

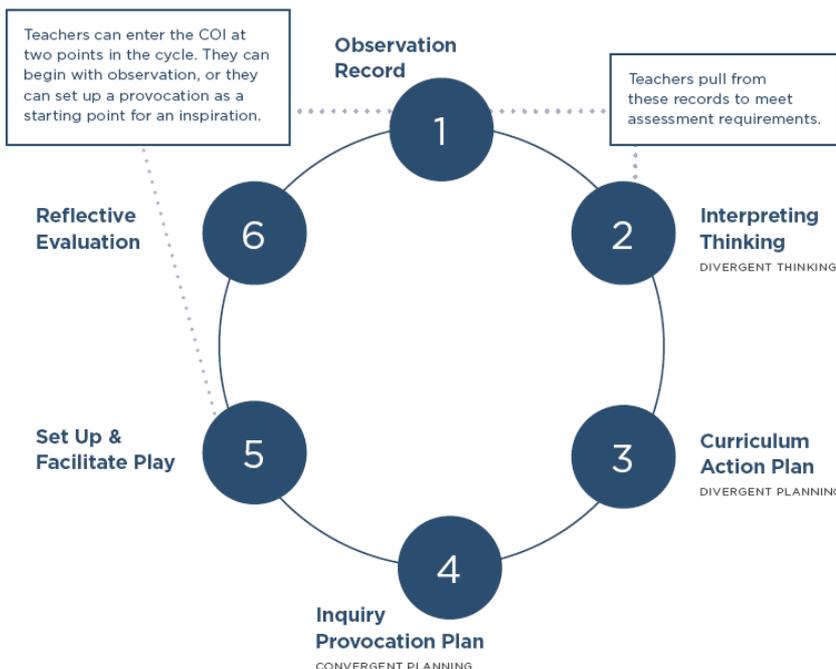
Book Review

## From Children’s Interests to Children’s Thinking: Using a Cycle of Inquiry to Plan Curriculum by Broderick, J. T., & Hong, S. B.

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Are you looking to enrich your planning and documentation? Look no further than, *From Children’s Interests to Children’s Thinking: Using a Cycle of Inquiry to Plan Curriculum*. This nine-chapter book by United States early childhood academics, Jane Broderick and Seong Bock Hong offers a practical approach for supporting early childhood teachers to enrich the emergent curriculum through the introduction of the cycle of inquiry (COI). The COI process is described by authors as a tool for teachers to “plan curriculum in response to children’s curiosity and questioning” (p. 1). From the onset, readers will recognise that the COI process is cohesive in its design, with each cycle linking and building off the next. The teacher’s role is emphasised throughout as central to each phase to promote “more depth and complexity” (p. 132) in learning alongside children’s instinctive exploration. Readers will also be able to see how the COI process could be used to support the implementation of *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum (Te Whāriki)* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017). The authors classify “children as inquirers [and] teachers as researchers” (p. 1), which is reflective of *Te Whāriki*, as teachers follow and extend on children’s natural curiosity within planning and assessment, provoking children to “inquire into, research, explore, generate and modify working theories” (MoE, 2017, p.47).

Figure 1: The Cycle of Inquiry Process



Note. This figure shows the COI process on p.4 from the book.

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This thoughtfully designed book supports teachers to unpack and apply each phase of the COI in their context. Chapter one begins with the learning environment to construct what the authors pen as the emergent inquiry curriculum. *Te Whāriki* expresses that a balance should be created between the role of the teacher in their facilitation of learning through provocations with the child being included in the “planning and assessing of their own learning journey” (MoE, 2017, p. 63), this draws upon the authors intent. Teachers’ thinking is valued while they work alongside children in play. The emphasis on the role of the teacher and the application of their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge to facilitate the learning environment, while considering the arrangement and positioning of resources to promote children’s thinking and questioning.

Chapters two and three align with the idea that “assessment is both informal and formal” (MoE, 2017, p. 63) and encourages teachers to engage with small groups of children in planned provocations intentionally. This idea of encouraging teachers to view children’s play as “constructive playtime ... representing the idea that children are ... constructing new understanding within the context of their play” (p. 16) is central to the COI process. Based on previously observed interests, this seeks to foster and encourage children’s own thinking and questioning about learning through collaborative and open dialogue with their peers. Through child-led planning, teachers are supported to find meaningful threads of inquiry to construct the ‘what next’ in their planning and COI process.

In chapter four, observation methods, including photos and videos, are discussed as tools to capture play and revisit later in the COI. The authors emphasise that reflective evaluation and collaboration with children, families and the team, promote greater subjectivity for teachers to interpret children’s thinking and understand their observations. This idea is the focus from chapters five to eight. Teachers are supported to make sense of their observations through brainstorming, questioning and implementing further provocations to enhance and continue the COI. There are tools throughout these chapters, including a COI reflective evaluation form and examples to support teachers in their responsiveness to children’s learning interests. Through drawing on their pedagogical and curriculum knowledge, teachers seek to enhance learning outcomes that are connected to the curriculum while ensuring that “assessment practices ... give children agency” (MoE, 2017, p. 59). The authors further add in these chapters that when teachers “keep [their] thinking as open and divergent as possible” (p. 45), deeper learning outcomes are achieved as teachers are open to learning possibilities throughout the COI and “remain uncertain as to the final direction of the curriculum” (p. 5).

The final chapter discusses documentation by creating panels to prompt children to revisit and extend their learning in play. The authors encourage teachers to utilise digital tools to present these, including “PowerPoint, Google Sheets, ... and Publisher” (p. 128). This could be extended in a New Zealand context to include online learning platforms such as StoryPark and Educa to further confirm and build off children’s learning to develop the COI through the collaboration with the child’s wider learning community.

Examples throughout the book are based in United States preschools. However, readers will recognise how the practices reflect the aspirations and values of *Te Whāriki*. The authors and this book place continued value on each teacher’s pedagogical knowledge to co-construct learning alongside children and the wider learning community. Through being open to the unknown, teachers are challenged by the authors to use the COI process to follow children’s natural inquiry to create a more authentic and intentional emergent curriculum.

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**References**

Broderick, J. T. & Hong, S. B. (2020). *From Children's Interests to Children's Thinking: Using a Cycle of Inquiry to Plan Curriculum*. The National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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