Editorial

Conversations about technology in early childhood education

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This edition of *He Kupu* is a first, in that it draws together a selection of papers from the fourth New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) conference held in November 2014 in Auckland, New Zealand. While the subject of ICT in early childhood education has been the subject of an earlier edition of *He Kupu* (see Vol. 2 No. 5), this edition sees a diverse number of presenters from across the sector in New Zealand who report on their perspectives on ICT and the early years. Although the papers are shorter than in recent editions of *He Kupu*, the variety of topics and novel ideas make up for the length of each paper.

The Practitioner Researcher section in this issue spans a number of topics including gender research, pro-social behaviour, the outdoors environment and implementing mathematics in early childhood education. Peng Zou, a Graduate Diploma student at NZTC, has returned to the topic of *He Kupu* Vol. 3 No. 3, to discuss gender education and the need for greater attention to be paid to this aspect of early childhood education. In a short paper Katherine Andrew, a Bachelor of Teaching graduate at NZTC, looks at strategies to develop pro-social behaviour. Katherine suggests a documentation system that supports children in their learning to respect their peers and teachers. Danielle Smith, née Bull, a Bachelor of Teaching graduate at NZTC, looks at the ideal outdoors environment observing that many children in New Zealand may not enjoy the outdoors for a variety of reasons. Nicola O'Brien, a Graduate Diploma student at NZTC, has chosen to write about mathematical learning. In an interesting paper she observes the need to blend topic based and direct instruction in this field of learning for the under-fives.

The Special Edition is a compilation of papers from the NZTC fourth annual conference 'Conversations about Technology in Early Childhood Education.' This conference drew delegates from a wide variety of backgrounds: librarians, teachers, lecturers, programmers and specialist support teachers in ICT based in New Zealand. The keynote speaker was Professor Chip Donohoue, Dean of Distance Learning at Erikson Institute, who outlined a number of innovative uses of technology designed to increase access, enhance learning and improve teaching practice. These themes were echoed in many of the conference papers.

The first paper in the Special Edition is by Associate Professor Andrew Gibbons from Auckland University of Technology. Andrew usefully outlines a number of critical questions for teachers working in early childhood in relation to technology. Briefly referring to the historical arguments regarding technology, Andrew addresses the polemic put forward for, and against technology in early childhood. As Andrew develops his essay he questions the expectations surrounding technology being seen as disconnected from the child. Extending the discussion to teachers, Andrew elaborates his argument with reference to

portfolios and the effect that 'expectations' can have on teacher conceptualisation of themselves and children. In conclusion Andrew asks for greater criticality in how technology is employed and for a criticality to be added to the discussion as to how technology is undertaken in teaching and learning within an ethic of care.

Kathryn MacCallum and Heather Bell have contributed a paper describing the use of iPads in a centre after a two year gap from the time of the first trial. Like the paper by Andrew Gibbons, the two authors see a lack of research data available in the field of smart devices and early childhood education. Using a model described as, 'Teaching as Inquiry' (Timperely, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007), the research sought to document, reflect and evaluate the work of the children. With reference to two case studies the research exemplifies shifts in learning that result from the use of the iPads where knowledge is enhanced and sound pedagogical practices were observed.

An interesting account is provided by Danielle Carter of the services offered at Auckland Libraries. The provision for early childhood at Auckland Libraries are impressive, with consideration not only for age appropriateness but also accessibility on a number of smart devices. Details are provided on 'OverDrive', a resource with 470 e-book titles and a variety of other e-resources from different publishers. It is particularly interesting to learn of accessibility in the Auckland Libraries to software that allows parents and children to develop their own narration to stories. Danielle completes her overview with reference to the professional development in the library system, ensuring that staff are familiar with the different titles available and ways in which they might be integrated into different online learning environments. It is hoped that this paper will be useful for those who live beyond Auckland, New Zealand, as for those who live and work in the city.

When Felipe Prieto presented his paper at the NZTC conference it was standing room only, and teachers who attended found his session very valuable. His knowledge of ICT is impressive and as he recounts his narrative in this paper that becomes obvious. With reference to the iPod and Apple TV, Felipe describes how he has used the TV for downloading material for the children at his centre. Felipe also features the use of the iCloud to store photos and the iPad or Tablet to show parents the children's activity at the centre. Felipe provides a useful array of 'Apps' that he has used in his centre before asking whether there is sufficient preparation in teacher education for this area of the curriculum. Felipe is optimistic for the future, looking forward to the next generation of ICT devices and Apps that teachers might utilise in the years ahead.

Shanali Vindya de Rose, from Whiteria Polytechnic, continues the theme of teacher education with an account of skills development with her students in the wake of policy decisions in New Zealand. Shanali outlines her work to improve her early childhood education students' confidence in their use of ICT. The students' differentiation according to age group was a finding that Shanali found surprising, especially in the familiarity and use of social media by the younger students. Questions around the competence levels of students and the effect on their practice in the early childhood setting was, however, put in doubt, as many children now have access to ICT in the home environment.

Returning to the availability of 'Apps' in the early childhood centre, Roimata Rokx, a lecturer from NZTC, has provided a very useful reference for those wishing to use various Apps in learning Māori language or *te reo*. After a brief history of British colonial rule in New Zealand, Roimata explains how despite government measures, *te reo* is still only spoken by a diminishing number of Māori. Roimata outlines the nature of the government backed provision to halt this decline with a number of initiatives. She begins with radio, where it is now possible to learn with programmes on *te reo* broadcast by Māori radio stations. This has subsequently led to 'Irirangi', a streaming of 21 radio stations available for iPad and iPhone. Roimata lists a number of other resources, including those available for the early childhood teacher that might be useful in the centre. This paper will prove a useful resource for those teachers looking for materials to help in developing *te reo* in their centre.

The final paper in the Special Edition section is written by Simon Archard from the University of Waikato. Simon considers the pedagogical issues surrounding the value of various ICT devices and software. With reference to a number of sources including Dahlberg and Moss (2005), Simon suggests we can see in Te Whāriki, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum document, a social justice discourse that supports a negotiated learning framework in ICT. It is this relational democratic approach that Simon sees as lacking currently in the implementation of ICT in the early childhood setting. Citing a case study, Simon shows how a more democratic usage of ICT might be brought about.

The two book reviews are by Shirley Harris, Curriculum Advisor at NZTC based at the Christchurch campus, and Sujatha Gomathinayagam, a lecturer at NZTC's Auckland Campus. Shirley has written a review of the publication by Gilian Pugh and Bernadette Duffy titled 'Contemporary Issues in the Early Years'. This is a revised edition that while seen by Shirley as over focused on the UK, has value in seeing the sector in an international framework. Another useful addition is a chapter on early intervention in cases of child abuse.

The second book review, by Sujatha Gomathinayagam, looks at the publication 'The essence of play: A practice companion for professionals working with children and young people,' by Justine Howard and Karen McInnes. This in-depth book considers play from a theoretical as well as practical viewpoint with developmental milestones frequently referenced. Other aspects of play are adults engaging in play, gender and culture issues and play related to the environment. Written for the therapist and educational context, each chapter has a list of related readings and follow up material that make this an interesting addition to an early childhood centre's resources.

The next edition of *He Kupu* will be focusing on Well-being in Early Childhood Education with a closing date of July 20th. for submissions and publication in October 2015. Following that in 2016 "Philosophy and Early Childhood Education" will be the theme with a closing date of January 20th.

References

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