

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MAKING A
DIFFERENCE FOR CHILDREN:
CO-CONSTRUCTING UNDERSTANDINGS IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD CENTRES

A Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
at
Massey University
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Barbara Jeanette Jordan

2003

Erratum

The following pages are bound out of order:

pp. ix and viii

pp. 3 & 4

pp. 56 & 57

ABSTRACT

This thesis reports an investigation of the ways in which teachers in four early childhood centres valued children's voices as the basis for developing authentic learning experiences with them. The purpose of the study was to support teachers as they identified the changes they needed to make in their programming in order first to hear and second to engage with and extend children's thinking. In the process of the research, teachers identified their current philosophies of learning and the evidence of this in their practices, with a view to working increasingly in sociocultural modes of interaction with and planning for children's understandings. Changes in three propositions related to children's and adults' development of understandings, around which this report is organised, also represent the changes in the teachers' thinking about children's learning.

Teachers in four case study centres were involved in reflecting critically on their practices, in progressively focused action research programmes. Through critical analysis of teacher-child dialogues, it became increasingly clear that the metaphor of scaffolding, as researched in the psychological literature, was an inadequate one to support these teachers in developing and maintaining intersubjectivity with children. A more adequate metaphor for the sharing and revisiting of ideas seemed to be that of co-construction. In order to hear and respond to the child's voice, as the foundation for developing intersubjectivity and co-constructing meanings, the teachers found they needed to work collaboratively with their community of learners.

A model representing levels of intersubjectivity was developed in response to the struggle to conceptualise similarities and differences between scaffolding and co-constructing learning. The model was useful in supporting understandings of the teacher's roles in planning for children's learning from a sociocultural perspective, through the development of ongoing and in-depth projects. The participant teachers' transformation of their own participation and some influences on these changes were further clarified as a diagram linking the personal, the interpersonal and the institutional/community planes of interaction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research report would never have happened without the support of a great many people, many of whom I have never met, others who have shared intensely my life and my work. All have worked alongside me, across time and space, in co-constructing understandings of ways of encouraging teachers to engage with children in authentic learning activities that empower children.

My thanks to my children and grandchildren, for encouraging my commitment to research and writing, with my consequent absences from many family events. Trevor, your help in developing microphones for recording teacher-child dialogue was crucial in my data generation. Susan, your own experiences as a Masters student, including your recommendations of useful references, have been especially supportive. Vernon and Marjan, you worked even through Christmas Day to ensure that my computer was up to the task. Jenny and Angela, your support in so many ways has been consistent and valued. My extended whānau, especially Myra and Sandy you have each made your special contribution. To my partner, Mike, the perceptiveness of your “woolshed psychology” alternately supports and confronts my articulated theories of learning, providing a mirror that clarifies my thinking. While you question the vagaries of academia your support for my work is never in question.

To the teachers, the children and their parents in my case study centres, your trust in your own processes and in me has enabled many to benefit, and your challenges to me have generated new directions for understanding for us all about what happens in children’s lives. To the many early childhood groups who have invited me to speak on the topics of my research, thank you for the inspiration you have afforded me in thinking my messages through.

To my Supervisors, Joy Cullen and Wayne Edwards, for your contribution to this work from your extensive experience and wisdom in many fields. You have challenged me and gently guided me, never doubting that I could do it, however frustrated at the time it might take me to reach the conclusion.

To the facilitator of one of the centre programmes, your protected anonymity does not detract from my sincere appreciation of the thoroughness of your work in and your full records of, the centre's programme of professional development.

To Chrissy Lepper and Anne MacIntyre, my thanks for taking the time to comment on my early drafts, especially when you were each facing challenges in your own lives.

To Massey University College of Education, I am grateful for financial and moral support, especially in the positive reinforcement of every achievement along the way. My thanks to College of Education Pro-Vice Chancellors, Heads of Department and other colleagues, especially in the Early Years group, who have supported my work in countless ways.



CERTIFICATE OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

This is to certify that the research carried out in the Doctoral Thesis entitled

Professional Development Making A Difference For Children: Co-Constructing
Understandings In Early Childhood Centres

in the Department of Learning and Teaching, at Massey University, New Zealand:


(a) is the original work of the candidate, except as indicated by appropriate
attribution in the text and/or in the acknowledgements;

(b) that the text, excluding appendices/annexes, does not exceed 100 000 words;


(c) all the ethical requirements applicable to this study have been complied with as
required by Massey University, other organisations and/or committees: Early
childhood case study management teams; the Kindergarten Association; and the
Ministry of Education, which had a particular association with this study, and relevant
legislation.

Please insert Ethical Authorisation code(s) here if applicable HEC97/81

Candidate's Name: Barbara Jordan

Signature: 
Date: 23.07.03

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Joy Cullen

Signature: 
Date: 23.07.03



CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that the research carried out for my Doctoral thesis entitled **Professional development making a difference for children: Co-constructing understandings in early childhood centres** in the Department of Learning and Teaching, Massey University, Hokowhitu, New Zealand is my own work and that the thesis material has not been used in part or in whole for any other qualification.

Candidate's Name: Barbara Jordan

Signature



Date

23. 7. 03

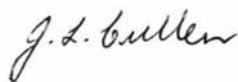


SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that the research carried out for the Doctoral thesis entitled "*Professional development making a difference for children: Co-constructing understandings in early childhood centres*" was done by Barbara Jordan in the Department of Learning and Teaching, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand. The thesis material has not been used in part or in whole for any other qualification, and I confirm that the candidate has pursued the course of study in accordance with the requirements of the Massey University regulations.

Supervisor's Name Professor Joy Cullen

Signature



Date 25 July 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF APPENDICES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
GLOSSARY	xi
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
Initial questions	2
1.2 MY PERSONAL BIASES AS A RESEARCHER	2
1.3 SOCIOCULTURAL FOUNDATIONS	4
1.4 HEARING CHILDREN'S VOICES	6
1.5 PILOT AND PROPOSITIONS	7
Initial propositions	8
Revised questions	9
Revised propositions	9
1.6 OVERVIEW OF THESIS CHAPTER STRUCTURE	9
CHAPTER 2: ENHANCING TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS	11
2.1 INTRODUCTION	11
2.2 THEORETICAL DISCOURSES	12
2.2.1 Sociocultural theory	15
2.2.2 Hearing children's voices in early childhood	28
2.2.3 Agency and children's rights	30
2.3 IMPACT OF THEORETICAL DISCOURSES ON PRACTICES AND RESEARCH	32
2.3.1 Learning environment: implications for children	34
2.3.2 Two metaphors for teacher-child interactions	38
2.4 AN EXEMPLARY PROGRAMME	48
2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY	50
CHAPTER 3: TEACHER CHANGE	52
3.1 INTRODUCTION	52
3.1.1 Whole team professional development	54
3.1.2 Motivation for teacher involvement	55
3.1.3 Range of approaches to professional development	57
3.2 COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	59
3.2.1 Collaboration/collaborative research	60
3.2.2 Reflective activities	61
3.3 ACTION RESEARCH	62
3.3.1 Limitations of the action research methodology	64

3.3.2 Insider/outsider roles in research	65
3.4 SOCIOCULTURAL LEARNING IN RESEARCH	66
3.4.1 The application of the zone of proximal development to research	67
3.4.2 Links between co-constructed learning and action research	69
3.4.3 Action research equated to co-constructed learning	71
3.4.4 Data generation in sociocultural research	72
3.4.5 Questions relevant to the sociocultural paradigm	73
3.5 THE CASE STUDY METHOD	74
3.5.1 The case study and qualitative research	75
3.5.2 Levels of generalisations in the case study	75
3.5.3 The role of the case study researcher	76
3.5.4 Examples of case studies with children	77
3.6 ETHICS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	78
3.6.1 Ethical checkpoints in three planes of analysis	79
3.6.2 Issues of Ethics specific to this study	80
3.7 VALIDATION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	82
3.7.1 Dimensions of validity and reliability	83
3.7.2 Triangulation	84
3.8 SUMMARY	85
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION	87
4.1 INTRODUCTION	87
4.2 PROJECT OUTLINE	87
4.3 THE PILOT STUDY	88
4.3.1 Pilot phases	89
4.3.2 Discussion of pilot findings	92
4.4 SELECTION PROCEDURES	93
4.4.1 Selection of case study centres	93
4.4.2 Selection of teachers and children within the case study centres	94
4.5 DATA ANALYSIS IN THE SOCIOCULTURAL PARADIGM	95
4.5.1 Questions relevant to sociocultural research	95
4.5.2 The use of propositions in handling qualitative data	97
4.5.3 Three initial propositions	98
4.5.4 The methods of data generation for these initial propositions	99
4.5.5 Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis	100
4.5.6 Revised propositions	102
4.6 THE PROGRAMME OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	103
4.6.1 Exploratory professional development session	103
4.6.2 Schedule of video recording	104
4.6.3 Schedule of discussions with participants	105
4.7 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER-AS-FACILITATOR	107

4.8	CHAPTER SUMMARY	109
	CHAPTER 5: MANUKA CASE STUDY REPORT	110
5.1	INTRODUCTION	110
5.2	INTRODUCTION TO MANUKA	111
5.3	PROJECTS WITH TWO CHILDREN	112
	5.3.1 Kaleb	112
	5.3.2 Annabelle	118
5.4	ITEMS FROM MANUKA IN PROPOSITION ONE	125
5.5	ITEMS FROM MANUKA IN PROPOSITION TWO	129
5.6	ITEMS FROM MANUKA IN PROPOSITION THREE	137
5.7	MANUKA SUMMARY	150
	CHAPTER 6: THREE CENTRES CONTRIBUTING TO UNDERSTANDINGS	152
6.1	INTRODUCTION	152
6.2	CASE STUDY TWO: KAURI KINDERGARTEN	153
	6.2.1 Introducing Kauri Kindergarten	154
	6.2.2 Outcomes of professional development	155
	6.2.3 Outcomes for children of teachers' professional development	168
	6.2.4 Kauri Summary	170
6.3	CASE STUDY THREE: TERRACE CENTRE	171
	6.3.1 Introducing Terrace Centre	171
	6.3.2 Dialogue analysis as a tool in professional development	172
	6.3.3 A model of intersubjectivity that makes sense for practitioners	175
	6.3.4 Outcomes for children of teachers' professional development	180
	6.3.5 Summary Terrace Centre	181
6.4	CASE STUDY FOUR: HAVEN CHILDCARE CENTRE	182
	6.4.1 Introducing Haven Centre	182
	6.4.2 Results from Haven as propositions	183
	<i>Proposition One</i>	184
	<i>Proposition Two</i>	194
	<i>Proposition Three</i>	202
	Outcomes for Haven children	202
	Outcomes for Haven teachers	207
6.5	SUMMARY HAVEN CENTRE	210
6.6	CHAPTER SUMMARY	211
	CHAPTER 7: PLANES, RECIPROCALLY SPIRALLING AND AS A WHĀRIKI	213
7.1	INTRODUCTION	213
7.2	PROPOSITION ONE	217
	7.2.1 Interactions contributing to both scaffolding and to co-construction	217
	7.2.2 Scaffolding interactions	218
	7.2.3 Co-constructive Interactions	218

7.3	PROPOSITION TWO	219
7.3.1	Articulated and collaborative planning	219
7.3.2	Professional development opportunities	220
7.3.3	Researching topics of children's interest	220
7.4	OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN ACROSS THE FOUR CASE STUDY CENTRES	220
7.4.1	Transformation of participation for children	220
7.5	PROPOSITION THREE	224
7.5.1	Outcomes for teachers in the personal plane	229
7.5.2	Outcomes for teachers in the interpersonal plane	230
7.5.3	Outcomes for teachers in the community/institutional plane	230
7.5.4	Scaffolding children's learning and co-constructing projects	234
7.6	SUMMARY	238
CHAPTER 8: FROM SCAFFOLDING <i>FOR</i> TO CO-CONSTRUCTION <i>WITH</i>		240
8.1	INTRODUCTION	240
8.2	CLARIFICATION OF SCAFFOLDING AND CO-CONSTRUCTION	240
8.2.1	From scaffolding learning <i>for</i> children to co-constructing understandings <i>with</i> them	243
8.2.2	From scaffolding learning <i>for</i> teachers, to co-constructing understanding <i>with</i> them	244
8.3	OUTCOMES OF A CO-CONSTRUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	250
8.4	CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY	254
8.4.1	Contributions to the support of teachers	254
8.4.2	Contributions to the field of professional development	255
8.4.3	Contributions to research methodology	256
8.5	REFLECTION ON THE METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH, IN THREE PLANES	257
8.5.1	Personal	257
8.5.2	Interpersonal	258
8.5.3	Community/institutional	259
8.6	LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH	262
8.7	RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	263
8.7.1	Recommendations in practices of teaching in early childhood	264
8.7.2	Suggestions for further research in the practices of early childhood	266
8.7.3	Implications and recommendations for professional development	267
EPILOGUE		270
REFERENCES		271
LIST OF APPENDICES		289

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Links Between Processes of Action Research and Co-Constructing Understandings	72
Table 4.1	Project Outline	88
Table 4.2	Teacher's Scaffolding Behaviours	90
Table 4.3	Brief Case Study Centre Details	94
Table 5.1	Aspects of Centre Planning and Curriculum Implementation	111
Table 7.1	Aspects of Centre Planning and Curriculum Implementation, modified	216

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Copies Information Sheet, Letters To Participants, Permission Forms	290
Appendix A1 Information Sheet For Case Study Children's Parents	291
Appendix A2 Information Sheet, For Staff And Management Committee	294
Appendix A3 Research Consent Form Parent/Guardian Of Child Case Study	297
Appendix A4 Research Consent Form Staff Involvement	298
Appendix A5 Research Consent Form Centre Involvement	299
Appendix B: Details Of Pilot Study	300
Appendix C: Nudist Programme Information And Data Storage	308
Appendix C1 About Nudist	309
Appendix C2 Document List of All Transcriptions Coded For Analysis	311
Appendix C3 Example of Coding Structure Under Nodes And Sub Nodes	312
Appendix C4 Example of Text Units Imported Into Nudist Programme	313
Appendix C5 Examples of Tree Displays At Various Nodes And Sub-Nodes	314
Appendix C6: Tree Display of Developing Evidence For Propositions	316
Appendix C7 Example of Definitions At Nodes	318
Appendix D: Records Of Professional Development	319
Appendix D1 Records of A Professional Development Session	320
Appendix D2 Professional Development In Case Study Centres.	322
Appendix D3 Sample Transcription of Teachers' Discussion With Facilitator	326
Appendix D4 Items Identified In Each Centre By Propositions	339
Appendix D5 Project Phases Adapted To The New Zealand Context	347
Appendix D6 Examples of Adapted Research Structures	348

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 6.1	A Model of Intersubjectivity	177
Figure 7.1	Transformation of Participation for Children as a Whāriki of Planes	223
Figure 7.2	Outcomes for Teachers as a Spiral Reciprocity of Planes	232
Figure 8.1	Teaching Continuum	242
Figure 8.2	Modified Teaching Continuum	242

GLOSSARY

45:45	Expresses the number of children enrolled in public kindergarten morning and afternoon sessions, in this case 45 in each.
Core curriculum	Regular programme provided for children; includes routines and a range of activities.
Emergent curriculum	The programme of activities that develops in response to children's own interests and strengths.
ERO	The Education Review Office. A government organisation established under the 1989 education reforms with responsibility for reporting to the Ministry of Education on their reviews of schools and early childhood centres.
Encarta	Computer online encyclopaedia
Focus child	One of the children who are the current focus of the teaching team's planning. Each teacher was responsible for her whānau group (see below), from which she nominated one child for each planning cycle. The teaching team then made decisions about appropriate activities and projects planned to extend each focus child's interests and strengths, as ascertained through the team's observations and discussions with the parents of each child and with the children themselves.
NUDist	Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising. (Qualitative Solutions & Research, 1997). A computer package designed to help users handle non-numerical and unstructured data in qualitative analysis by supporting processes of indexing, searching and theorising. A NUDist project is the product of the researcher's knowledge and organisational and analytical skills. NUDist creates a powerful environment to store and explore data and ideas, to minimise clerical routine and maximise flexibility and to discover new ideas and

build on them. For further information and examples of the use of this programme in this research project, see Appendices C and D.

Playcentre	The Playcentre movement is a uniquely New Zealand early childhood parent co-operative that teaches and practices empowerment for both adults and children.
Portfolio	A folder or file for each child containing sample records of learning. Might include observations, teacher-child dialogues, records of projects, art work, photographs of activities. Maintained by Whānau teacher.
Private kindergarten	A sessional early childhood programme, registered under the childcare regulations with the Ministry of Education.
Process cooking	An area set up to provide children with maximum individual control in their cooking experiences. Equipment consists of storage units for materials and cooking utensils at child height, with choice of recipes and a display shelf for placing cards in order. Children follow instructions with support from adults; they make and cook one item, often in a microwave they programme with the aid of coloured dots; they then wash their dishes and leave everything tidy for the next child.
Project	An in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about. The investigation is usually undertaken by a small group of children within a class or group, sometimes by a whole group and occasionally by an individual child. The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions posed either by the children, the teacher, or the teachers and the children in collaboration (Katz, 1994).
Project board	A display area on which children and teachers collaborate to present the progress and some of the products of a project. This may consist of

information about the topic of investigation, artifacts that are products of this investigation and children's representations of their developing understandings about the topic. This is a dynamic display to which teachers and children frequently refer and contribute.

Public kindergarten	An early childhood centre, usually sessional (3 hours), provided under the auspices of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Free Kindergarten Association. In contrast to some private kindergartens, public kindergartens are not run for profit. In New Zealand, early childhood centres generally cater for children in the birth to 5 years range; public kindergartens cater for the 3-5 year olds. Children usually start public schooling after their 5 th birthday.
Whānau	Literally, “family grouping”. Often an early childhood centre groups children and teachers in smaller units, fostering closer relationships between teachers and children and between teachers and families. These units are sometimes called whānau, or roopu.
Whānau planning	The teacher of a whānau group maintained the portfolio records of the children in her group and was the main contact person with “her” children’s families. Although planning for each child is ideally a collaborative exercise in the teaching team, the whānau teacher had the major responsibility for co-ordinating plans for the children in her whānau group. Each child would be the focus of planning for a period of weeks, during which the child would be especially encouraged to engage in an ongoing project from their own particular interests, or a new group project might emerge.
Whāriki	Māori word meaning a mat of woven threads. Because the New Zealand national early childhood curriculum document is called <i>Te Whāriki</i> , the word and the metaphor of a whāriki have become popular in early childhood terminology.