Children and Childhoods 1

Children and Childhoods 1: Perspectives, Places and Practices

Edited by

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PREFACE

This volume is the first in the *Children and Childhoods* series. The series aims to report current research in early childhood and childhood education while challenging tradition and invoking debate about the nature of research in these and cognate fields. The complex, transdiciplinary nature of childhood is reflected in the transdisciplinary nature of the series. For example, children's voices will be heard alongside those of adults, practitioner-led action research may well sit beside experimental research, neo-liberal critique and cultural politics may join curriculum analysis.

Volume 1 draws on a range of papers presented at the innaugural *Children and Childhoods Symposium*, held at Macquarie University, Australia in 2010. The examination of how children and childhoods are seen (perspectives), where they are enacted (places) and how they are played out (practices) sets the scene for the series. Researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and others will find their interest piqued by the various paradigms represented as we hear about playgrounds, museums, hospitals, child care centres and other places in which children do childhood. I invite you to join me on an exciting journey of discovery as we are led through the detail of that complex construct we call childhood.

Peter Whiteman, Series Editor

CHAPTER ONE

PERSPECTIVES

PETER WHITEMAN, KATEY DE GIOIA
AND ZINNIA MEVAWALLA

Artists have painted it (e.g. *The Voyage of Life* by Thomas Cole), poets have written about it (e.g. *Michael* by William Wordsworth, *Songs of Innocence* by William Blake) and composers have imagined it in music (e.g. *Kinderszenen* by Robert Schumann). Childhood is omnipresent. It is a multifarious concept that is inextricably entwined with social, cultural and historical moments that influence and are influenced by a multitude of perspectives, places and practices. The manner in which these perspectives, places and practices are enacted by children, families and communities determines the nature of childhood experiences and defines the complex nature of childhood itself. This complex, contemporary notion is not without history. Generations of competing theoretical, philosophical, scientific and socio-historical ideologies have framed current constructions of childhood (Burman 1994; Cannella 2000). Notably, the majority of literature has been definitively Eurocentric. Childhood has often been conceptualised as a singular, universal phenomenon. In recognition of this, it is reiterated that a plethora of socio-culturally diverse histories (both written and unwritten) have influenced understandings of childhood. Nonetheless, surveying the theoretical and philosophical groundwork laid within Eurocentric traditions is pertinent to understanding some of the residual impacts of past eras upon current and future early childhood theory, research and practice (MacNaughton 2003; Woodrow 1999; Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999; Wong 2007)

The Silent Child

The construction of the silent child is contextualised by a historical era in which children were seemingly invisible (Ariès 1962; Cannella and

Grieshaber 2001). Prior to the Age of Enlightenment, childhood was not seen as a distinctive phase of the lifespan in itself, but rather as the necessary precursor to adulthood. Children were therefore conceptualised by theorists such as Locke, as "blank slates" awaiting inscription from the experiences of life (MacNaughton 2003). In this sense, children were seen to start "life with and from nothing – as an empty vessel or *tabula rasa*" (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999, 44, original emphasis). Subsequently, Romantic-era philosophers such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Fröebel placed paramount importance on the role of education in enabling children to discover their inner nature (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999) in an environment that protects the innocence and naivety of childhood (MacNaughton 2003).

The silent child then, was one in constant need of protection and shaping – a child upon whom predetermined socially acceptable forms of knowledge, skills and attitudes were to be bestowed, in order for the child to function (conform) in accordance with the dominant socio-cultural norms and sanctions of the age (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999). This view has been exemplified by literature regarding the conditions of childhood experienced by children in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, young children of means were sent to wet nurses for the first two-to-five years of their lives, while other children were placed into the workforce as apprentices and labourers (Turmel 2008).

Correspondingly, in educating the silent child, the role of practitioners was to protect and imbue children with the virtues that would enable them to contend with societal norms and practices (MacNaughton 2003). Woodrow (1999) has highlighted that the role of educators was to direct learning through the top-down imposition of power, by which means practitioners were to "confer rewards, sanction behaviour, and ensure conformity to the acceptable social order" (9). Similarly, Locke argued that the role of educators was to "dampen [children's] desires and their tendency to frivolity, so that reason can prevail" (as cited in MacNaughton 2003, 25). Conversely, Romantic philosophers such as Rousseau argued that educators were to play a facilitative role, letting nature take the primary lead in unfolding the child's journey to maturity (Rousseau [1762] 1968). This Romantic perception was the precursor to the development of views surrounding the individual child (MacNaughton 2003).

The Individual Child

Contextualised against the backdrop of the Post Industrial Revolution – the Period of Modernity, also known as the Scientific Period (19th, 20th and 21st centuries) brought with it a plethora of changes that have subsequently influenced meanings of childhood (Crain 1995; Turmel 2008). During the latter part of the 19th century, childhood was recognised as a separate period of the lifespan, leading to major reforms in legislation pertaining to child protection, education, and child labour (Turmel 2008). General progress in the 20th century was characterised by improvements in health, life expectancy and child mortality, therefore leading to further changes in the depiction of childhood.

In line with the philosophical beliefs of the era that focused on the discovery of knowledge through logic, reason and the scientific application of technology, notions of child development were particularly sharpened by scientific investigation during this period (Johnson, Christie, and Wardle 2005). Utilising scientific (positivist) methods and technologies for proving knowledge, investigations of children built upon Darwinian notions of humans having evolutionary predispositions toward maturation (Boardman, Smuts, and Hagen 1986). Twentieth century maturationists such as Hall, Gesell and Piaget studied children's development and defined universal categories for the ages and stages of children's normative development (MacNaughton 2003). This formed the basis of the individual child as one "who is a natural, rather than a social phenomenon, abstracted and decontextualised, essentialised and normalised, defined either through abstract notions of maturity…or through stages of development" (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999, 46).

The individual child then, was one that had been naturally endowed (genetically pre-programmed) with a set of "universal properties" (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999) that predetermined their progression into adulthood, regardless of the cultural context in which the child lived (Woodrow 1999). The linearity of the reductionist scientific thinking of the period compartmentalised the individual child into isolated developmental aspects (physical development, intellectual development, social development, and so on) that could be separately measured and ameliorated. The role of the individual child was to comply (without agency) with the linear progression into maturity by achieving a set of biologically defined milestones, passing through developmental stages at a particular time in life.

Accordingly, the role of the educator was to provide "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" (DAP), that is, practice that directed children to engage with age-and-stage appropriate content, materials and activities that had been engineered to address children's abilities to meet developmental norms (Bredekamp and Copple 1997). The "normalisation" of the individual child was furthered by behaviourist approaches to teaching children according to predetermined standards, measurement assessments and teaching practices that reinforced the existence of universal knowledge and truths. Correspondingly, behaviourists such as Pavlov, Watson and Skinner highlighted the importance of educators conditioning children (despite differences in situation or temper) to conform to the linearity of biological rules outside of the context of history or society (Cannella and Grieshaber 2001).

The end of modernism brought postmodern views to education during the 1980s and 1990s (Johnson, Christie, and Wardle 2005). Postmodernists questioned the existence of universal truths, postulating instead that truth is an interpretive and subjective phenomenon, therefore leading to the view that concepts such as childhood are socially constructed ideals (Wong 2007).

The Social Child

While Piaget (1962) maintained that children were thinking, investigating beings that actively engaged in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understandings, Vygotsky (1978a) proposed that learning occurred in social contexts, and that there was a theoretical space – the "Zone of Proximal Development" – in which children can achieve greater understandings with the help of their peers, than that which they would have been able to accomplish singularly. Thus arose the social child, as one that was a co-constructor of knowledge, seeking, from infancy, to learn in the context of peer relationships (Curtis and Carter 2000; Hewett 2001; Millikan 2003). For social children, learning became a socially-located, collective action.

Contextualised against a "new sociology of childhood" (Prout 2011, 4), the emergence of the social child corresponded with the development of the *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations 1989), which recognised children as active agents and citizens with a specific set of human rights. Following the lead of critical educators (such as Loris Malaguzzi from Reggio Emilia), contemporary understandings in

early childhood subsequently sought to distance themselves from the memory of previously deficit views of children and childhood.

The social child, therefore, was framed as "beautiful, powerful, competent, creative, curious, and full of potential and ambitious desires" (Hewett 2001, 96). Pedagogical practices in turn became increasingly child-centred, child-focused and child-directed, where the role of the educator was to inspire discovery, investigation and capitalise on the teachable moment, procuring learning in the context of meaningful relationships by "truly listening" (Hewett 2001, 96). Reciprocity of learning was a particularly pertinent point, where to learn was "not to pass information along or replicate thinking, but to advance thinking" (Hewett 2001, 98). The social child was therefore educated in the context of relationships, as relationships create conflict which creates cognitive disequilibrium and an opportunity to question one's assumptions and ideas.

Illustrations of the social child abound in what could be construed as seemingly inconsequential, common events. For example: the act of obtaining a new bookcase for the family room. After coming to agreement on the style, family members purchase their new furniture, only to realise as it is brought from the warehouse area that the real adventure is about to begin as it becomes clear that the assortment of flat, slim boxes means that this bookcase requires assembly. Once home, the children help unpack the boxes then stand back and observe as their parents begin the process of assembling the new acquisition. Instructions are read, tools, screws and other small accessories are sorted and the item begins to take shape. At times, someone will read from the instructions. At other times, one parent will demonstrate to the other how they believe the components should be fitted together. Other interactions will take the form of a parent speaking quietly to himself or herself as they talk their way through a particularly intricate procedure. At other times, one parent might explain something to the other, while extracting only two types of screws from the large variety in the pack to illustrate their point. Eventually, a new bookcase stands in the corner of the room. To the untrained eye, this appears to be quite ordinary. To an observer versed in learning as socially located, collective action, this could be quite an extraordinary event.

An important concept linked with the social child is that of scaffolding. A new building is often surrounded by scaffolding, a temporary structure that remains in place until the building itself is complete. The social child was often similarly surrounded. Scaffolding in childhood can be thought of as

support strategies employed by experts (the more knowledgeable) as they support novices (the learners) in their quest to become experts. For the social child, scaffolding was good pedagogy.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) named five strategies that experts utilise in their support of novices:

- Recruitment – engaging the novice
- Reduction of degrees of freedom – simplifying the elements of the task at hand in order that the novice can recognise the requirements
- Marking of critical features – pointing out relevant responses and their components
- Maintenance of direction – ensuring that the novice's interest in the task remains
- Demonstration – modeling solutions.

Returning to the new bookcase, aspects of this framework can be clearly seen:

- Recruitment – the whole family is excited by the new furniture and keen to place it in the family room
- Reduction in degrees of freedom – only two types of screws were removed from the large collection while one parent explained something to the other
- Marking of critical features – as the bookcase took shape, one parent's achievements were applauded by the other with accompanying explanations for the success
- Maintenance of direction – everyone voiced their delight as the project moved towards completion
- Demonstration – as small hurdles were met along the way, one parent offered advice to the other by showing how they thought particular components should be assembled.

Scaffolding was evident in more formal learning environments as well. Teachers were experts and children were novices. Content gave way to process and scaffolding became commonplace. Interestingly, the notion of "expert" was widened, as the social child was acknowledged as an expert in his or her own right. For example, it is plausible that one of the children returned to kindergarten a few days after the bookcase experience, and was completing a large wooden jigsaw puzzle with another child. Explanations of which piece went where were punctuated with demonstrations of how a

piece could be rotated to fit, success was applauded and one child removed a few pieces at a time from the large array that eventually needed to be placed. There were no printed instructions as there were for the bookcase, but aspects of scaffolding were clearly evident.

Children can understand aspects of scaffolding. The following interview is an extract from a larger discussion that took place between a researcher and Aaron, a preschool aged child. They were watching some short video clips that Aaron had recorded of music making in his home, and Aaron was sharing his thoughts on what was happening with his brother, Ethan, and his mother.

Aaron:	Oh yeah, that's my brother playing the violin. Daniel's crying. He's playing I wish you a merry Christmas.
Researcher:	He is. What's he playing?
Aaron:	His violin.
Researcher:	And is there other music happening there as well?
Aaron:	No.
Researcher:	Just your brother? I wonder what your mum's doing.
Aaron:	She's playing the piano, playing the songs that Ethan should play.
Researcher:	Why is she playing the sounds that Ethan should play?
Aaron:	So he knows the sound that he should play.
Researcher:	That's pretty clever isn't it? How does mum know what to play?
Aaron:	Because she looks at the book.
Researcher:	Really?
Aaron:	And then my brother learns how to play.
Researcher:	So, is the book really important when you play music?
Aaron:	Yes.
Researcher:	Yeah? What's in the book?
Aaron:	But when you've fully learnt and you're actually a really good musician you don't need the book any more.
Researcher:	Ooh, is your mum really good and doesn't need the book?
Aaron:	No. She still needs her book.

Aaron is a social child. He seems to have an understanding of various ways in which Ethan is scaffolded, and in turn, his mother. In this case, Ethan is scaffolded by his mother, who is in turn, scaffolded by the printed music. Aaron understands this because as part of his early learning experiences he has regularly been both scaffolder and scaffolded.

The Cultural Child

The historical establishments of theorists such as Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Malaguzzi have all led towards the eminence of socio-cultural theories, which explore the importance of communities, families and the role of the context upon the individual (Vygotsky 1978b; Rogoff 2003; Bronfenbrenner 1986). Contemporary early childhood practices have adhered to the recognition of the importance of relationships, critical reflection and the authenticity of programming and planning in early settings (O'Connor and Diggins 2007; Fleer et al. 2006; Hujala et al. 2009; Nimmo 2002).

Following on from the development of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)* and the principles underlying education in Reggio Emilia, recent understandings of childhood have framed children as citizens that actively engage with the world (Millei and Imre 2009). The cultural child, therefore, is seen as one imbued with critical tools, able to critically question and engage with the power structures in society. This view of childhood has surfaced from increased awareness of equity and social justice issues surrounding diversity and inclusive education (Diaz Soto and Blue Swadener 2002; Hawkins 2009; Keesing-Styles and Sumsion 2007; Pelo 2006). The role of the educator is to engage in collaborative partnerships with families and communities in order to better understand children's critical knowledge, interests and current understandings (Hewett 2001; Hughes and MacNaughton 2002; Swick 2003) and further provide children with the tools to critically question the power structures in an attempt to transform society.

The recent focus on child-centred sociocultural models, has forced educators to take a closer look at recognising the increasing importance of collaborative partnerships with families and members of the local and wider community. Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979), which proposes the multitude of layers impacting on children both directly and indirectly, emphasises the importance of relationships between children, adults, families and the community.

The notion of partnerships with families in early childhood setting continues to be subject to discussion and debate (Brown et al. 2002; Hughes and MacNaughton 2002; Lubeck and deVries 2000). While Westernised literature supports this concept, careful conversations pertaining to deconstructing the notion of "partnerships" should be contextualised within

individual settings. A study conducted by De Gioia (2003) explored continuity of care-giving practices for very young children between home and early childhood setting. One of the overarching findings identified effective partnerships as key. Discontinuity was an issue when partnerships were not established and maintained, and covert practices in the early childhood settings resulted.

The importance of successful communication for continuity between home and setting was acknowledged by a parent in the following manner:

> What I wanted them to do was to come and speak to me so that we could talk about it together and then decide what was best for Olivia so that I could follow through with it at home as well (Hetti, Mother, second generation Australian).

A further two parents also acknowledged the significance of developing trust relationships which incorporated the exchange of valuable information about home practices and centre processes.

> Letting them "in" on the family - getting them to know us (Mei, Mother).

> This [communication] also helps child to adjust easier because [there] is [a] good relationship between carers and parents (Olin, Mother).

This was also reinforced by educators. For instance:

> [We need to] build up friend [ships/] relationship with parents so it's made relaxed and ease into exchange information between us (Xanthe, Educator, Long Day Care Centre).

However, there were family members who had chosen not to share information about home practices with educators. In one centre, interviews were conducted with family members who had all recently arrived in Australia as migrants (n=8 parents). While these family members were able to articulate their reasons for choosing the centre in their interviews; *it represented Australia; they could learn English*, the educators were unaware of this and believed that family members were working counter to their philosophy by not sharing practices. Family members were open in their conversations with the researcher but the questions did explicitly centre around practices and reasons. While studies have supported this finding (see, for example, Wise 2002; Ebbeck and Glover 2000), it highlights the necessity for educators to deconstruct the notion of partnership, ensuring that families have an understanding of the terminology in the context of that particular early childhood setting. Further, the

discussion of practices enables families and educators to come to shared understandings and determine opportunities for negotiating differences where needed. Bess explained:

> … we do quite a bit of what the parents ask, but what we'll do is we try and reach a solution that we're both happy with. Sometimes we need some negotiation, [for example] "I understand this is what you want, this is what we can do, do you think that you'd be happy with that?" A lot of families are… (Director, Long Day Care Centre).

When conversations occur and negotiation is the result of discontinuity, partnerships flourish. Meaning is shared, understanding strengthened and both parties feel empowered.

The cultural child is framed in the understanding that early childhood settings are inextricably linked to the community in which they are situated; they are hubs for connections, advocacy and possibilities. Opportunities begin with the mindset of educators who define community as extending beyond the gates of the setting and not confined to the community within. This enables educators to consider broader and more relevant approaches to working with the community. Influences in framing the cultural child acknowledge the relevance of context and authenticity in these connections, determining that a "one size fits all" approach is unrealistic and incongruous. For instance, a small rural suburb on the outskirts of metropolitan Sydney has developed an approach to transition to school which has taken into account *their* community needs which they have reflected on and adapted over the past years. This has brought together a community in assisting children in the transition to school.

A community organisation supported through State Government funding identified a need for young mums to connect to each other and services to support them in the parenting role. Slowly, slowly, through building partnerships with these families, the numbers increased and two playgroups were in operation over the week, in a small demountable classroom at the back of a local school. Playgroups consisted of time for children to come together to play and information sessions for family members or caregivers. The Coordinator believed that the families would benefit from an early childhood teacher at the playgroups to guide pedagogy, curriculum and in discussions of transition to school. Some family members had privately expressed their fear of their children starting school based on their own negative experiences. The local child care centre was approached and discussions commenced between the Director

and Playgroup Coordinator. Outcomes included looking for ways to incorporate community into the transition to school and the teacher from the child care centre being released to spend 2 hours, once a week at the playgroup; particularly to support children and families transitioning into school.

Community meetings were arranged. Being such a small suburb, residents knew each other and were always willing to support local projects. The main street held the majority of businesses down both sides; newsagency, café, mini market, butcher and clothing store. There were two schools, one public school and a Catholic school situated in this community. Both sent representatives to the meeting and later became part of the project team. The Director and Playgroup Coordinator presented information about transition and benefits for children, families, early childhood settings, schools and communities. A small start to this project has had significant outcomes, which have built slowly from reflection, determination and realisation of the importance of community working together. Approximately halfway through the year all children starting school in the following year receive a tee-shirt which acknowledges this Playgroup milestone. They wear it to the local shops, which prompts the business community to acknowledge this significant event (usually with a token gift such as; free milkshake, drink bottle, frankfurt and cap) through conversation prompted from information sheets developed by the project team. Visits to schools also became part of the day for playgroup members accompanied by their child care centre friends who were also starting school the following year. These visits were across schools where the conversation was about what happened at schools and environmental aspects, not about one sector in competition with the other. Kindergarten teachers anecdotally report changes in children's confidence when starting school and the ease with which they settled in.

This project worked for *this* community; however, it may not work in larger suburban parts of Sydney. The consideration here is to determine the needs in the community and advocate for experiences to meet the needs which are realistic to the community. Connections grow communities and understanding, giving children a presence and visibility which acknowledges the valid contributions they have. .

Reframing children over the years has led us to a space where collaborations and partnerships are critical. They define our pedagogy and force us to rethink children and families both within and beyond the early childhood

setting. The location or *walls* which have held learning now extend to possibilities and places which allows children to construct knowledge as they co-construct culture. The imperative now is to ensure that early childhood does not become stagnant within this frame but rather, with reflection and ongoing critical dialogue, extends to places, perspectives and practices beyond current possibilities.

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CHAPTER TWO

RETHINKING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES: HOW CAN TEACHERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS BE SUPPORTED PROFESSIONALLY TO EXAMINE THEIR PRACTICES?

FAY HADLEY

This chapter reports on a one-year project that was implemented with a community based child care organisation that operates three child care centres[1] in Sydney, Australia. The organisation employed an academic consultant to work with the qualified staff and Directors in regard to planning, programming and pedagogical documentation. The project was situated within a change management theoretical framework. Change management requires the leadership to create a space and vision for examining and reframing practices. For this project, this enabled the organisation to transform their pedagogical practices. This project involved several stages to implement the change over a period of a year. At the completion of the project the role of the consultant was evaluated. This chapter will explore the effectiveness of the consultant in terms of managing the changes to planning and programming processes. Conclusions will be drawn as to the support qualified staff require to transform their pedagogical practices and how a change management approach can support professional learning.

[1] Centres in this article are places for children 0-5. There is at least one university-qualified teacher (three-four year trained) and/or Diploma staff (2 year trained) in long day care centres in Australia.

Supporting the professional learning of qualified staff

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2006) *Starting Strong II* review identified that early childhood professionals need quality, participatory approaches to training to ensure that they "take responsibility for the pedagogical choices that appropriately serve the children in their care" (p. 18). This project was significant given the introduction of National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2009)[2]. The EYLF advances core principles and practices that early childhood staff can apply when developing a contemporary early childhood curriculum. Qualified staff, therefore, need to be confident in their ability to use this document and to make evidence-based and theoretically sound pedagogical decisions. As Hahs-Vaughn & Yanowitz state:

> Today's teachers are expected to be more than just providers of information. To effectively guide their students, teachers need to be reflective practitioners, using research-based pedagogy in and adapting it to their own particular classroom (2009, 422).

Jaruszewicz & White (2009) argue that to create a space for professional learning and change, leaders of the program need to undertake intentional actions to develop a culture that challenges professional growth. Previous research has found that models of professional learning that include academics or expert external consultants have had positive effects on teachers' practices (Evans, Lomax, and Morgan 2000; Hahs-Vaughn and Yanowitz 2009). Other research has found that when professional learning is undertaken outside of the workplace, it is more difficult for the participants to implement changes in their workplaces (Morgan 2003). Research has shown that professional learning is more successful when the training is implemented in the workplace, provides both off site and on site support and is aligned with outcomes and expectations (Morgan 2003; Fiene 2002; Campbell and Milbourne 2005). Much of this research has focused on the school sector. As there have been limited studies that have examined educational change in the early childhood sector (see Kilgallon, Maloney, and Lock 2008) this study aimed to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the value of the external consultant in supporting them in implementing pedagogical changes.

[2] The Early Years Learning Framework is mandatory from 2012 and had been sent to all Australian prior-to-school settings in July 2009.

Change management framework

The management literature (both in the business and education fields) addresses processes and steps that are needed to undertake change within an organisation (Dubrin, Dalglish, and Miller 2006; Duigan 2006; Hiatt and Creasey 2003). It is crucial within this change management framework for leaders of the organisation to create a space and vision for examining and reframing practices (Kotter 1990). Kotter (2007) argues that leadership plays a critical role in the beginning of the change management process to ensure effective change is enacted. He argues that the leader creates a sense of urgency within the staff, assembles a group who believe in the change and creates the vision for the change. Changing the culture of an organisation only occurs at the end of the implementation stage, once (or if) the staff believe that the changes were effective. Therefore, for change to be imbedded within the organisation, staff beliefs and attitudes need to be transformed (Kotter and Schlesinger 2008; Kotter 1990).

The *Appreciative Inquiry Model* was developed in the mid 1980s by David Cooperrider and associates. This model was developed from research undertaken by Cooperrider (2001) that focused on how an organisation developed, evolved and managed change. Cooperrider and Suresh (1987) argued that for organisations to be transformational in their change they needed to move beyond conventional action research.

The appreciative inquiry approach is based on the premise that organisations change in the direction in which they inquire. This means not only focusing on the problems, but also recognising the strengths and how the organisation can move forward. The *Appreciative Inquiry Model* is an effective approach to changing organisational culture and offers an exciting way to re-think the way organisations operate. This model includes 4 stages. These are:

1. Discover – the organisation identifies both their strengths and weaknesses;
2. Dream – the future vision and direction the organisation wants to implement;
3. Design – develop strategies and changes that will move the organisation towards the vision; and
4. Destiny – implement and evaluate the changes (adapted from Srivastva and Cooperrider 1990).

This model was implemented for this 12-month change management project and is discussed below to provide contextual background to the research study on the evaluation of the consultant's role. This chapter reports the findings collected from interviews conducted with the teachers after the 12-month project. The main aim of this project was to identify the needs and resources required by the qualified staff[3] to implement documentation that met both the state and federal government accountability requirements, as well as contemporary approaches to planning. The consultant aimed to discover:

- What were the current strengths of approaches to documentation in the three centres?
- How did the current documentation processes meet accountability requirements and contemporary approaches to planning?
- What supports and resources did the qualified staff need to ensure their program and documentation meets accountability requirements and contemporary approaches to planning?

Utilising the appreciative inquiry model in data analysis requires the ideas, themes and views to be commonly agreed upon. This means that although the data are collated, they are not deemed quantifiable or sorted into themes like other approaches to data analysis (Bushe 1995). Once the data have been generated and organised, this is reported to the group so they decide collectively on the direction to be taken. This approach to the data provides an opportunity "to generate new theory that will have high face value to members of the organization" (Bushe 1995, 15).

1st stage: Discover and management rethinking

The first stage involved the management team rethinking what forms of professional learning should occur and whether the resources were being effectively utilised. This research project was commissioned by the organisation's board with the aim to improve the capacity of qualified staff in the three centres to document children's learning to meet the Quality Improvement Accreditation System requirements[4], Early Years Learning

[3] Diploma (two-year TAFE qualification) and degree trained (three or four-year university degree) staff.

[4] The Quality Improvement Accreditation System has since been revised as a part of the National Quality Reform Agenda, but at the time of the project it required developmental milestones being met as well as an emphasis on family participation.

Framework (DEEWR 2009) and contemporary approaches to pedagogical documentation. The whole-of-organisation strategy provided the opportunity to develop a culture that supported pedagogical change.

The Council of Australian Government's reform agenda provided impetus for implementing the changes due to the new national accountability requirements. This external accountability required staff to implement changes. In terms of enacting this change management process and building this culture, the organisation recognised that this required:

- a sustained period of time;
- a whole-of-organisation support;
- a critical mass where all of the qualified staff needed to be involved in the training; and
- reviewing current practices in relation to documentation.

The commitment of the organisation to include budgetary funds and the engagement of senior management and centre Directors provided an opportunity for staff to implement the pedagogical changes to programming and planning.

2nd stage: Dream and needs analysis

The second stage involved engaging an academic consultant to understand current practices in the three centres, including identifying needs and resources required by the qualified staff. The role of the external consultant in this project needed to balance contemporary knowledge and approaches with what could be implemented at a practical level in busy long day care settings. This also required an organisational "fit" between the external consultant and the senior management's expectations of programming and planning.

In this stage a needs analysis was undertaken to inform future directions in terms of pedagogical practices and documentation. This stage included questionnaires, observations and semi-structured interviews to elicit knowledge about the strengths, current practices and the challenges the qualified were facing in terms of programming and documentation. Documentation examples were also collected at this stage. This dream and needs analysis stage created a space to begin to develop organisational goals as well as individual action plans for each centre.

The results for the organisation as a whole (strengths and issues for further discussion) were presented at a staff training day in April 2009. The strengths included working well as a team, children were provided with choices, children's interests were incorporated into the program and children and staff had developed close relationships. In terms of the organisational goals it was evident that staff recognised issues of documentation and use of appropriate formats within a contemporary framework. The aspects that staff felt needed attention included documenting children's choices and interests in planning and programming, indoors, outdoors and group times, documenting links clearly, and strengthening pedagogical documentation.

3rd stage: Design and working party

Action research involves collaboration between participants to provide a depth of analysis as well as opportunities to share findings in the hope that changes can be developed and implemented to improve the practices (Cohen and Manion 1986). The cycle, referred to by Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998), of plan, act, observe and reflect is not so clear-cut - it is a spiral that the researcher has little control over. The important issue of action research is being self-critical. The third stage involved negotiating action plans which were cognisant of management expectations and underpinned by contemporary early childhood practices. This stage also required the plans of actions to be compatible with the professional and industrial landscape. The organisational goals were developed in consultation with the CEO and three Directors. The individual action plan for each centre was developed in consultation with each staff team.

The outcome of this initial data analysis at the organisational level was the formation of a small working party to review documentation, processes, formats, expectations and requirements. The members of this group were handpicked and included the three Directors, one qualified staff member from each centre and the academic consultant (N=7). This small working party met fortnightly for a period of three months to reconceptualise the systems and templates used for programming and planning across the three centres. Systems and templates, alongside a detailed policy, were developed for the daily diary, the programming plan (indoor and outdoor classroom and group times), portfolios, projects and displays. The external consultant worked closely with the qualified staff and Directors throughout the process.

4th stage: Destiny – Implementation and evaluation

The fourth stage involved implementing the pedagogical changes and evaluating these changes. The goals and action plans developed in the small working party and with the individual centres were implemented with the support of the academic consultant throughout the 2009 year. During this stage of the project the academic consultant spent significant time in each centre with the qualified staff explaining the systems, templates and addressing any questions or issues as they arose. These systems and templates were implemented gradually, explained to the qualified staff and supported individually as needed. Family memos were also distributed as each system and template was introduced, to ensure families were aware and informed of the changes being introduced.

In terms of each centre the "pre" questionnaire was analysed, and results presented to each centre at a staff meeting. From this dissemination an individual plan of action was developed for each centre. This individual plan of action was implemented in each centre where the academic consultant provided support, mentoring and resources as necessary. The academic consultant worked closely with the Director of the centre in terms of implementing the required changes. Each centre focused on changes that reflected their results. For example, two of the centres focused on improving the outdoor program, and the other centre focused on ensuring the documentation and links to planning were evident in their day-to-day practices. At the completion of the 12 months, a "post" questionnaire was completed by the staff, samples of documentation were collected and a questionnaire was completed by the families. A final report was presented to the organisation's board, the CEO and each centre. A summary of the project was presented to each centre at an end-of-year staff meeting.

Methodology and research design

Using a phenomenological approach, the research investigated early childhood teachers' and directors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the external consultant. Phenomenology identifies "phenomena" through the eyes of the participants and is a reflection and interpretation of these experiences (phenomena) from the participants' perspectives. This approach is a "way of seeing" and helps create opportunities for new understandings (Husserl 1965; Lester 2001; Lyotard 1991; Schutz 1972; Stamage and Kreiger 1987; van Manen 1990; Heidegger 1962).