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Pasifika perspectives of play: challenges and responsibilities

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This paper examines the challenges that Pacific Island early childhood teachers are confronted with when trying to advocate learning opportunities for young children through play. Research studies (Hughes, 2004; Leaupepe, 2008a; Mara & Burgess, 2007) reveal that Pacific Island teachers are seldom involved in children's play experiences and rarely encourage play opportunities for children. These findings are attributed to a number of critical factors: cultural influences, parental attitudes towards play, and teachers' values and beliefs about the term 'play.' Drawing from the findings of a research project that investigated Samoan and Tongan student teachers' views of play (Leaupepe, 2008a) assumptions about the term play and the responsibilities of teachers in promoting play opportunities are explored. Aspects that are specifically related to play and Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1996), Aotearoa New Zealand's national early childhood curriculum, underpin this discussion. The implications of this document for Pacific Island early childhood teachers are discussed. The discussions in this paper are not intended to be conclusive. Rather, it is hoped that by engaging in a critical discussion concerning the need for Pacific Island early childhood teachers to understand theories of play, this paper will inform Pacific Island early childhood practice.

Introduction

In 2007 a small-scale research project explored Pasifika early childhood student teachers' views of play. The research participants were recruited from a class listing and were enrolled in the Pacific Islands Early Childhood Education (PIECE) Diploma of Teaching programme. The specialized three-year programme was administered through the School of Pasifika Education, Faculty of Education, at The University of Auckland. This particular cohort consisted mainly of Samoan and Tongan students, therefore the sample was not representative of all Pasifika groups. The research participants were in their second year of studies completing a teaching qualification that would allow them to work in both mainstream and Pacific Island early childhood settings. For the purpose of this study, understanding the views of Pasifika student teachers in relation to play and the contributing factors that influenced their ways of thinking about play were considered important. It is hoped that an understanding of such views may support student teachers in their responsiveness to play and help them recognise the effects this may have on how they provide play opportunities for young children.



A Pasifika research approach

When undertaking any type of research with Pacific peoples, one's own Pacific heritage is not automatically guaranteed. The 'rite of passage' becomes a matter of mana and status (Airini et al., 2010). The author of this paper - being of Cook Islands, Tahitian and Kiribati heritage - makes explicit the use of Pasifika research concepts that are relevant to the research participants and are regarded as being of great importance for this particular research project.

Two Pasifika concepts have underpinned the research approach for the study reported here. Firstly, the *kakala* model that was developed by Thaman (1999) was considered as being appropriate. This model is based on Tongan values and principles that illustrate the customary practice of fragrant garland making. It is used in this study to describe the process of gathering knowledge, classifying information and disseminating knowledge and information. *Toli kakala*, the searching for, selecting and gathering of the most appropriate flowers, is employed to explain the recruitment and interviewing of the research participants for the study. In order to investigate the nature of student teachers' perceptions of play, interviews were carried out before and after undertaking a course about the value of play. During the initial stage of the research the student teachers shared their childhood play memories. *Kau tui kakala* is the procedure by which the information shared by the research participants is methodically organised and interpreted in order to make the best possible design for the garland. *Luva e kakala* is the final process; it is used to describe how the research information is given back to the research participants, which in turn becomes a gift as the information and knowledge are used to inform others (Thaman, 1999).

Secondly, the concept of *talanoa*, a research methodology that is favoured by many Pacific Island peoples (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001) was used. *Tala* refers to "inform, tell, talk about" and *noa* means "nothing, or void" (Fa'afoi, Parkhill & Fletcher, 2006, p. 105). This provides a culturally appropriate setting whereby the researcher and research participants can talk openly and spontaneously about the research topic. The conversation flows freely with very little intrusion of a formal structure with predetermined questions. In the process a shared understanding of ownership and research directions are incorporated. Manu'atu and Kepa (2006) refer to *talanoa* as "critical thinking and action," with the notion of *talanoamālie* involving critical thinking that "gets under the skin" (p.171). The concept of *talanoa* endorses a qualitative approach as the most appropriate technique to use in this research, as it adopts an oral interactive approach (Leaupepe, 2010a).

Pasifika perspectives of play

The concept of play has been part of early childhood educational programmes since their early development (Ailwood, 2003). Play is perceived as allowing children to learn naturally about themselves and the world around them (Bruce, 2001). Play is regarded as the necessary core of curriculum for young children (Alward, Van Hoorn, Nourot & Scales, 1999; Ministry of Education, 1996) and is considered a significant catalyst for learning and development that reflects the social and cultural contexts in which children live (Dockett & Flear, 2003; Gaskins, Haight & Lancy, 2007). Play is viewed as purposeful, as well as being



a source of unadulterated enjoyment and pleasure that offers a means of exploration and a way of acquiring knowledge (Ministry of Education, 1996). Reviews of play-related research propose that play is imperative to the holistic development of the child (Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales & Alward, 2003; Bruce, 2001; Dockett & Fler, 2003; Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002; Saracho & Spodek, 2003). However, such views of play and its benefits may not be held in high regard in Pacific Island countries (Leauepe, 2008a; 2010a).

Very little research has been conducted on Pasifika perspectives of play (Leauepe, 2010a). Literature on play that is currently used in education is dominated by research that has been carried out from Western perspectives and collected in Western contexts (Dockett & Fler, 2003). It has been argued, however, that play should not be perceived outside of the cultural, political and historical context in which it emerges (Dockett & Fler, 2003; Fler, 2003; Leauepe, 2010a). Several writers have cautioned about the prevalence of value assumptions about play that may not necessarily apply to all cultural contexts (Cannella & Viruru, 2002; Delpit, 1993; King, 1992; Leauepe, 2010a; 2008b). Play may not in essence be viewed in the same regard from one culture to another and in some cases may be deemed as being inappropriate; for example, taking up children's time and energy when they could be engaged in something more productive. Completing important household chores is a highlighted feature for children of the Pacific Islands. In Vanuatu, Hughes (2004) points out that families and communities need children for household chores and prefer children to work rather than play. Traditionally in Western discourses of early childhood, the concept of play has been positioned in opposition to work (Rogers, 2011). Children's contribution to village life in many Pacific societies was and is important (Leauepe, 2008b), as is highlighted in the following statements¹:

I feel like playing all the time, I remember my mother saying to me 'come home do the things, sweep outside, pick up the rubbish.

When I was a child, when I go out and have a play our parents called out 'come here and do some work, don't waste your time but come here do something'.

Roopnarine, Lasker, Sacks and Stores (1998) in their study of the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia, discovered that play associated with activities such as fishing and hunting for food was a means of survival and the children's way of contributing to village life. Contributions of this sort are seen as children's duty and service, a way of respecting parents (Leauepe, 2010a; 2008a; Schoeffel & Meleisa, 1996). Therefore play becomes less important when compared to work. However, research participants in this study noted how work-related chores provided opportunities to engage in play. One research participant's recollection of working on the plantation illustrates this point:

When we go to the plantation we use to cut the you know banana skin back home, the ones ready to die, so we just cut the leaves, we sit in it and then we slide down, it was funny and we really enjoy ourselves.



The research participants initial views of play

The research participants had explained what their understanding of 'play' meant prior to undertaking a course about the value of play. For most, play was a way to have fun:

Play is fun, we experience the outer world and we experience more things to add on to your list of experiences.

We have fun with others.

I'm not tired of playing, 'cause I'm happy and I feel like playing every time. When my mother don't let me go and play I was crying and I was very sad at home.

All the research participants saw play as a way of making friends that enhanced their socializing skills. Initially the views of the research participants were very much in line with the "surplus energy theory" (Schiller, 1875, cited in Dockett & Fler, 2003) in which play is considered to be aimless expenditure of exuberant energy. Play was thought of as running around, climbing trees and other activities that had no connection to learning:

When we play we are making friends.

I like playing, making friends with my peers.

We make lots of friends, it helps with communication.

Play was just you run around and have fun, nothing to do with learning.

You climb trees, make friends, it was a time to socialize. I always like playing.

Play was relaxing and associated with exercising through playing traditional cultural games. Participants recalled playing in groups and that play at times was competitive.

I remember playing kilikitī, running around, laughing having fun and then getting really competitive. So much fun, heaps of children. Those were fun times. We go under the tree and relax and talk about the game, who did what, the mistakes, the funny parts that makes everyone laugh.

We never play by ourselves, we always play in a group, it's more fun to play together.

Individual play seldom occurred. The absence of individualized play experiences for the research participants may become a challenge when encouraging opportunities for individual play. *Te Whāriki* (MoE, 1996) endorses opportunities for children to experience an environment where "ways to enjoy solitary play" (p.70) are encouraged.



All the research participants had experienced and shared similar childhood play memories. Their childhood play experiences occurred mainly outdoors and on a social level that involved other children. Indoor play involved playing cards, finger-plays, knucklebones and hand clapping games that were accompanied by various chants. One participant explains why indoor play is rare:

We hardly have any games indoors, back home no indoors; indoors we have to keep the house nicely for visitors.

The research participants' accounts of parental attitudes towards play

All the research participants recalled that, for their parents and other adult members of the extended family, play had been viewed as a waste of time, of no value and interfering with important household chores.

I learnt from a young age that play was a waste of time. My parents would say to me "stop playing, stop making a mess, you're getting dirty" you know, things like that. Even the old people, they don't like it [play] too, making too much noise.

My mum doesn't want me to get my clothes dirty.

Sometime our parents don't want us to go play - it's a waste of time.

Elderly parents don't value play.

I wasn't really allowed to play.

Another similar experience shared by all the research participants was the lack of adult involvement in their play. All the research participants had no recollection of adult participation in their childhood play experiences. The following quote illustrates this point:

As a child, I can't remember any adults playing with us kids. Not teachers, no experienced people or even my parents to enhance that play or give me that support [during play].

Adults don't play with us. I think that because it's the way that they were being brought up, now I am growing up and it's the same thing, I pass the same thing to my eldest child, that play isn't important.

The research participants gave accounts of when their parents had used play as a reward to ensure that household chores were completed, which resulted in work being completed quicker:

When I had to do my chores and I didn't want to, my mother would let me play once I had finished my chores, so I would do it faster.



Our parents reward us when we do our chores because it's always we do our chores.

There were times like you have to do little chores at home and then it's playtime. Sometimes I cry because I don't want to do it, 'cause I want to play with my friends, but then my mum she say if I do it [the chores] then I can go and have a play and I'm happy again and I make sure I do it fast so I can play outside with my friends.

These examples indicate that parents had, to some degree, seen the value of play, but only if play was connected with children being able to complete delegated tasks and household chores.

It would be useful for Pasifika early childhood teachers to consider what play has meant for them, to reflect on their own childhood play experiences and consider how different these experiences may be to the children that they interact with as practitioners. The importance of this is noted by Sandberg and Samuelsson (2003), who maintain young children's experiences of play are to some extent influenced by the values and beliefs held by early childhood teachers. The revitalization of neglected knowledge provides opportunities for teachers to critically reflect on such processes and consider the implications for children's learning and development (Leaupepe, 2010b).

The word 'neglected' is used here to describe the dichotomy between what teachers know and understand about play and what is actually implemented (Leaupepe, 2010a). Knowledge that has been accumulated overtime, and that should inform what teachers do and why, is often neglected (Leaupepe, 2010b). Certain practices within an early childhood education environment, along with ideas and views pertaining to play, can go unquestioned and unchallenged, and therefore can become somewhat 'taken-for-granted' (Fleer, 2003; Keating, Fabian, Jordan, Mavers, & Roberts, 2000; Leaupepe, 2010b; Leaupepe, 2009). Unraveling taken-for-granted practices entails breaking into well-entrenched and constructed traditions that may not always be easily shifted or eradicated. The process of being a reflective practitioner requires one to critique one's own practices through a process that is ongoing, intentional and succinct. It is where one begins to examine what has informed how a person behaves, reacts or respond in a certain manner and includes the ability to identify the implications that may arise from such an examination.

The value of play for children's learning is recognised in the Pasifika early childhood teacher education programmes delivered in the Faculty of Education at The University of Auckland (Airini et al., 2010). However, not all students entering these programmes are from backgrounds where play is highly valued or recognised for its contribution to the holistic development of the child (Leaupepe, 2009). The tension that arises when students bring to their studies deep-seated beliefs that are challenged by the ideas presented in their courses can become problematic. Of those who have entered teacher education programmes, some, though not all, have experienced an irresolvable tension as they struggle between the deep-seated beliefs acquired as children in their home country and the ideas presented to them in the courses that challenge those beliefs (Leaupepe, 2009).



Bourdieu refers to such deep-seated beliefs as doxic knowledge: beliefs that are so embodied that they are unconscious and unavailable for analysis using self-reflective strategies (Bourdieu, 1990). "We accept many things without knowing them" (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p.113). It is the implicit knowledge that is not considered: to a certain extent "it just is" (Rata, 2002, p.15). According to Shalem and Bensusan (1999), doxic beliefs are particularly difficult to change and there are extensive differences of opinion about how change can occur, if at all.

Viewing play from multiple perspectives: critical factors

Cultural influences

Culture has a central effect on children's play. Cultural socialization practices, values and assumptions are fundamental in shaping play preferences within varying cultures. It is through the process of socialization, that members of a particular culture evidently impart appropriate values, norms and skills to their children (Dockett & Fleer, 2003; Leaupepe, 2008a; Mara & Burgess, 2007; Mauigoa-Tekene, 2006; Roopnarine & Johnson, 2001). Play is then shaped and/or organized based on the cultural information taught through socialization practices (Gaskins et al., 2007; Sutton-Smith, 1997). It would appear that children prefer the style of play that they have been socialized to value and employ, and socialization practices provide both the context and means through which children play (Gaskins et al., 2007; Hughes, 2004; Leaupepe, 2008a; Mauigoa-Tekene, 2006; Roopnarine & Johnson, 2001; Roopnarine et al., 1998). This is highlighted in the following quote in relation to gender equality:

In Tongan culture you know there are certain play that boys can only do and certain play that girls can only do, and there were times that boys and girls are not allowed to play together because of boys being rough and for the respect we have for each other. For example, we are playing marbles it would have been rude for me to play marbles, of the way we are kneeling down on the ground, climbing trees with boys because then having exposed ourselves as a child. Some play was limited for us because of the languages we might use in our play. Even now, after I learn about those theorists I still don't let my daughter play certain games, I don't let her climb trees, no climbing trees.

Despite what has been learnt in a course about the benefits of play which included frequent rigorous debate about the importance of gender-equality in play, the participant's embodied beliefs remain unchanged and firmly fixed in the traditional ways. New Zealand education is based on human rights legislation and a liberal-democratic culture that requires and values gender equality and the education system actively encourages gender interaction (Leaupepe, 2009). However, the result for this student is an unacknowledged conflict as she passively receives the ideas presented in the course, but actively allows her own views to dominate her interactions with children. She may be seen in class to have adopted the required knowledge through assessments. She may appear to engage in the appropriate practices within the early childhood centres where she undertakes practical experience, but it is a superficial acceptance. The subtle



and unconscious messages that she sends to the children through her body language and choice of words may reveal the deeper doxic beliefs.

Yet this is not the case with all the students. Another research participant spoke about the significant transformation of her own attitude towards gender related aspects of play, that occurred as a result of what she had learnt in the course. Here she refers specifically to the theorists studied in the course:

Back home I grew up in a home with the knowledge that girls games are different from boys games. We hardly mix. I've changed my mentality that's the first thing. I've learnt a lot [in this course]. At my last practicum I practiced that, what I've learned from the theorists, like Vygotsky's theory about imagination and it's amazing how you discover new learning. Children's thinking, how they come up with certain play. Like this group of children were playing doctors and nurses, and the boy is a patient and the girls are the nurses and the doctor. They are playing in the family corner. I wouldn't encourage the boy in that area because it's for girls and then I think 'yes', the girl can be a doctor too, it's ok that they are playing together. I definitely wouldn't encourage this kind of play, no, not at all, but now I understand how this type of play and interactions between the boy and the girls can enhance their learning.

These two examples illustrate the problematic nature of teacher education programmes that involve making significant changes to beliefs held by the students.

Parental attitudes towards play

Negative responses from parents have been noted in several studies; parents viewed play as a waste of time and of no value (Gaskins et al., 2007; Hughes, 2004; Leaupepe, 2010a; 2008a; Rothlein & Brett, 1987). Parental beliefs and attitudes towards play, and the role and function of children in society and within cultures, need to be considered when viewing play from multicultural perspectives (Leaupepe, 2010a). For the research participants in this study, influences of their own parents' views of play had contributed to the ways in which they as adults viewed play and the dilemma they now faced advocating for play. One participant met with unsurprising resistance as she attempted to pass on the knowledge learned in her course to her children, who were using the very practices with their children that she had used with them:

It's hard, 'cause you know; I now see my eldest child and how he stops his son from playing. What happened to me as a child, I passed on to him. I tell him to leave his son, he is exploring. We start to argue and he says to me "what a waste of time, look at the mess." I feel sad and know what has happened, it's like a cycle being continued, but I know now and I want to try and encourage him so his son can learn and have fun.

Pasifika parents who have migrated to New Zealand have aspirations for their children and have preferred early childhood settings that take into account similar features to those of the home environment (Airini, Leaupepe, Sauni, Toso & Amituanai-Tolooa, 2009): that is caring, secure and loving settings that



incorporate discipline, routines and rules that resemble village-type lifestyles from the Pacific Island countries (Airini et al., 2010; 2009; Leaupepe, 2010a; 2008b; Schoeffel & Meleseia, 1996).

Teachers' values and beliefs

Literature has revealed that understanding of theories of play and what was actually practiced has been an issue for many teachers both in mainstream early childhood settings (Hedges, 2003; Newman, Brody & Beauchamp, 1996; Ranz-Smith, 2007; Rothlein & Brett, 1987; Wood & Bennett, 1998) and in Pacific Island early childhood services (Hughes, 2004; Leaupepe, 2010a, 2008a; Mara & Burgess, 2007). It is suggested that early childhood teachers' views and experiences of play will in turn have an effect on the types of play, amount of play and space for play made available to children, and the role of teachers in children's play (Fleer, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Keating et al., 2000; Leaupepe, 2008a; Newman et al., 1996; Ranz-Smith, 2007; Riojas-Cortez, 2000; Roonarine & Johnson, 2001; Rothlein & Brett, 1987; Sandberg & Samuelsson, 2003). In the following example, a research participant shares how what she learned on the course has helped her appreciate children's play and recognize how she can be involved:

I come into their [children's] play and I said, "I'm sick too, please someone help me". I pretend to be sick and they come, then they wrap some tissues around my arm and I was having fun, the way they imagine things of doctors and nurses, they must have seen this thing on T.V. They create and do their own script, their own play. I was amazed, because back home, we play only the things we experience and have seen. I think about Vygotsky's ideas about imaginative play, how children's cognitive thinking is developing and enhancing that learning. Children learn so much through play.

The increased awareness of different theories influenced her values and beliefs about play and contributed to changes in her practices. She goes on to describe how she can support and encourage children's play:

I know if I saw a child play, with the understanding I have now. I have to think of a better way to enhance that learning or that play to make it more meaningful for the child and where is it going to take him or her.

Connections to Te Whāriki

So what does this mean in relation to *Te Whāriki*, which points out the need for children's play to be "valued as meaningful learning and the importance of spontaneous play . . ." (MoE, 1996, p.16). To meet *Te Whāriki's* goals, Pasifika early childhood teachers need to recognise that children develop knowledge through "trying things out, exploration, and curiosity" (MoE, 1996, p.84) and these are deemed important and valued ways of learning; that play is a vehicle through which learning can occur. Although many Pasifika early childhood teachers are committed to play, several studies have noted that attention to more formal activities continues to be favoured (Hughes, 2004; Leaupepe, 2010a, 2008a; Mara & Burgess, 2007; Mauigoa-Tekene, 2006; Tagoilelagi,



1995; Tanielu, 2004). A common feature in many Pacific Island early childhood centres is direct instructional teaching of children, whereby the teacher controls the whole learning process (Leauepepe, 2008a). Pacific children are familiar with the practice of teachers being in charge and directing the learning as this reflects the practices by which children learn in the home (Airini et al., 2009; Leauepepe, 2010a; Schoeffel & Meleisa, 1996). Several studies have revealed that teachers have used play as a means of rewarding children for completing adult-teacher task related activities (Hughes, 2004; Leauepepe, 2008a; Mara & Burges, 2007), reinforcing the message that work is more important than play.

Teacher education plays an important role in equipping teachers to recognise the complex ideas associated with theories of play and the benefits play has for young children (Airini et al., 2010; Leauepepe, 2009). Alternative programmes that have been developed offer the opportunity to undertake teacher training through Pasifika approaches and models (Airini et al., 2009). However, it is important to recognise that some students who enter such programmes bring with them deep-seated beliefs that are sometimes in tension with course content. Furthermore, *Te Whāriki* does not make explicit how other cultures may view play and the implications such views will have for the developing child in early childhood education. In addition, what Pasifika early childhood teachers understand and know of play has often been met with the anxiety of trying to provide play experiences to children while needing to stay abreast of parental expectations, such as the maintenance of language and culture through traditional ways of learning (see for example Tagolelagi, 1995; Tanielu, 2004; Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). Added to this dilemma are government aspirations of improving the early literacy and numeracy skills of children (Hughes, 2004; Leauepepe, 2010a; 2008a; Mara & Burgess, 2007; Mauigoa-Tekene, 2006; MoE, 1996).

Challenges and Responsibilities

The views and beliefs of migrant Pacific Island parents may still be influential (Hughes, 2004; Leauepepe, 2010a). If Pacific Island migrant parents in Aotearoa-New Zealand do not see the value in play it is most likely that play opportunities for their children will be hindered. In Pacific Island early childhood centres, teachers may feel obligated to carry out the expectations of parents by producing evidence of children's learning by way of worksheets and other related tasks (Hughes, 2004; Leauepepe, 2010a). An additional challenge is the downward pressures of ensuring children's learning outcomes from the curriculum are evident.

Even when they know the benefits of play, teachers have struggled with trying to implement effective and meaningful opportunities for children to engage in play (Hughes, 2004; Leauepepe, 2010a; 2010b; Ranz-Smith, 2007). Mara and Burgess's (2007) research revealed that Samoan early childhood teachers were more likely to allow children to play with their peers than participate in children's play themselves. There is evidence to suggest that interactions are crucial to teachers' work with young children, especially during children's play episodes. Early childhood teachers' knowledge and skill in questioning children during play helps to develop children's higher levels of thinking; however, this may be a challenge for Pasifika early childhood teachers whose socialisation practices do not encourage children to question and challenge adults (Leauepepe, 2010a;



2009; Schoeffel & Meleisa, 1996). The socialisation practices within cultures differ, especially when children are viewed as being separate from the adult world (Ailwood, 2003; Hughes, 2004; Mauigoa-Tekene, 2006). Any failure to recognise the socialisation practices of other cultures silences the voices that tell of 'other ways' of doing things.

All these areas would need to be addressed for Pasifika early childhood teachers to become confident in their role of advocating for play opportunities for young children. It would appear that Pasifika early childhood teachers need to adapt and/or at least become familiar with the concepts of Western views of play. In doing so, they may need to critically examine their own attitudes towards play and perceptions of play, and consider how such views may enhance or hinder children's learning and development. Although Western theories of play may not be favoured amongst some Pasifika early childhood teachers, consideration must be given to other ways of achieving effective learning for young children. At the same time, it must be appreciated that interpretations of play will vary from culture to culture (Leaupepe, 2010a).

Conclusion

Notions of play and the role it has in young children's education have been subjected to the attitudes and beliefs of particular cultures, and have been met with perplexity and uncertainty. Play is a word that is closely associated with the early childhood education sector in New Zealand: it has become almost a buzzword for what unfolds before us. However, play continues to intrigue us and a deeper understanding is required of how it has become accepted (Ailwood, 2003) within the practice of early childhood education (Fleer, 2003), and how we can utilize play opportunities to encourage further learning and development for young children. Although play has been regarded as a universal activity among young children, it is important to note that the nature of play will vary and the importance attached to it differs from culture to culture.

What is highlighted in the responses from the research participants in this study is the influence of their own childhood experiences on the ways in which they have perceived play as adults. By revisiting their childhood play experiences, the research participants compared and contrasted the types of play that they did as children with the types of play that children are exposed to in New Zealand today. Sandberg and Samuelsson (2003) recommend that this is a useful exercise as it establishes whether such influences will have an impact on children's development, as teachers' views of play are greatly influenced by their own knowledge, beliefs and experiences (Ranz-Smith, 2007). The findings that have emerged from this study are the beginnings of exploring play from other perspectives that are relevant to the diverse peoples living in New Zealand. Additionally, this study has revealed that research participants are willing to explore their own beliefs regarding play and see the benefits of carrying out such an exercise. Questions on how such views either hinder or influence early childhood teachers' relationships with young children will become the basis for further exploration into the area of play.



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ⁱ The information presented draws on the transcriptions of the research participants' interviews. English is a second language for all the participants in this research study and quotes/statements used in this report are exactly to how the participants have expressed themselves.

ⁱⁱ Kilikiti is a popular sport played among Pacific Island peoples and is derived from the English game of cricket. Unlike cricket however, kilikiti is full of singing, dancing and colourful uniforms with island style rules and mixed-gender team members from all age groups. Missionaries introduced Kilikiti into the Pacific Islands in the late 19th century from the London Missionary Society (LMS).