

## **Negotiating fairness and diversity: What can stories from one kindergarten teach us? Inspired Kindergartens Conference 19 July 2018**

Morena koutou katoa,

### **TITLE SLIDE:**

I am delighted to be presenting here today. It is lovely to be among friends, and to have had great visits to a number of Inspired Kindergartens this year. I saw Year Ones on Practicum, and then took Year Two students to look at functional and aesthetic kindergarten environments near the Polytech - many students had never seen such amazing quality environments before.

Today, I am here to share stories from my recently submitted PhD. The ‘data generation’ phase of the action research took place over seven months in a kindergarten community (known by the pseudonym of Beech Kindergarten) in 2014. The research was concerned with diversity and fairness and we all learnt a great deal about the children, families, each other and ourselves during the process.

I was particularly interested in how fairness and various aspects of diversity were being negotiated between teachers, children, parents and whānau, and the researcher (participant/ observer). And I have had the past 3.5 years to view and review the data over and over alongside lots of literature in the process of writing up the 94,000 371 page thesis.

First some contextual information from my perspective...

### **SLIDE TWO:**

This quote from Pat Thomson in *Schooling the rustbelt kids: Making the difference in changing times* represents my thinking/ philosophy behind research

It reminds me that the world can be different - a better place for our grandchildren, and great grandchildren. And that the change, the fight to change - goes on individually, locally, nationally in practices, policies, discourses –  
STARTING WITH ME!

The imaginary of **a just and fair society** looks different to each of us - hence the importance of telling our stories, and of multiple perspectives

### **SLIDE THREE:**

We live in an increasingly diverse society – we just need to look around

For the past decade or more, much of the academic literature about diversity and difference in ECE has focused on **creating spaces for multiple perspectives, and minority voices to be heard.**

Positive, constructive, and inclusive responses to diversity draw on discourses such as a discourse of tolerance, or respect, or appreciation. BUT WE CAN'T IGNORE THE SHADOW OR DARK SIDE

Diversity can be problematised or troubled, i.e. understood at a deeper level with all of its complexities, inequities and omissions

Individual or group differences between people can be viewed/responded to on a continuum from positive to negative perspectives depending on the aspect of diversity, one's positioning and perspective (Davies & Harré, 1990; Moss, 2016)

### **SLIDE FOUR:**

Reay (2012) argues that despite diversity having been co-opted in right-wing rhetoric and educational policy, diversity and difference “are still always about inequalities” (p. ix).

POWER / Discourses about what is normal and what is 'OTHER' / Creating spaces for multiple perspectives, and minority voices to be heard

Diversity can be viewed/responded to on a continuum from positive to negative depending on the aspect of diversity, one's positioning and perspective, and the theoretical lens used

**SLIDE FIVE: **Stick to the script/ Be succinct****

Back to the research at hand

- Participatory Action Research
- Involving teachers, children and families
- Participant Observer for ten days at Beech Kindergarten (pseudonym)
- Mosaic of methods
  - Discussions / Focus Groups - teachers/ parents (Transcripts)
  - Teacher Reflections
  - Focus children - 6-8
  - Assessment documentation – Learning Stories, Snippets, and Notes
  - Photographs, video and audio recordings

**SLIDE SIX:**

Data also known as field texts in recognition of their constructed nature...

**SLIDE SEVEN: (I'll leave you to read them)**

The research questions were:

1. When learning about diversity and fairness in the social world, what working theories do children (3.5 -5 years) express? And how are these expressed?
2. How do families describe, encourage, and respond to children's explorations of fairness and difference?

3. How do teachers provoke and respond to children's working theories about the social world?
4. How might teachers promote an 'inclusive response' to diversity by supporting children to respect the equal worth of others regardless of their perceived differences?

**TODAY** I want to focus on children's voices in research – Question 1

And for you to consider your responses – Question 4

**SLIDE EIGHT:**

Useful lens through which to view diversity and fairness particularly given the growing body of research that explores teaching strategies

Children refine their theories and apply across new situations (MoE, 2017).

Thinking about WT's was in transition at time of research. Since then Te Whariki (MoE, 2017) includes stronger focus, greater clarity.

The increased focus on working theories in the revised curriculum, along with new information and understandings about them was not available during the fieldwork stage of this research.

**SLIDE NINE:**

Possible teaching strategies include hijack, disrupt, extend, interrupt, unpack (Refs)

**NEXT** Take a few minutes and talk to your neighbour about the child's comment (x6):

How you might respond? What's their possible WT?

The comments show that Children are shaped by the world around them

**SLIDE TEN: I'm not dancing with you...**

**SLIDE ELEVEN: Friends don't do that (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016)**

**SLIDE TWELVE: I'm gonna get angry at that boy (Areljung & Kelly-Ware, 2016)**

**SLIDE THIRTEEN: 'What's he doing that for? He's a boy' (Kelly-Ware, 2016)**

**SLIDE FOURTEEN: 'No-one with brown faces is coming to my birthday party'**

**SLIDE FIFTEEN: 'We're just gonna make them marry us ...kiss them for real...Cos we want real babies' - You have to just have a boy and a girl'**

**SLIDE SIXTEEN: 'My Dad didn't like them. He said 'take them off'.**

**SLIDE SEVENTEEN: CONTRIBUTION STRAND** – Now revised

**SLIDE EIGHTEEN: VOLCANOES AND SEA BEDS**

Dr Guy Claxton, British academic - early work informed the construct of working theories in Te Whāriki (MoE, 1996, 2017). When Claxton was advisor on the TLRI project 'Moments of Wonder' (Peters & Davis, 2012) he introduced the metaphors of volcanoes and seabeds to describe children's interests; the former being easily visible while the latter means you have to really stop and look (Personal communication AP Sally Peters, 29 July 2017).

Claxton's metaphors could prove useful for teachers when considering children's deeper interests in terms of diversity and fairness under the Contribution strand (MoE, 1996, 2017).

Teachers generally followed children's surface issues under the banner of emergent curriculum or child-centred pedagogy – **Many of these are driven by commercial advertising**

## **SLIDE NINETEEN: TAKE HOME MESSAGES**

A discourse of tolerance, or respect, or appreciation

Concluded that ‘working theories’ - a valuable lens for seeing and responding to children’s ongoing theorising about aspects of diversity. **Involve parents!**

## **SLIDE TWENTY: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **SLIDE TWENTY-ONE: TEXT BOOKS**

These text books represent ongoing influences on my thinking about education related to diversity and social justice over nearly thirty years (1989 - 2017).

## **SLIDE TWENTY TWO/ SLIDE TWENTY THREE: REFERENCES**