysia. The study employs quantitative methodology and a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire. Findings will include measurement of frequency and the average number of preschool teachers who implement integrated planned physical activities, recommended time and routines for physical activity as well as physical resources which can afford a broad range of fundamental movement skills.

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Room 6

Teacher professional learning

A phenomenological study of kindergarten teachers' experience of collaborative learning in China

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Keywords

Collaborative learning, kindergarten teachers, teacher change

Abstract

In China, many kindergartens get professional support from researchers and educational specialists at district and organization levels in developing teacher professional learning (Liu, 2019; Zhao, 2016). Most ECE leaders and teachers value the shift in teacher professional learning from individual to collaborative formats. Previous international studies also show that effective professional learning promotes professional teacher changes (e.g., Given et al, 2010; Johanson & Kub, 2013). However, existing studies show limited exploration of the complexity of teacher collaborative learning (TCL) in the Chinese context, leaving many elements (e.g., cultural values, personal beliefs, policies) that may affect PL unstudied. Also, an exploration of TCL in Chinese ECE context is needed as there may be different understandings of collaborative learning among teachers and ECE leaders.

My PhD study proposes to explore important features of professional learning in the context of Chinese early childhood education, and how these features vary between different contexts. It also looks at how collaborative learning in kindergartens relates to perceived teacher changes; and how teacher professional learning experience interacts with the participation of different ECE professionals.

A conceptual framework about teacher knowledge and learning is built on established literature (e.g., Cherrington, 2018; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Desimone, 2009) and is the focus of this presentation. The research design uses a post-intentional phenomenological perspective (Vagle, 2018), with data gathering through semi-structured interview, non-participant observation through videos and Zoom. The study expects to provide information about Chinese early childhood teachers' professional learning experience through collaboration. Findings may help in explaining the complexity of collaborative learning, distinguishing collaboration from simply staying together, and enriching both ECE leaders' and teachers' understandings of effective PL in different contexts. In addition, the exploration of Chinese culture in the process of teacher PL may pave the way for changes in the power structure and effectiveness of teacher learning involving different ECE professionals and inform both policy and practice regarding PL in ECE settings.

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Physical literacy: The need to support early childhood educators in Hong Kong

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Keywords

Physical literacy, early childhood education, teachers

Rationale and Purpose

Physical activity participation benefits the health and development of young children, and educators play an important role by nurturing physical literacy (UNESCO, 2015). Physical literacy refers to the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and pursue physical activity throughout life (Whitehead, 2013). However, physical literacy has been largely unexplored in the early childhood education (ECE) context. There is limited knowledge of how early childhood educators understand and integrate physical literacy in practice; educators' perception of their own physical literacy is also unexamined. We implemented two studies to investigate Hong Kong early childhood educators' (1) understanding and operationalisation of physical literacy in their classrooms, and (2) perceived physical literacy.

Methodology

Study one adopted a mixed-methods design and involved kindergarten teachers and principals (N = 45). Participants responded to pre- and post-interview questionnaires and participated in face-to-face interviews. The questionnaires utilised a 5-point Likert-type scale; data were analysed using descriptive and non-parametric statistics. The interview questions were open-ended and exploratory; data were examined using thematic analysis.

Study two used a cross-sectional quantitative design, which involved an online administration of the validated Perceived Physical Literacy Instrument to kindergarten teachers (N = 317); data were analysed using descriptive and parametric statistics.

Findings

Study one found that majority of the participants (69%, $X^2 = 6.42$, $p = 0.01$) reported low familiarity with the concept of physical literacy. The participants' understanding of physical literacy were associated with physical play (e.g., outdoor play, sports, playground), and were mostly derived from online information

sources. Factors that could enable or restrict the integration of physical literacy in ECE settings include material resources, teaching tools, time, physical space, and parents' cooperation. A wider information campaign and targeted professional development for early childhood educators were reportedly needed to enable integration of physical literacy in the curriculum. Study two revealed that the participants' perceived physical literacy attributes were at moderate levels, and their sense of self and self-confidence was negatively associated with age ($r = -0.13$, $p = 0.026$) and years of teaching experience ($r = -0.16$, $p = 0.004$).

Discussion and Implications

Early childhood educators in Hong Kong appear to have an underdeveloped understanding of the concept of physical literacy, and integration into the ECE curriculum is reportedly constrained. The educators expressed the need for systematic remedies which include professional development support. Teachers' own perceived physical literacy also needs to be enhanced. As physical literacy is a relatively new concept in ECE, professional development activities are needed, especially for teachers who have been in practice for longer. Overall, the findings presented here suggest that ECE policies in Hong Kong need to explore strategies that would improve the conceptualisation and understanding of physical literacy by educators. Through such effort, educators may be enabled to promote physical activity participation of young children.

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Challenges and opportunities for early childhood teachers in the digital era

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Keywords

Early childhood teacher; competencies; digital learning

Abstract

Universitas Terbuka (UT) implements distance education to facilitate its students with various ways to learn independently. To measure whether its students comprehend their learning successfully, research needed to be done. This study aims to describe the challenges and opportunities for early childhood and kindergarten teachers in facing the digital learning era. The method used is a survey in the form of a questionnaire distributed to teachers who are students of the Early Childhood Teacher Education Study Program at Universitas Terbuka (UT) and who took an online learning program provided by UT. This program was taken by these teachers as most of them were located in remote areas. Participants in this study were 216 teachers from various regions in Indonesia, such as Palangkaraya, Sorong, Banda Aceh, Medan, Semarang, Banjarmasin, Jember, Denpasar, Makassar, Manado, Ternate, Bengkulu, Jambi, Pangkal Pinang, Mataram, Bogor, Gorontalo, Samarinda and Tarakan. The results obtained in this study reveal current challenges and opportunities for Early Childhood teachers. Increasing their ICT skills, such as accessing the internet and using computers in daily learning, is required by the Indonesian Ministry of Education decrees. Factors that support the implementation of the online learning program include that the program helps students in their learning process and work assignments. On the other hand, factors that were obstacles to online learning are the limited internet network, especially in the islands/remote areas. Moreover, the student's ability to access the internet influenced their learning process.

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Room 7 Professional practice

Meaning making in process in dramatic playing: Multimodal analysis of heritage language learning

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Keywords

Multimodal, Drama in Education, Heritage Language

Abstract

Multimodal perspectives to language education have brought significant insights into how learners construct meanings as they interact with resources of expanded semiotic repertoire in social interactions in play (Dyson, 2003; Rowe, 2008). Research on L1 learners' use of multimodality has been extensively conducted, whereas research on heritage language/literacy practices in community-based schools is still in its embryonic stage.

This study demonstrates (1) how three preschool-aged Korean heritage language learners (KHLLs) engage multimodal/multilingual practices in structured dramatic play, or dramatic inquiry pedagogy (DIP; Edmiston, 2014) and (2) how they construct meaning with their teacher using the semiotic repertoire. DIP invites an imagined heritage language context (Korea) into the classroom where KHLLs can explore and experience collaboratively in a "playworld" (Lindqvist, 1996, p. 7) using multimodal/multilingual resources.

This study is guided by sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) and "dynamic bilingualism" (Garcia, 2011, p. 74), which stresses multimodal (i.e., auditory, visual, action, and environmental modes) and multilingualism in language practices. Drama is designed to invite learners using the various modes to create meanings in play.

This case study analyzed classroom interactions using multimodal analysis (Wohlwend, 2011) developed to understand how various modes are "made meaningful and social in situations rather than in representation". This study received IRB approval and parents' consent. DIP led to an increase of translanguaging between Korean and English in playworlds versus teacher-directed instruction as they co-deployed stories across various modalities. KHLLs actively engaged with semiotic modalities and translanguaging while creating and clarifying potential meanings in an imagined community.

Findings imply that HL educators need to develop the knowledge and pedagogy of multimodal language/literacy and to support translanguaging to create learner-centered learning environments and active engagement of HLLs. Also, the findings suggest educators need to pay attention to the meaning making process while children are interacting in the classroom community rather than the result of the interactions.

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An exploratory study of early childhood educators' emerging sense of professional self

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Keywords

Professional self, professionalism, Singapore

Abstract

Early childhood (EC) education requires articulate, reflective and highly qualified teachers. Literature shows that the teaching profession is often perceived to have a lower standing than many other professions (Ingersoll & Mitchell, 2011). When the profession is considered in subgroups of pre-school, primary and secondary teachers, it is claimed that EC teachers have the lowest standing (Hargreaves & Hopper, 2006). However, internationally as well as in Singapore, efforts have been made to raise EC teachers' professional standing with the setting of prescribed criteria such as knowledge, expertise and training based on sector-agreed competencies and standards of practice for specific job roles in the field (Feeney & Freeman, 2018). This paper presentation, which is a part of a wider study, explores the emerging sense of professional self of Singapore EC teachers.

Using a mixed methods research methodology, the study garnered quantitative as well as personal insights into EC teachers emerging sense of professional self. The quantitative part, the survey, was carried out first and this was followed by semi-structured interviews. The survey participants of the study consisted of 253 working early childhood teachers enrolled in a part-time Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subgroup of 20 of these teachers. Confirmatory factor analysis was applied on the survey items, six latent factors of EC professional self were identified. To add depth into the analysis, the responses were divided into subgroups based on demographic factors such as participants' age and working experience as EC teachers. T-test was conducted. Main domains and subdomains of topics in the semi-structured interviews were mapped from the findings of the survey to provide further insights.

The survey findings showed that the EC Teachers rated themselves higher in factors and items in knowledge and skills in "developing the young child" as compared to their sense of "professional self". Aside from strong foundations in knowledge and practical skills, the findings also highlighted that the teachers require support developing professional traits such as the professional relationships with students, parents, administrators, fellow teachers, and community members. The EC educators also indicated in the open-ended section in the survey as well as in the interviews that they would value platforms for learning communities to support teaching and learning. The following findings were highlighted in the interviews:

- Teamwork and collaboration are seen as key for improving practices
- Collaboration can provide educators with opportunities to develop the professional self
- Growing need to hone professional skills to facilitate family and community partnerships

These issues give rise to fundamental questions about the value of early childhood as well as the value placed on those working with young children. This places the role of the EC professional to be more complex and multi-dimensional than a list of standards. As Singapore puts in place EC standards that surround teachers' registration, a key challenge lies in supporting the EC teacher emerging sense of her professional self.

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“They will form bonds”: Early educators’ understanding and practices on outdoor community learning in an urbanized landscape

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Keywords

Outdoor Community Learning, Urban Landscape, Educators’ Practices

Abstract

Learning in the outdoors can be viewed as originating in the concept of forest schools, which has since extended to bush, beach, and parks over the years (Elliot & Chancellor, 2014). However, there are urbanized countries which do not have accessibility to extensive natural spaces and resources and this means there are differing opportunities for outdoor teaching and learning for educators and young children globally. A rich resource which urbanised landscapes might consider are the community facilities and settings which Chaudhury et al. (2015) described as public open spaces including parks, green spaces, sidewalks, plazas, playgrounds, shopping malls and community centres. These spaces are easily and freely accessible to the public and allow for varied uses for individuals and groups, which can foster the engagement of public in the neighbourhood community environment and in turn support social connectedness within the community members (Lachowycz & Jones, 2013). With the focus in adapting these resources in an urbanized landscape, this qualitative study reports findings based on interview data from six early educators of children in six Kindergarten (five- to six-year-olds) classrooms across four preschools in Singapore. Preliminary analyses reveal that educators’ practices in outdoor learning have shifted in the ongoing pandemic. Content analysis is being conducted to illustrate educators’ definition of authentic learning, as well as teaching practices in the community settings.

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Room 8 Advocacy in ECEC

Learning from a community-based support program for young dual language learners and their families: Implications for ECEC teacher education in Japan

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Keywords

Community network, family support, young dual language learners (DLLs)

Abstract

Children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are increasing in early childhood education and care centres in Japan. OECD (2019) found that the Japanese teachers think of themselves as not having enough knowledge and skills to support children with linguistic and cultural diversity. Meanwhile, in the last decade, community-based programs have emerged to support young Dual Language Learners (DLLs) and their families operated by non-profit organizations and/or local governments in some cases. This study closely analyses one such program in order to identify challenges which young DLLs face and consider how the findings can inform ECEC teacher education.

The target program, Kirakira Class, is a program to support transition from ECEC centres to primary schools for young DLLs in a city in the central area of Japan. Programs like this are not common in Japan and have developed to compensate for the current system. Since 2013, the author has been conducting ethnographic research on Kirakira Class, which is funded by the city office and operated by the City Centre for International Relations. This six-months-program consists of weekly individual Japanese language lessons at their own ECEC centres and once-a-month group days including parent-support programs, learning activities for children, and parent-child activities.

This study focuses on the data collected from October 2018 to March 2019. Observers were the author and her co-researcher. Observers took 1) field-notes, 2) audio-recorded and transcribed group-lessons, and 3) conducted semi-structured focus group interviews with instructors and supporting staff (8-10 persons) for about 60 minutes in December of 2018 and after the program in March 2019. Focus groups were asked about the improvements of the program compared to the last year and on-going challenges in the target year. 1) and 2) were organized by episodes and analysed to identify elements of challenges for DLLs in ECEC and transition to primary schools. Data from 3) were compared with the findings from 1) and 2).

Findings indicated the staff of Kirakira Class believed that support for parents is as important as the support they provided for children. Even though the official aim of the program was to promote Japanese skills and cultural knowledge about Japanese schooling, their practice prioritized promoting positive views of immigrant families on Japanese education and connecting them with the local community. Parents were encouraged to help their children with their own culture and language, while they learned the cultural practices of Japanese schools from Japanese staff as well as other immigrant families in the community. In individual lessons at ECEC centres, each child received more attention and opportunities to demonstrate their emerging Japanese skills than in their own classrooms, although some did not feel comfortable performing same tasks in their Group days. These one-on-one sessions facilitated most of the children's interests in Japanese language and literacy. ECEC teachers could learn to utilize available community resources and their own cultural networks. They also need strategic curriculum management to increase time for individual interactions with DLLs in addition to their traditional strength of cultivating interactions among children.

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Children's picture books and family diversity in early childhood settings: Who is included?

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Keywords

Children's Literature, Family, Picture Books

Abstract

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child notes the valuing and respecting of a child's family (The United Nations, 1989). Traditionally, the notion of family is linked to marriage, parents of different genders and children. However, contemporary family structure has undergone considerable change, the concept of family has become more fluid, and, according to Raid and Kasearu (2017) there is no such thing as a standard family.

Children are routinely exposed to a number of picture books available in childcare settings (Young et al., 2020). Picture books have the potential to present to children an authentic and realistic picture of the world (Souto-Manning et al., 2018). Research, such as that done by Bishop (1997), holds that children should be able to see themselves and, by extension, their families reflected in the picture books that are available to them.

The overall question explored by this study asks if there is a gap in the availability of picture books representing family diversity in early childhood settings. Given the socialization potential of storybooks (Nieto, 1997; Mendoza & Reese, 2001; Souto-Manning et al., 2018), this lack of representation poses a missed opportunity for deepening children's learning about themselves and the world.

This small-scale study forms part of an ongoing doctoral research project and addresses the following research question: How are family structures represented in commonly used English picture books in a Hong Kong early childhood setting?

Using a qualitative, critical content analysis methodology, this case study aims to analyse the images and text in the 20 most commonly used English picture books in one particular early childhood setting in Hong Kong, with a focus on how families are represented. In children's literature, "...critical content analysis involves bringing a critical lens to an analysis of a text or group of texts in an effort to explore the possible underlying messages within those texts ..." (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 6). The critical content analysis of the books will be informed by anti-bias theory (Derman-Sparks, 1989) and the family diversity categories framework (Bishop, 1997).

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds ... windows are also sliding glass doors ... readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated ... Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience (Bishop, 1990, p. ix).

This study has implications for the provisioning of picture books in early childhood settings. When picture books are intentionally chosen to reflect the rich plurality of family life, all children from all families stand to gain a sense of belonging, affirmation and self-worth. All children will see their families reflected in the available picture books i.e. books as mirrors; get to view families different to their own, i.e. books as windows and develop empathy and a richer understanding of the world, i.e. books as sliding doors (Bishop, 1990).

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Malaysian parents' and early childhood educators' perspectives on pretend play: the benefits, needs for assessment kit and activities guidelines.

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Keywords

Pretend play, Malaysia, perceived benefits

Abstract

Rationale for the study

Children's main activity is play and it has been shown to be beneficial for children's development and learning; and has been adopted in the practice of early childhood education in Malaysia. However, pretend play which has been reported to promote children's cognitive, language and social interaction skills are not significantly discussed as there is limited to none available reports on it in the Malaysian context (Chang et al., 2018; Jing, & Li, 2015; Slot, Mulder, Verhagen, & Leseman, 2017). There are plausible causes explaining this including the lack of knowledge about pretend play and limited resources to be referred to in relation to pretend play (Abu Bakar, 2009; Puteh, & Ali, 2013). Therefore, it is of interest to explore young children's pretend play in Malaysia.

Purpose(s) and research question(s) of the study

The study aims to explore young children's pretend play in Malaysia, and the need of a pretend play assessment kit and activities guidelines from the perspectives of parents and early childhood educators. The research questions of the study are:

- i. how do parents and educators perceive pretend play and its benefits for young children's development?
- ii. is there a need of a pretend play assessment kit for educators to use to assess young children's pretend play?
- iii. is there a need of a pretend play activities guidelines for parents and educators to use to promote young children's pretend play?

Brief description

The quantitative study used an online survey via Google Form. The survey is in Malay language and has been completed by consented 85 parents of children aged between 2 to 6 years old and 115 early childhood educators. The survey data was analysed descriptively, reporting the frequencies and mean.

Summary

Findings showed that the level of knowledge and understanding of participants are quite high, with parents' slightly higher ($M_{\text{knowledge}} = 4.56$, $SD_{\text{knowledge}} = 0.626$; $M_{\text{understanding}} = 4.55$, $SD_{\text{understanding}} = 0.627$) than the educators' ($M_{\text{knowledge}} = 4.25$, $SD_{\text{knowledge}} = 0.673$; $M_{\text{understanding}} = 4.23$, $SD_{\text{understanding}} = 0.714$).

Educators reported the need for pretend play kit assessment ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.78$) and will use it once available ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.795$). Both educators and parents reported the need for pretend play activities guideline ($M_{\text{educator}} = 4.42$, $SD_{\text{educator}} = 0.701$; $M_{\text{parents}} = 4.22$, $SD_{\text{parents}} = 0.864$) which will be use if available ($M_{\text{educator}} = 4.41$, $SD_{\text{educator}} = 0.687$; $M_{\text{parents}} = 4.41$, $SD_{\text{parents}} = 0.729$). It is need to guide them on how to engage in pretend play with children ($M_{\text{educator}} = 4.56$, $SD_{\text{educator}} = 0.638$; $M_{\text{parents}} = 4.44$, $SD_{\text{parents}} = 0.794$) and to promote children's pretend play skills ($M_{\text{educator}} = 4.54$, $SD_{\text{educator}} = 0.692$; $M_{\text{parents}} = 4.61$, $SD_{\text{parents}} = 0.638$).

Based on the findings, majority of parents and educators know and understand about pretend play and perceived that it is beneficial for children's development and learning. The findings suggest that a pretend play assessment kit and activities guidelines book should be developed as parents and educators in this study reported to highly needed them.

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