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**Digital foundations:
A study of perceptions and practices surrounding the use of ICT in
ECE Centres**

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ABSTRACT

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in early childhood education (ECE) is controversial. Currently, ICT in ECE is experiencing a second wave of popularity. While many of the recurring debates exist around the use of technology in the education sector it would appear that ICT is here to stay. A distinguishing feature of the literature across both waves is a growing appreciation of the importance of pedagogy and the key role of the teacher.

This thesis builds on this broad concept of pedagogy by investigating the growth of ICT in ECE. The aim of the study was to discover new insight and understanding of how parents', teachers' and children's perceptions of the use of ICT in ECE influence the surrounding practice. A mixed-method approach was undertaken with a sample group in three distinct phases in one geographical location in the greater Wellington region. The study adopted an interpretive framework to inform the research methodology and help explain the findings.

The findings across the three phases show the multifaceted nature of ICT and the many layers that are required to ensure that it can be offered in an authentic and meaningful way in ECE. When this approach is not evident it constrains the integrated use of ICT and affects the quality of the programme offered. Factors that influence the level of quality include: (a) the role of teacher's beliefs and self-efficacy; (b) fluid conceptions of pedagogy; (c) the competing and co-existing drivers associated with the use of ICT in ECE; (d) the changing face of literacy; (e) barriers affecting the full integration; and (f) the implications of policy on practice.

The thesis draws on the framework of an enabled and enacted ICT curriculum developed in the literature review, as a tool to indicate and understand the current state of the level of ICT integration in ECE centres. Overall the findings show that participating teachers have begun their ICT journey and are working towards the goal of offering an authentic and meaningful educational experience. Yet, the research shows that the many layers of support necessary to ensure teachers continue to move forward on this journey are not well understood. A failure to address these gaps may sadly lead to a "third wave" of ICT in which history repeats itself.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of contents	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	
Introduction to the study	1
Early childhood education in New Zealand	2
My personal history	4
Research aims and context	5
Overview of the thesis	6
Chapter Two: Literature Review	
Review of the literature	8
Search strategies	8
The first wave of ICT in ECE	9
The second wave of ICT	15
Multiliteracies in the twenty-first century	21
Changing perspectives on learning	23
Constructivism	24
Social constructivism	29
Critical theory	33
ICT in the context of ECE	37
<i>Te Whāriki</i> – The early childhood curriculum	37
Learning and assessment	41
Seeding the growth of ICT	43
An ICT policy framework for ECE	44
Early childhood curricula and ICT	49
Critique of the recent research	52
Stakeholders' viewpoints of ICT	59

What do teachers have to say?	59
What do parents have to say?	64
What do children have to say?	67
Teacher beliefs and self efficacy	68
ICT enabled and enacted curriculum in ECE	71
Principles underpinning an enabled and enacted ICT curriculum	74
Statement of the research problem	80
Statement of the research objective	81
Chapter Three: Methodology	
Methodology	83
Research objective	83
Research methodology	84
Research design	84
Parameters of the study	86
The research sample	87
Site / subject selection	87
Methods of data collection	88
Questionnaires	90
Interviews	90
Interviews with children	91
Procedures	92
Phase One	93
Phase Two	93
Phase Three	94
Data analysis	95
Quantitative analysis	95
Qualitative analysis	96
Trustworthiness	97
Reliability and validity of the data	97

Reliability issues	98
Validity issues	98
Content validity	99
Ethical considerations	99
Informed consent	99
Research involving indigenous groups	100
Confidentiality	100
Right to withdraw	100
Summary	101
Chapter Four: Results of Phase One	
Results of Phase One	102
A review of participant information	102
A review of the centre information	102
Level and type of ICT available	103
The level of ICT use by children	107
Ongoing professional development of teachers	109
Summary of emerging trends	110
Summary of Phase One of the research	111
Chapter Five: Case Study One (Kindergarten)	
Case study of a Kindergarten	112
Teacher's background data	112
Teachers' use of ICT in the kindergarten setting	114
Types of ICT use or planned use by children	116
Children's learning and ICT	118
Professional development	120
Barriers to the integration of ICT	120
ICT framework for ECE	121
Summary	121
Teachers' perceptions and practices	122
Teachers' changing view of ICT	122

Linking with children's home lives	126
The ICT Kindergarten experience	128
Issues and challenges	129
Summary	130
Parent surveys	131
A review of participant information	131
Nature of the ICT learning experience	132
Parental perception of computer use	136
What is the perceived value of using ICT in ECE	137
The safe use of ICT with young children	139
Children's use of ICT and parental concern	139
Why use ICT in ECE?	140
Summary	141
Children's perceptions of ICT	142
Interviews with children	142
Summary	147
Interpretive summary	147
The nervous aunties	147
Chapter Six: Case Study Two (Education and Care Centre)	
Case study of an Education and Care Centre	150
Teachers' background data	150
Teachers' use of ICT in the Education and Care centre	151
Types of ICT use or planned use by children	154
Children's learning and ICT	155
Professional development	157
Barriers to the integration of ICT	157
ICT framework for ECE	158
Summary	159
Teacher perceptions and practices	159
Teachers' changing view of ICT	159
Linking with children's home lives	163
The ICT Education and Care Centre experience	164

Issues and challenges	166
Summary	167
Parent surveys	168
A review of participant information	168
Nature of the ICT learning experience	168
Parental perception of computer use	172
What is the perceived value of using ICT	172
The safe use of ICT with young children	174
Children’s use of ICT and parental concern	174
Why use ICT in ECE?	175
Children’s perceptions of ICT	177
Interviews with children	177
Interpretive summary	178
ICT a passionless pastime	178
Chapter Seven: Discussion	
Discussion	182
Overall portrait of ICT in ECE	182
Influence of teachers’ beliefs and self-efficacy	186
Fluid conceptions of pedagogy	190
Competing and co-existing drivers	193
Children and ICT	194
Teachers and ICT	195
Parents and ICT	196
Literacy in transition	198
Key role in professional development	202
Barriers to full integration of ICT	206
Understanding the policy landscape	209
Summary	213

Chapter Eight: Conclusion	
Conclusion	219
The nature of the ICT learning experiences	220
Parents’ perception of young children using ICT	221
Children’s perceptions of using ICT	221
Teachers’ perceptions of using ICT with young children	223
Issues that parents and teachers perceive with the introduction of ICT into ECE	223
Contributions of the study to literature	224
The future of ICT in ECE	227
Reflections on methodology	228
Contributions of the study	228
Methodological limitations	229
Sample size	229
Parents’ contribution	229
Observation in the home	230
Teacher observation	230
Interviews with the child	230
Suggestions for future research	231
Final words	232
References	233

List of Appendices

Appendix 1. Initial letter of introduction to Centres	261
Appendix 2. Phase One information sheet for head teacher / supervisor or nominee	262
Appendix 3. Head teacher / supervisor or nominee questionnaire	265
Appendix 4. Letter seeking consent to conduct research – centre owner	272
Appendix 5. Letter seeking consent to conduct research –umbrella organisation	274
Appendix 6. Consent form for the centre owner	276
Appendix 7. Consent form for the umbrella organisation	277
Appendix 8. Phase Two information sheet for teachers	278
Appendix 9. Phase Two teacher questionnaire	280
Appendix 10. Phase Two information sheet for parents	287
Appendix 11. Phase Two parent questionnaire	290
Appendix 12. Phase Three consent form for child to participate in the research	296
Appendix 13. Phase Three information sheet for teachers	297
Appendix 14. Consent form to interview the teacher	299
Appendix 15. Consent form to photograph teachers	300
Appendix 16. Phase Three parent information sheet	301
Appendix 17. Consent to photograph the child in the Education and Care Centre	303
Appendix 18. Phase Three interview guidelines	304
Appendix 19. Example of memo writing	308
Appendix 20: Authority to transcribe the tape of the child	310
Appendix 21: Authority to transcribe the teacher tape	311

List of Figures

Figure 4.1 Age group of the children in participating centres	103
Figure 4.2 Type of ICT available in the centre	103
Figure 4.3 Location of the computers	104
Figure 4.4 Access to the computers	105
Figure 4.5 The origin of the computers	106
Figure 4.6 The percentage of children using ICT in one week	108
Figure 4.7 Where do teachers continue to learn about ICT?	109
Figure 5.1 The use or planned use of ICT by kindergarten children in 2007	116
Figure 5.2 Number of children under sixteen living in the household	131
Figure 5.3 The level of ICT available in the home environment	132
Figure 5.4 Frequency of child's computer use in the home setting	134
Figure 5.5 Computer use and activities in which the child is engaged	135
Figure 5.6 Name chart	143
Figure 5.7 Use of the laptop	144
Figure 5.8 Components of the laptop	145
Figure 5.9 A digital camera	146
Figure 6.1 The use or planned use of ICT by children from the Education and Care centre in 2007	154
Figure 6.2 The level of ICT available in the home environment	169
Figure 6.3 Frequency of child's computer use in the home setting	171
Figure 6.4 Computer use and activities in which the child is engaged	171
Figure 6.5 KidsDesk	178
Figure 7.1 The ripple effect of ICT in ECE	184
Figure 7.2 The ICT roundabout	212

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Exploring the alignment of ICT and the principles of <i>Te Whāriki</i>	51
Table 2.2 Principles of an enabled and enacted curriculum for ICT	78
Table 3.1 Flow chart of the data collection	89
Table 4.1 How up to date are the computers?	105
Table 4.2 Use of ICT and frequency	107
Table 4.3 Frequency of children's use of ICT	108
Table 4.4 Rating the overall level of ICT use	110
Table 5.1 Background data on the Kindergarten teachers'	113
Table 5.2 Level of teaching experience	113
Table 5.3 Frequency of use	114
Table 5.4 Rating of teacher skills and ICT	114
Table 5.5 Level of use for learning and teaching	115
Table 5.6 Kindergarten teachers' knowledge of the potential dangers of ICT use and young children	117
Table 5.7 Teachers' reasons for ICT use in the kindergarten	118
Table 5.8 Barriers affecting the use of ICT in the kindergarten	121
Table 5.9 ICT available for children's use and place of access	133
Table 5.10 Parental views of computers in the home environment	136
Table 5.11 Parental views of the use of ICT by children in ECE	137
Table 5.12 Where is ICT most important in the education sector?	138
Table 5.13 Concern about the future use of ICT	140
Table 5.14 Parents' reasons for ICT use in the kindergarten	141
Table 6.1 Background data on the teachers – Education and Care Centre	151
Table 6.2 Level of teaching experience	151
Table 6.3 Frequency of use	152
Table 6.4 Rating of teacher skills and ICT	152
Table 6.5 Level of use for learning and teaching	153
Table 6.6 Education and care teachers' knowledge of the potential dangers of ICT use and young children	155
Table 6.7 Teachers' reasons for ICT use in the education and care centre	156
Table 6.8 Barriers affecting the use of ICT in the education and care centre	158

Table 6.9 ICT available for children's use and place of access	170
Table 6.10 Parental views of computers in the home environment	173
Table 6.11 Parental views of the use of ICT by children in ECE	174
Table 6.12 Concern about future use of ICT	175
Table 6.13 Parents' reasons for ICT use in the education and care centre	176
Table 7.1 The relationship between each centre and an enabled and enacted ICT curriculum	215