

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 24

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Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is essentially a Western view of childhood preschool education and school education.

It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series will:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly Indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
- Explore policy imperatives which shape and have shaped how early childhood education is enacted across countries
- Examine how early childhood education is researched locally and globally
- Examine the theoretical informants driving pedagogy and practice, and seek to find alternative perspectives from those that dominate many Western heritage countries
- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
- Examine concept formation from within the context of country-specific pedagogy and learning outcomes

The series covers theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series will also cover a broad range of countries, including poor majority countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies will also be examined. However the focus is critical and international (not Western-centric).

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/7601>

Linda Mitchell

Democratic Policies and Practices in Early Childhood Education

An Aotearoa New Zealand Case Study

 Springer

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Foreword

Towards New Political Times

This book makes a fresh contribution to international early childhood policy discourses. Early childhood policy and pedagogy in Aotearoa New Zealand has, over several decades, created interest in international arenas, and aspects of the story have been selectively documented. Linda Mitchell's book is timely, presenting a comprehensive case study analysis, illustrative of wider arguments and viewpoints concerning childhood, democracy and the institutions of care and education of young children. This is an international book with global messages, but with exemplars originating in the Antipodean Pacific, distant in geography and culture from Western sites of early childhood discourses. The exemplars stem variously from research projects, policy initiatives, pedagogical innovation, advocacy and protest. The combination of pedagogy, policy, protest, politics and research, as a linked analysis, is a significant contribution to policy discourses. Linda explores the interface of these domains to illustrate, for example, what democratic practice might look like and what it can achieve in terms of policy and practice.

The timeframe spans Linda's own career in education and is indeed a scholarly mirror, probably not intentionally, of her own activism. But a preface writer, and long-time colleague in advocacy, can surely acknowledge Linda as a key player in both shaping early childhood policy in Aotearoa New Zealand: contesting its shortfalls and articulating new debates. This is a distinctive feature of the Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood scene and a clue to its policy successes and innovation, with players like Linda who combines long-term activism, scholarly research and writing and union activism: strategically working with government as well as, at times, sternly critiquing government.

The book was conceptualised in challenging political times amidst the third term of a conservative government that undermined and stalled earlier policy initiatives around free and universal approaches to early childhood, a pathway to 100% qualified teaching staff with equal pay and status with the other education sectors and

fledgling understandings of the rights of the young citizen child. But in the late 2017, new political times emerged in Aotearoa New Zealand with the election again of a Labour-led government promising to redress earlier wrongs across the education sector. The timeliness of this book captures the dramatic turnaround in policy and opportunities ahead to again enhance “democratic policies and practices in [the] early childhood centres of Aotearoa New Zealand”.

Emeritus Professor, University of Otago
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Helen May

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