



# **12th OMEP Asia-Pacific Conference**

## **Abstract Book**

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## **Keynote abstracts**

**Thursday 9am – 10am**

### **Meeting Sustainable Development Goals for Indigenous children in Australia**

**Ms Catherine Liddle (SNAICC)**

To be advised

**Thursday 3.45pm – 4.45 pm**

### **Measuring global progress in meeting Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.2**

**Professor Nirmala Rao (The University of Hong Kong)**

Global recognition of the importance of the early childhood period for human and societal development is reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.2 (by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education). High-quality data are needed to monitor progress towards all SDG Targets, and this talk illustrates challenges associated with measuring global progress towards the two indicators of SDG Target 4.2. They are the percentage of children under five years who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being (Indicator 4.2.1) and participation rates in organised learning one year before the official primary school entry age (Indicator 4.2.2).

Data inadequacy limits the extent to which progress or lack thereof towards SDG Target 4.2 can be gauged. Data on Target Indicator 4.2.1 are available from less than 50% of 193 United Nations Member States. There are concerns about the assessment methods adopted for Target Indicator SDG 4.2.1, and our research in Asia demonstrates disparities in findings from parent report and direct assessment of on-track status. Data on SDG Target indicator 4.2.2 are now available for most countries, but comprehensive data are only available from a few countries. It should be noted that data on preschool attendance in some countries in the Asia Pacific region vary based on whether they were collected from household surveys or Ministries of Education. Worldwide (i) about 75% of children between 24 to 59 months are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being; (ii) the enrolment rate in organised learning one year before the official primary school entry age was 75% in 2020. There are noticeable disparities across SDG regions and for all indicators associated with SDG Target 4.2. For example, Australia and New Zealand have an enrolment rate of 83% compared to 50% in Western Asia. Wealth-based inequalities for all indicators of SDG 4.2 exist worldwide, and many countries have residence-based disparities in these indicators. Efforts must be continued to ensure that reliable data, the foundation of evidence-based policy-making, are collected and reported.

**Friday 9am – 10am**

## **Sustainability from the start: Early childhood Education for Sustainability**

**Associate Professor Ingrid Engdahl (Stockholm University)**

There is a new agenda for all education. I refer to the UN Agenda 2030 and the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. But how well is the Agenda 2030 recognised and implemented in Early Childhood Education and Care?

In the OMEP ESD Award winning projects, children are given the opportunity to marvel and develop their ability to explore, communicate and reflect. In education for sustainability, children are invited to take the initiative. Children have the right to express themselves in all matters that relate to them. Early Childhood Settings are social and cultural meeting places that may promote children's understanding of how local and global perspectives are linked, and about the value of diversity. In what ways could young children's voices about their lives become starting points for learning about the world, and about sustainability?

We now live in the Anthropocene, the time when the development of and on planet Earth is driven by human beings' lifestyle. There is a need for a new ethical stance where the rights of nature, and all living species are included. Our generation is probably one of the last that based on the complexity of the situation can and must take responsibility to accomplish the challenging transformative changes. Strengthening a sustainable and just road lies in the best interests of the children, for humankind and for the planet.

**Friday 12pm – 1pm**

## **Embedding the principle of sustainability (EYLF) in practice through the 17 SDGs**

**Dr Diane Boyd (Liverpool John Moores University)**

This presentation will highlight the need for sustainability to be clearly embedded into all aspects of early childhood through the UNESCO (2015) Sustainability Development Goals. The SDGs offer potential for all children to become empowered citizens of their world in authentic and agentic ways. The presentation will feature research I am conducting in Wales UK that demonstrates the positivity of embedding the SDG/3 Pillars of Sustainability into pedagogical practice. The example shared will focus on children being and becoming 'economic agents of sustainability', highlighting the importance of early childhood when fundamental values and attitudes are developed and contrasting previous research that suggests this is not possible. It will conclude with the introduction and launch of the Australian SDG free resource for early childhood that will empower both educators and children to transform their world through positive actions, as detailed in SDG 12.8 (UNESCO,2015).

## **Concurrent sessions Thursday 10.30am – 12pm**

### **Strand 1 – Oral presentations**

#### **Providing accessible, equitable, and inclusive quality early education for young children in Sarawak**

##### **The Honourable Dato Sri Hajah Fatimah Abdullah (Ministry of Women, Early Childhood and Community Wellbeing Development)**

Accessible, equitable, and inclusive quality early education for all young children is crucial in ensuring a holistic development and wellbeing of children. Early childhood is an important stage not only to prepare children to be school ready, but also for character building through inculcation of moral values.

This paper aims to share the journey of Sarawak in providing accessible, equitable, inclusive and quality early education for our children in Sarawak. This includes initiatives, strategies and policies adopted in our efforts to achieve this goal. There are significant challenges which include social, cultural, economic, geographic, and demographic factors. Other challenges include funding, infrastructure, teacher qualification, curriculum, and the different agencies providing early childhood education. These challenges require different approaches in addressing them. We will share the efforts and different challenges in providing early education to children from low household, those in the remote areas and special needs children.

Through our continuous efforts and collaboration with strategic partners, we are able to achieve 98.85% of Standard 1 children who have attended preschool in 2022. The Sarawak Government plays a vital role in prioritising early childhood by allocating adequate funding and implementing initiatives not only for children, but for parents, teachers and preschool operators.

The paper concludes that providing accessible, equitable, and inclusive quality early education for all young children is actually a continuous journey which demands passion, compassion and commitment to provide the best for our children. There are still a lot more things to be done and a lot more to learn.

#### **Reimagining early childhood education futures: Storying Pacific worlds**

##### **Mrs Sangeeta Jattan, Ms Teupola Nayaca, Mrs Dropati Lal, Mrs Martha Komatai, Ms Babra Narain, Mrs Ufemia Camaitoga, Dr Bec Neill, Dr Alexandra Diamond, Dr Belinda MacGill (Fiji National University & University of South Australia)**

This presentation invites attendees to enter dialogue with Pacific early childhood education (ECE) researcher-educators working across Fiji and Australia, about how cultural/family values and learning protocols intersect with ECE policies at national and bi-lateral levels. Beginning in Dec 2022, with talanoa and baat-chit between eight researchers, this inquiry adopts storying as a 'methodology for sharing', and ways of engaging, and learning in and from stories (Phillips & Bunda, 2018, p. 44). Early storying between the researcher-



educators indicates that despite diverse cultural, religious and linguistic positions and places in the Pacific, we commonly and critically experience and perceive enabling and constraining structures (see Habermas, 1984, pp. 52-101) that impact young children's access to quality early education, that is, to early childhood education that prepares children for meaningful and reciprocal mature participations in their families and communities, thus affording them equitable future pathways in national and global societies. The research blends storying methods to explore systems, structures and paradoxes of ECE pedagogy and policy, and centre Pacific worldviews. In this session, we ask you to participate in storying how Pacific ECE systems might be re-imagined so that all Pacific children and their families may enact their cultural, linguistic and education rights, and experience authentic lifelong learning.

## References

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society.* (T McCarthy trans.) Beacon Press.

Phillips, L.G. & Bunda, T. (2018). 'Principles of Storying' in L.G. Phillips & T. Bunda (Eds.) *Research Through, With and As Storying.* Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315109190>

## **Professional development: Building early childhood educators' capacity to support South Asian ethnic minority children's learning in Hong Kong**

**Dr Kevin Kien Hoa Chung, Dr Shiang Yi Lin, Dr Tikky Sing Pui To-Chan, Dr Chun Bun Lam, Dr Barbara Pui King Ho (The Education University of Hong Kong)**

Shaping teachers' multicultural attitudes through professional development (PD) has constituted an important objective of teacher education in many Western countries. However, only a few empirical studies have examined multicultural attitudes and awareness among Chinese early childhood educators in Hong Kong (Yuen 2016). The Integrative Model Teacher PD Programme is a locally derived model that incorporates three theoretical underpinnings: culturally responsive teaching (Gay 2010), meaningful and pleasurable learning, and effective teaching of Chinese as a second language (L2). This paper presents empirical evidence showing positive outcomes of the PD programme in (1) building Chinese early childhood teachers' capacity to teach ethnic minority (EM) children and (2) changing teachers' perceptions of EM children. The programme consisted of Introduction and Foundation Courses and Practice Courses, ten 3-hour sessions each, over six months. Qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with 15 programme participants were analysed. Results showed that teachers reported gaining pedagogical knowledge and skills, increasing their awareness of ethnic minority cultures, and developing empathy toward ethnic minority children and families. As our studies conducted before PD implementation indicated teachers at schools/classrooms with low (vs. high) ethnic concentration self-rated as less efficacious in teaching EM children, quantitative data from a survey of 85 teachers and 550 pupils (Mage = 3.49) were used to examine PD-induced teachers' attitude change by classroom ethnic concentration. Results showed that the programme positively changed teachers' perception of EM children, especially among teachers from classrooms with low ethnic concentration. Findings highlight the important role of PD, focusing on teachers' multicultural attitudes and beliefs.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Yuen, Y. M. (2016). Enhancing Early Childhood Schooling of South Asian Children in Hong Kong: Beliefs and Perceptions of Kindergarten Teachers and Principals. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186 (3), 403–418.

## **Strand 2 – Oral presentations**

### **Building capacity and sustainability: Mentoring early childhood scholars and new graduate teachers**

#### **Dr Rebecca Andrews & Associate Professor Fay Hadley (Macquarie University)**

Within Australia and world-wide, challenges of supply and sustainability of early childhood teachers (ECTs) continue to hamper the provision of quality programs for children and their families. Australia's National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy (2022-2031) cements the call for a national approach to mentoring in early childhood education. Goal FA1-3 is to enhance mentoring and induction support for new teachers within the next three years. This presentation outlines two mentoring programs designed to build capacity and sustainability in the early childhood workforce. Both programs were funded by the NSW Department of Education. Mentoring Program 1 involved 60 experienced ECTs (mentors) from a variety of services offering preschool programs in metro, regional and rural areas in NSW and 145 new ECTs (mentees). Mentoring Program 2 involved 13 experienced early childhood mentors, who had completed our Mentoring Course in 2021, three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors who enabled culturally safe practices, and 59 early childhood scholars (mentees) who were at university studying for an ECT degree and who had received a scholarship through the NSW Department of Education's Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Scholarships and Early Childhood Education Scholarships Program (2020–2022). Additionally, both programs had a team of Macquarie Mentors (the project leaders). Both programs were framed by the Community of Practice theory, and collegial and mutually reciprocal relationships between the Macquarie mentors, mentors and mentees were paramount to its success. The unique multi layered approach adopted for the mentoring programs will be explored, as well as key findings from the evaluation of the program highlighting the impactful elements of participating in this program for both the mentors and mentees. For mentees - we highlight the importance of self-care and self-compassion when dealing with the complexities of study and work life balance. We highlight ideas on how early childhood leaders and organisations, policymakers and government agencies can support educators who are upskilling. We showcase the benefits of this approach for experienced early childhood teachers who engage in mentoring, therefore growing and nurturing leadership in the sector. This university research project offers new mentoring possibilities for sustainability across the early childhood workforce.

### **Group mentoring to foster reflection and professional development of preservice teachers in early childhood education and care**

**Ms Yue Qiu, Ms Xinghua Wang, Ms Dongyang Qu, Ms Chenfan Zhang (Beijing Normal University)**

According to Sustainable Development Goal 4.c, substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers is urgently needed, and one of the goals of teachers' training for sustainability is to make them reflect on action in order to transform praxis (Colas-Bravo et al., 2018). This study based on the ALACT model, which presents 5 phases of reflection as a continuous process, including Action, Looking back on it, Awareness of essential aspects, Creating alternative methods and Trial (Korthagen, 2017). However, external support is needed for more in-depth reflection and discussion to occur. Research has shown that group mentoring, as a tool for professional development (Eriksson, 2017), can facilitate deeper reflection for preservice teachers (Lassila et al., 2017). This study aims to further explore the aspects in which group mentoring have shown effectiveness and the mechanism by which it works. In our study, 9 preservice ECEC teachers were divided into 3 groups and provided with 3 rounds of guidance for 10 weeks during their internship, following a procedure of guided reflection plus group mentoring. Through a thematic analysis, our study finds that: 1) Group mentoring helps teachers acquire effective knowledge and strategies, and accelerates the formation of professional development community for all group members. 2) The focus of teachers' reflection is to find solutions to the difficulties encountered in the process of interacting with others, and the discussion of the above will be more diversified in groups. 3) Critical incidents involving contradictory feelings and complex themes tend to deepen the reflection, and mentor's using of scaffolding strategies, such as summarizing and raising further questions promotes preservice teachers' reflection in groups. Findings of our study prove the value of group mentoring in preservice teachers' reflection and professional development, and provide practical strategies for improving the quality of preservice teachers' fieldwork.

## **Becoming a pre-school teacher: Developing competence for education for human rights and democratic citizenship in Croatia**

**Dr Adrijana Visnjic Jevtic, Dr Višnja Rajic, Dr Ana Znidarec Cuckovic, MA Ivana Golik (University of Zagreb)**

It is to be considered a success that human rights and children's rights have been included in global development policy frameworks, such as the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), as these have global impacts on teaching policies, and educational practice.

This makes it a responsibility and obligation for universities and institutions educating prospective teachers to ensure the development of teacher competencies necessary for education about/through/for human rights (EHR) and democratic citizenship (EDC).

But where do we stand with human and children's rights standards in education of prospective pre-school teachers? How are they perceived, and could they be observed and delivered through professional competencies developed during pre-service education? Are prospective pre-school teachers equipped with the content knowledge, teaching competence and positive attitudes towards advocating for children's rights?

This paper explores opinions of prospective pre-school teachers in Croatia on the development of their professional competencies for EDC and EHR developed during their pre-service education. Qualitative research methodology was used to determine the thoughts of prospective pre-school teachers on their competencies for EDC and EHR.

Four focus groups were organized and content analysis of the data collected was conducted. The results show that although human rights and children's rights are relevant in teacher education, we can conclude that human rights, children's rights, and active citizenship competencies are not fully recognised nor developed during pre-service teacher education in Croatia.

## **Strand 3 – Oral presentations**

### **Worthy of love? Examining teachers' practices to promote infant wellbeing early childhood settings.**

**Dr Andrea Delaune (University of Canterbury)**

Love is a central need for human flourishing (Sharma et al., 2020). The New Zealand Early childhood curriculum recognises this need through an educational lens, stating that infants are learning that they are 'worthy of love' through sensitive and responsive pedagogical practices (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 13). Teachers play an important role stimulating infants' feelings of their 'worthiness of love', but how do teachers show this in their teaching practices? This Aotearoa New Zealand-based study examined teacher's explanations of their practices of love broaden theoretical understandings of the role of the teacher within infant wellbeing. Despite multiple tensions between discourses of love and professionalism (Dalli, 2010), there is growing recognition of the critical need to examine love in early childhood pedagogies (Page, 2017). Drawing from Iris Murdoch's notion of askesis, or philosophy as a lived experience (Murdoch, 1998), moral concepts, such as love, are generated from the lived experiences of those involved in the practices, expanding broader understandings. Broadening our conceptual understandings of love in teaching requires the voices of teachers who live these practices everyday (Delaune, 2020). Infant teachers self-selected 5 video snippets to stimulate a guided recollection and exposition of teaching practices that demonstrate 'worthiness of love'. Through the methodology of grounded theory, teacher's explanations revealed themes in their explanations of practices of love (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), supporting a wider working hypothesis of the benefits of a pedagogy of love in infant early learning settings for infant wellbeing. This developing hypothesis holds implications for pedagogy, initial teacher education, professional development, and policy guidance.

### **Impact of a community-based child injury knowledge intervention in rural Bangladesh**

**Ms Rehana Parveen, Dr Aminur Rahman (Centre for Injury Prevention & Research, Bangladesh)**

#### **Background**

Unintentional injuries cause a high number of child death across the globe. To reduce child injury risk behaviour Center for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh collaborated with Royale National Lifeboat Institution and Sesame Workshop Bangladesh, implemented the safe play project and researched to measure the changes in injury knowledge of Anchal, a child supervision centre, for children in southern Bangladesh.

#### **Aims**

The study aimed to assess the impact of introducing early learning materials related to injuries improving injury prevention knowledge for children 1 to 5 years old.

#### Methods

The study applied a randomized cluster trial. 341 intervention and 355 control children aged between 3 and 5 years and their caregivers were the participants. Data was collected after a one-year intervention using injury learning materials. The average mean percentage scores of the injury knowledge domains were calculated by accumulating all the subtasks scores.

#### Results

Intervention children scored significantly higher in the major unintentional injury knowledge areas such as road traffic (Intervention=17.2%, Control=10.0%), drowning (Intervention=42.0%, Control=34.7%), animal bite (Intervention=55.9%, Control=44.7%), poison (Intervention=14.4%, Control=3.7%), compared to the control group. Further analysis is ongoing to determine whether the groups' scores obtained at the baseline and end-line demonstrated a significant improvement in children's injury knowledge as a result of the exposed intervention

#### Conclusion

Children from the intervention group exhibited an increased level of awareness and knowledge on injury risks behaviours and prevention actions more than the control group children. The evidence indicated the necessity of integrated and innovative approaches into community-based, low-resourced childcare providers to reduce children's unintentional injury deaths targeting community children and research initiatives for better-informed policy formation and service delivery.

## **Early childhood teachers' role in nurturing young children's health and well-being**

**Ms Babra Narain, Mr Lalesh Ram Sharma**

The impact of the recent pandemic and climate change has increased the economical constraints of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific. The growing threats to food security through the increase in natural disaster activities due to climate change and the economic instability of families are likely to affect young children's health and well-being in developing nations, including Fiji. The roles and expectations for teachers in the Fijian community are changing drastically. As such, this study reports on the early childhood teachers' (ECE) role in nurturing young children's health and well-being in the Fijian community. The health and well-being of young children need to be prudently nurtured for their mental, emotional, social, and physical growth and development. A case study research design was embraced, compiling data by the means of a semi-structured interview, a questionnaire survey, and document analysis. The analysis explicates the ECE teachers' reactions to their roles in nurturing young children's health and well-being in Fijian schools. There is, however, a growing concern amongst ECE teachers about the need to bring positive changes in young children's health and well-being with the limited learning and teaching resource provision and professional guidance ECE centers have in Fiji. Implications of this study support the research literature, demonstrating the implication of ECE teachers and their roles in planning and implementing contextualised school and community-based awareness programmes on the importance of backyard gardening for healthy living. These implications are also likely to be relevant and significant to other

educational authorities within and beyond the SIDS of the Pacific that re-looking at addressing young children's health and well-being issues and developing healthy living values amongst its future citizens.

## **Strand 4 – Oral presentations**

### **Promoting a culturally diverse workforce for the sustainability of the Early Childhood Education workforce**

**Ms Sene Gide, Prof Sandie Wong, Prof Frances Press, Dr Belinda Davis (Macquarie University)**

In Australia, one out of every three people is born overseas and anecdotally, the early childhood education (ECE) workforce is highly culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). However, data are not gathered on the cultural composition of the workforce. We do not know how many CALD educators there are, their qualifications, the positions they are employed in, nor the opportunities/barriers they may face in their career progression, or the support they require to remain in the ECE sector (Gide et al., 2021). Reports on the general workforce indicate that inclusive workplaces tend to retain quality staff, with employee job satisfaction and satisfaction with client services, higher than that of non-inclusive workplaces (Brown et al., 2020). The most recently updated Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF version 2.0) includes several updates related to the planning cycle and collaborative leadership to support critical reflection and sustainability. There is also an increased focus on cultural responsiveness and the importance of educators providing a culturally safe place for children and families attending their service. However, there is no mention of the importance of a culturally safe workplace for teachers/educators, or how the diversity of teachers/educators should be acknowledged and respected by other colleagues, families, and management. Teachers/educators themselves should feel culturally safe in their workplace in order to establish a culturally safe environment for children. The National Children's Education and Care workforce strategy states that a highly-skilled, well-supported, and professionally recognised workforce is essential for quality outcomes for children (ACECQA, 2021). Attention to the cultural composition of the ECE workforce is needed if we are to develop workforce strategies that support supply and sustainability of the ECE workforce. This paper presents findings from a national survey on the cultural composition of the ECE workforce. Findings are especially important in light of the critical teacher/educator shortage in Australia and globally.

### **OMEP Pacific Islands Nations and OMEP Aotearoa NZ - Building relationships**

**Robertson, He and Pacific Island Nations members**

Belonging to an international organisation enables exploring different perspectives around early childhood practices. Over many years OMEP Aotearoa New Zealand members have liaised with members of OMEP Pacific Island Nations at ARNEC and OMEP gatherings which culminated in visits by early childhood teachers to and from Tuvalu and Fiji. A few

months ago in August 2023, OMEP Aotearoa hosted twenty six Fijian teachers providing centre based experiences in Auckland, Gisborne and Whanganui and workshops. We will share both countries' perspectives - our planning, the positive outcomes, and our insights.

## **Early childhood teachers' work well-being in China and Singapore: Commonality and difference**

**Dr Qianqian Liu & Dr Xinghua Wang (Beijing Normal University)**

Teachers' work well-being has attracted the attention of researchers around the world. Although China and Singapore are Asian countries, there are many differences, such as in culture and early childhood education context, and these differences may influence early childhood teachers' work well-being. The study aimed to examine the characteristics and relations of early childhood teacher job satisfaction and turnover intention in a sample of 1,232 Chinese teachers and 1,072 Singaporean teachers. Results showed that: (1) The extrinsic and overall job satisfaction of Chinese teachers are significantly higher than that of teachers Singapore teachers, and turnover intention of Chinese teachers was significantly lower than those of the Singaporean teachers. (2) Three factors of teachers' job satisfaction were negatively associated with their turnover intention in China and Singapore. The correlation coefficient was medium in both China and Singapore. (3) Although Chinese teachers and Singaporean teachers were divided into three profiles in terms of work well-being, there were significant differences in the proportion of each profile between the two samples. (4) Significant differences were found on teachers' years of experience and education level in three profiles of all sample. However, the differences in working hours, major and marital status were only showed in profiles of Chinese teachers, and salary was only associated with Singaporean teacher profiles. The current study has inspired education and administrative sector in China and Singapore should attach importance to the professionals' stability and well-being. Targeted measures to make the teaching profession truly enviable could be considered, such as improving wages and social welfare, providing psychological and organizational support, and enhancing professional identity should be implemented to prepare for the stability of the teaching workforce both in China and Singapore.

## **Strand 5 – Symposium**

### **Environmental policies, areas of intervention, and actions taken by educational childcare settings to adhere to sustainable development practices and raise awareness of its issues to children**

The importance of making young children aware of adopting sustainable development practices by providing experiences that will lead them to understand this concept (Bahtić, et Višnjić Jevtić, 2020) and demonstrate the resilience to integrate the values associated with it (Engdal et Furu, 2022) is underlined in the literature (Chapman et Gorman, 2022; UNESCO, 2020; Wang et al., 2019; Zhou, 2021). In Quebec (Canada), a law on sustainable development has been introduced to bring ministries and institutions, including those who welcome young children, to act in this direction (Gouvernement du Québec,

2014). This communication presents the context that led an early childhood center (0-5 years) to be part of sustainable development practices and to have the recognition of OMEP-World for the best EDS project in 2023. To this end, the aims of the Quebec government and the Family Ministry are presented, particularly the strategy put in place to support childcare centers and offer them a sustainable development certification (FM, 2023). Then, the fields of intervention and commitment found in the "l'Arche de Noé" Childcare Center environmental policy are presented in connection with the actions taken to implement sustainable development practices. The three pillars of sustainable development: environmental, economic, and socio-cultural (Siraj Blatchford, 2009) are used to highlight the fields of intervention and the resulting actions. Examples of practices implemented by educators and strategies implemented to involve children are highlighted.

### **PAPER 1 - Environmental policies, areas of intervention, and actions taken by four educational childcare settings to adhere to sustainable development practices**

**Professor Manon Boily, Dr Nathalie Goulet, Dr Sara Lachance, Dr Tamie Jean-Baptiste, Dr Marie-Christine Allaire & Dr Nawel Hamidi (University of Quebec in Montreal)**

### **PAPER 2 - 'L'Arche de Noé' Childcare Center: OMEP Canada ESD Awards 2023**

**Dr Mélanie Bélanger, Dr Martine Bertrand & Professor Manon Boily (University of Quebec in Montreal)**

### **PAPER 3 - Raise the ecological awareness of children in educational childcare**

**Dr Marie-Christine Allaire, Professor Manon Boily, Dr Tamie Jean-Baptiste & Dr Sara Lachance University of Quebec in Montreal)**

## **Concurrent sessions**

**Thursday 1.45pm - 3.15pm**

### **Strand 1 – Oral presentations**

#### **Educators as health communicators: Which factors predict their ability to implement and communicate COVID-19 health information?**

**Professor Sheila Degotardi, Professor Linda Harrison, Professor Rebecca Bull (Macquarie University)**

Early childhood (EC) educators play a vital role in ensuring every child's health is supported in their settings. The Australian National Quality Standard requires educators to



ensure health practices and procedures are promoted and implemented (Standard 2, Element 2.1.2), and in many cases, educators are the main point of contact for parents, and a trusted source of information for families when they are managing their child's health. In 2020-21, the COVID-19 pandemic presented an entirely new scenario. The EC sector was instantly tasked with expanding their required health practices to prevent the spread of this new virus. At the same time, leaders and educators became essential conduits for information and enforcers of health and practice guidelines.

This paper presents findings from a study that investigated the health communication experiences and practices of the EC sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. We report findings from a nationwide survey of 401 educators and leaders to identify where COVID-19 health information and advice was sourced, and the perceived effectiveness of that health communication. A high level of trust and effectiveness was attributed to health information obtained from early childhood employer and peak organisations, but the survey respondents educators varied in their reported ability to implement COVID-19 health information and to communicate this information to families. We therefore report relationships between respondents' perceived ability and their attitudinal and demographic characteristics.

This study has implications for the EC sector's preparedness as public health communicators. At a broader level, we reflect on the sector's ever-expanding role boundaries and derive recommendations on how educators and managers can be better supported in this area. The lessons from the pandemic can be harnessed to redefine EC educators' roles in supporting children, families and communities to be resilient during periods of rapid social change.

## **Early childhood educators' training and their preparedness to support the language learning of infants and toddlers**

**Ms Tracy Redman, Professor Linda J. Harrison, Dr. Emilia Djonov (Macquarie University)**

The sustainability of an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce relies on specialist pre-service ECEC training to support the learning, development, and wellbeing of very young children. This exploratory study sought to understand how adequately ECEC training and coursework prepared educators for their work with infants and toddlers, with a focus on supporting language learning – critical in the first three years for children's later language, literacy, and learning outcomes (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). An online questionnaire was developed and distributed to educators working in ECEC services across Sydney, Australia. A total of 122 educators holding certificate, diploma, and bachelor's degree qualifications provided ratings and written comments about: (1) focus on children under three years in their ECEC coursework; (2) inclusion of content about language learning of this age group, and (3) their perceived preparedness to support infant-toddler language learning. Statistical analysis of the data showed that across all qualification levels, educators reported that their courses focussed more on children aged 3-5 years than on those under 3. Ratings for course content about language-supporting interactions and preparedness increased from certificate to diploma to degree qualifications. Overall, 80% of bachelor-level graduates felt prepared to support infant-toddler language learning, compared to 69% of diploma and 58% of certificate III graduates.

The findings of this study can inform how future initial early childhood training and professional development initiatives could be more inclusive of infant and toddler pedagogies and improve educators' knowledge and skills to better promote language learning in infants and toddlers. Building these critical language foundations could relieve later pressure on ECEC services, children, and families.

## **Translanguaging to reduce language inequities: Case studies of Chinese-Australian bilingual infant-educator interactions**

**Dr. Zhijun Zheng, Professor Sheila Degotardi (Macquarie University)**

Many bilingual infants attend early childhood education centres (ECEC) as their monolingual peers. However, recent evidence revealed that bilingual infants vocalized less than monolingual infants in ECEC environments (Zheng et al., 2023), suggesting that educators may need to provide language tailored strategies to support bilingual infants' language learning. Prior studies demonstrated the benefits of translanguaging pedagogies in promoting preschool and school-aged children's language and social learning, but very few studies have focusing on settings for infants. In Australia, Mandarin is the language with the highest number of speakers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Giving the social and cultural importance of Mandarin, this study aims to examine how educators support English-mandarin bilingual infants' language development through a range of translanguaging and other language-supporting strategies in ECEC settings. This study analysed the educator-infant interactions of four focus infants who experienced Mandarin-English translanguaging strategies during a one-hour observation of their naturally occurring interactions. We report on three types of fluid translanguaging pedagogies which were associated with different pedagogical intentions: 1) using translanguaging to make meaning and acknowledge children' bilingual repertoire during play-responsive interactions; 2) using translation to support the connection between two languages during literacy and playful activities; 3) using home languaging for emotional support or behaviour regulation. We also identified associations between the translanguaging strategies and educators' language supporting strategies such as repetition, expanding own/child's utterances, labelling and questioning. This study is the first to closely describe the dynamic pictures of translanguaging practices between Mandarin-English bilingual educator-infant in naturalistic environments. Findings suggests that educators can use different strategies to scaffold infants' bilingual language learning and their wellbeing, and further reduce social inequities of language environments.

## **Strand 2 – Oral presentations**

### **Visibility of and support for educator well-being in early childhood systems: Reflections from Australia, Singapore, and New Zealand.**

**Professor Rebecca Bull, Dr Ee Lynn Ng, Dr Kiri Gould, Dr Justine O'Hara-Gregan, Ms Yilin Huang, Dr Laura McFarland, Dr Tamara Cumming, Professor Sandie Wong (Macquarie University)**

There is widespread agreement that educators are key to providing quality experiences for young children in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, which benefits children, families, and societies as a whole. Yet the supply and sustainability of early childhood teachers and educators is a pervasive problem globally, with an increasing potential for a workforce crisis as many countries move to expand access to high quality ECEC.

In 2020, a group of international scholars began informal discussions about educator well-being in our respective countries. The intent of these discussions was to better understand the current state of educator well-being, the organisational factors that support well-being, and the impact of well-being on educators' interactions with children. Since then, we have formed an international research alliance with the aim of raising global awareness of the physical, physiological, and psychological demands placed on those individuals supporting the learning and development of our youngest children. Our initial international comparative work considers how educator well-being is positioned and made visible, with this work being driven by four provocations; 1) How is educator well-being situated in current curricula, guidelines, or statements – is it part of an ecology of well-being in early childhood education, or is it only present as a function of quality practice for children and families?; 2) What parts of existing Work Health and Safety rules could be amplified to improve attention to and support of educator well-being?; 3) Are there existing policy mechanisms that could be expanded to improve attention to and support for educator well-being?; and 4) Are there any current interventions in place to support educator well-being? We present answers to these provocations from three Asia-Pacific nations – Australia, Singapore, and New Zealand.

## **Sustaining the early childhood workforce: The impact of job demands and resources on turnover intentions**

**Eerika Lämsmäns, Dr Mari Saha, Prof Rebecca Bull (Tampere University)**

High quality early childhood education and care [ECEC] enables families to participate in paid employment and promotes positive outcomes for children, particularly those who are disadvantaged. As such, maintaining a stable ECEC workforce is critical, yet the recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood educators is a pervasive problem globally. Finland is no exception, with Heilala et al (2021) reporting that up to 44–62% of the participants were considering quitting the ECEC profession. The aim of the current study is to examine the associations between educators' job demands and resources [JD-R], and turnover intentions in order to better understand how we can support educators to stay in the ECEC field.

The data were collected via an online survey during spring 2021 from ECEC educators in the Inland Finland (N=428). The survey included measurements about work-related stressors, time management, emotional demands, encountered offensive behaviours, relationship with colleagues, acceptability of identity, relationship with supervisor, positive organizational climate, decisions making influence, instrumental resources, working conditions and physical environment. Analysis is ongoing but will firstly establish JD-R profiles (using latent profile analysis), and then will examine whether JD-R profiles are associated with turnover intentions. The results will be discussed in the context of international findings. The findings have potential for informing policies and ECEC organizations about the factors that support retention of the workforce.

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## **Negative workplace gossip and thriving at work among Chinese kindergarten teachers: The roles of psychological contract breach and bianzhi**

### **Ms Can He (Hubei Normal University)**

With the longstanding shortage of kindergarten teachers, Chinese kindergarten teachers often face excessive work pressure and load. These issues lead to the loss of work vitality and enthusiasm, resulting in job burnout and health-related concerns. Improving the work vitality and physical and mental health of kindergarten teachers is imperative for the development of the ECE workforce in China. As a signal of individual progress and growth, thriving at work helps individuals maintain high energy, reduce burnout, and enhance physical and mental health. Therefore, exploring the influencing factors and functioning mechanisms of thriving at work is of practical significance both for teachers and kindergartens. Based on the socially embedded model of thriving at work and the social exchange theory, this study aimed to examine the relationship between negative workplace gossip and thriving at work, as well as the role of psychological contract breach and bianzhi. The questionnaire method was applied, and 1105 kindergarten teachers in the Hubei Province of China participated in the survey. The results showed that negative workplace gossip was positively correlated with psychological contract breach and negatively correlated with thriving at work. In addition, psychological contract breach was negatively correlated with thriving at work. According to the moderated mediation test, psychological contract breach mediated the relationship between negative workplace gossip and thriving at work, with the mediation effect accounting for 39.13% of the total effect. Furthermore, bianzhi moderated the impact of psychological contract breach on thriving at work. Specifically, the impact of psychological contract breach on thriving at work was larger for teachers with bianzhi than for those without bianzhi. These findings deepen the understanding of the influential factors and formation mechanisms of thriving at work among kindergarten teachers. In practice, this study provides a new perspective for administrators to support the sustainability of early childhood teachers.

## **Strand 3 – Oral presentations**

### **EDUCARE: A Swedish pedagogical practice**

#### **Dr Ingrid Engdahl (Stockholm University)**

This presentation will introduce early childhood education and care in Sweden with a special focus on 1-5-year olds health and well-being. Already 50 years ago, the Swedish politicians decided on a holistic model for ECEC where play, development, learning, fostering and care are integrated processes. In 1975, only 10% of Swedish children (6

months – 6 years) had access to ECEC. Today, the number is 85%, and most children enter ECEC during their second year of life.

In a Unicef study comparing the status of ECEC and family policy in the western countries, Swedish policy came out as number one, the only country to reach the maximum of 10 points. Today, however, the situation in the ECEC sector is hard, with a huge variation in quality, in equality and there are huge problems reaching a equitable and sustainable preschool for all children aged 1-5 years.

OMEP Sweden runs a project where we focus on young children's health and well-being. Two studies show a lack of collaboration between professionals in the child health care and ECEC sectors, and little collaboration between parents and ECEC educators to help children to become nappy free. The average age to be nappy free in Sweden is 3.5/4 years (day/night), an increase by almost two years the last decades. As a comparison, 98% of Vietnamese children are nappy free at the age of two. And the biology is the same, only cultural traditions differ.

This is not sustainable, and it is not in the best interests of the child. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states children's right to life, development and health, to play and education, and to influence their daily lives. I will present the campaign for Nappy free children earlier and invite to a discussion about children's health and well-being.

## **The impact of work connectivity behavior on harsh parenting among Chinese parents of preschoolers: A conditional process analysis**

**Ms Can He (Hubei Normal University)**

With the development of the Internet and mobile communication technologies, society has entered a new era of connectivity. This new era of digital connectivity has given rise to an emerging form of work interaction—work connectivity behavior, which refers to employees' use of tools such as personal computers and smartphones to deal with work-related issues outside of the workday. Work connectivity behavior extends work from the workplace to the family, blurs the traditional boundaries between work and family, and exacerbates the squeeze of work roles on family roles, which may hinder working parents' emotional understanding of their children and their ability to interact with children, ultimately leading to harsh parenting. However, few studies have focused on the impact of this emerging work behavior on harsh parenting. Based on the work-family boundary theory and the ego depletion theory, this study aimed to examine the relationship between work connectivity behavior and harsh parenting, well as the mediating role of ego depletion and the moderating effect of problem-solving pondering. The questionnaire method was applied, and 1083 parents of preschoolers from the Hubei Province of China participated in the survey. The results showed that work connectivity behavior was positively correlated with ego depletion and harsh parenting, and ego depletion was significantly positively correlated with harsh parenting. According to the moderated mediation test, ego depletion mediated the relationship between work connectivity behavior and harsh parenting, with the mediation effect accounting for 33.33% of the total effect. Furthermore, problem-solving pondering moderated the impact of work connectivity behavior on ego depletion. Specifically, it was stronger for individuals with low problem-solving pondering than individuals with high problem-solving pondering. These findings deepen the understanding

of the influential factors and formation mechanisms of harsh parenting among parents of preschoolers and provide a new perspective on the intervention of parenting.

## **A research on multidimensional collaborative education among home, school, and community based on key events in kindergarten**

**Ms Hongmei Gu (Songchingling International Kindergarten)**

Abstract: The collaborative mechanism of home-school-community integration is one of the crucial components of education reform and development in China. The transition from home to kindergarten is the first social change in young children's lives. High-quality collaboration between the family, kindergarten, and society is essential for young children's growth. To respond to education reform, our kindergarten aims to promote young children's development with a focus on four key events: adapting to kindergarten, preparing for graduation, engaging in active play, and overcoming distress. Guided by the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, the three parties - home, school, and community - work together to develop target-consistent, multidimensional, cooperative, and win-win educational practices. Through localized collaborative education among home, school, and community, the kindergarten seeks to optimize all parties' educational ideas and resources to promote family and community development while improving the quality of kindergarten education.

## **Strands 2 and 5 - Oral presentations**

### **Exploring factors related to early childhood teachers' STEM teaching self-efficacy in central China**

**Dr. Beijia Tan, Dr. Yaping Yue, Dr. Jin Li, Ms. Yun Ma (Henan University)**

Integrating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to facilitate young children's acquisition of knowledge and problem-solving skills through exploration and experimentation has drawn international attention (Bybee, 2013; Chen et al., 2020). However, the majority of preschool teachers in China are not confident about implementing STEM education in their classroom settings (Tao, 2019). In order to support teachers in STEM education, the current study took the initial steps towards this challenge by exploring the current level of STEM teaching self-efficacy among preschool teachers in Central China and identifying possible factors related to STEM teaching self-efficacy.

The current sample consisted of 321 early childhood teachers (98.8% female) from Central China (55.8% in urban areas). In addition, 59.5% of the participants were working in public preschools while 40.4% were working in private preschools. All participants completed a web-based measure of STEM teaching self-efficacy including pedagogical self-efficacy and content self-efficacy (STSS, Yang et al., 2021).

The results showed that teachers in urban areas demonstrated a significantly higher level of STEM teaching self-efficacy,  $t(319) = 5.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Moreover, private preschool teachers in rural areas revealed a significantly higher level of STEM teaching self-efficacy compared to public preschool teachers,  $t(140) = -3.11$ ,  $p = .002$ . In addition, teacher's

age, years of teaching, levels of education, and professional development were contributing factors to STEM teaching self-efficacy  $F(5, 315) = 16.00, p < .001, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .19$ . Out of the above variables, professional development was the strongest predictor of STEM teaching self-efficacy ( $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ). The implication of this finding is that attention should be paid to enhancing teachers' STEM teaching self-efficacy through professional development programs that address both pedagogical and content knowledge in STEM education, especially for teachers working in preschools in rural areas.

## **Addressing Movement and Physical Activity in the Post-Pandemic Early Childhood Programs: Perspectives from Early Childhood Teachers in the Philippines**

**Ms Charla Rochella Santiago Saamong, Dr Catherine Capio (The Education University of Hong Kong / The University of the Philippines)**

One of the effects of the recent pandemic is the decrease in opportunities for young children to engage in movement and physical activities (MOPA), potentially worsening the problem of inactivity. Early childhood programs provide opportunities for MOPA but were among the most affected sectors during the pandemic, having to resort to evolving modalities (i.e., online, modular, hybrid). This study is part of a larger work on early childhood teachers' experiences in using MOPA in their classes. We explored how Filipino early childhood teachers describe a "physically well" child and their perceptions of how the pandemic has impacted the physical development of young children. We also studied their strategies for addressing the needs of young children in MOPA. Data were obtained from online interviews with 25 early childhood teachers from the Philippines who were actively teaching during and after the pandemic. Guided by the bioecological systems theory, all interviews were subjected to reflexive thematic analysis aided by the NVivo software package.

Results show that early childhood teachers describe a physically-well child in terms of observable health and nutritional status, and capacity to perform movement skills with ease and enthusiasm. According to early childhood teachers, young children display a range of reactions when engaging in physical activities post-pandemic. Some children were described as highly energetic, while some were afraid and uneasy to try relatively novel movement and physical activities. In response, the early childhood teachers adjust their strategies to accommodate the perceived needs of the young children. However, the availability of resources limit the extent to which early childhood teachers can adapt to the children's needs. We offer recommendations for supporting early childhood teachers' in promoting MOPA. Finally, we underscore the crucial role of early childhood teachers in providing opportunities for MOPA in post-pandemic early childhood settings.

## **"Let's take care of the sea with our hands!" Emotional experiences influencing children's exploring activities.**

**Ms Yoshie Shiraishi, Ms Sachi Uchiyama (Aichi Shukutoku University)**

Japan is surrounded by the sea and consists of multiple islands. The sea is a familiar natural environment for children in the coastal areas. Protecting the richness of this ocean is one of the important tasks for sustainability.

This study is placed in the educational practice of 19 children aged 3 to 5 years old and 2 teachers at a nursery school in Nagoya City in 2022. This was part of an action research study on educational practices of listening to children's voices through pedagogical documentation. I visited this nursery school almost once a month and observed the project activities and participated in the reflection meeting based on the documentations. The direction of this project was decided by children and teachers during discussions every week.

Because of COVID 19, the children couldn't go to the sea or the Aquarium. The children decided to raise a fish named Kiss, but the fish lived only one day. However, in that time, the children saw the "fish swimming lively". After such an experience, the children started exploring about the sea where fish like Kiss live and the project continued, with their teachers, for half a year. They made a documentation wall about their experiences and findings, including a diorama of the cycle of water and a poster "Let's take care of the sea with our hands". Furthermore, they made a presentation about their activities to other children, teachers, and their parents.

In this study, I focus on the children's voices and how they related affection toward Kiss in their drawings and sayings on the documentation wall. I will clarify how the experience of a moving encounter with "fish swimming lively" influenced the process of their exploring sustainability for the sea.

## **Strand 5 – Oral presentations**

### **Indigenous ways of knowing and being with wai (water): Pedagogical priorities and tensions for ECE kaiako (teachers)**

**Dr Ngaroma Williams, Professor Jayne White, Dr Kaitlyn Martin**

This presentation outlines the background, context, methods and discoveries of a four-country pilot study completed between 2022-2023, as part of a wider international project titled "Wash from the start". Our emphasis is on the discoveries of the Aotearoa New Zealand team in particular (Williams et al, 2023). The purpose of this project for Aotearoa New Zealand is best captured within the whakataukī (proverb):

'Ko te wai te ora o ngā mea katoa - Water is the life giver of all things.'

The pilot project arose out of our joint desire to respond to UNESCO goals concerning children's health and wellbeing, access to safe and clean water, and understandings of climate change and its impacts on life above and below water (UNESCO, n.d.). Children across the world, who very rarely have a say in this, are the most affected group when it comes to climate change, with devastating impacts on the waterways that they need to thrive. We share the view of many that more sustainable and ecological frameworks are needed to alter this trajectory. Moreover, we collectively consider that children have much to offer us in broadening our understandings of water as a global concept and resource. Inviting them to contribute their experiences and perspectives – as world citizens - lies at the heart of our joint endeavours and it is here where this pilot project sits.



Inspired by our local environment in Te Wai Pounamu (the South Island), and its relationship to our Tiriti o Waitangi (1840) (Network Waitangi Ōtautahi, 2018) informed ECE curriculum, the Aotearoa New Zealand research team were informed by the notion of ‘walking with’ children through ethnographic engagement in the field over several days. The walking-as-method approach to this research was inspired by the Common Worlds research (see for instance Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018) and the immersion of the researchers in the complex ecology of the life of their ECE communities. In ‘walking with’ three ECE communities, we sought to engage with the ‘intra-actions’ of children and water. For this reason, we did not enter the fieldwork with pre-determined orientations concerning what children’s engagements or representations of water would look like, or mean, for that matter. However, we also recognised the futility of any claim that we could observe with an impartial eye, irrespective of the technologies at our disposal (White, 2020).

Our presentation reflects the dynamic composition of our team, meaning that each researcher saw through their unique lens, and, correspondingly, engaged differently with children, capturing different representations and expressions of water as a consequence. We present our findings relating to children’s representations of water in curriculum from two different perspectives:

(1) Indigenous ways of knowing and being with wai (water): There is a value of whakapapa (genealogy) that acknowledges Māori connection with Atua (guardians of environments). Whanaungatanga ‘in action’ (relational connection) is a process of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and engagement with people, places, and things. All things have mauri, a life force, and this is especially true for wai.

(2) Pedagogical priorities and tensions for ECE kaiako (teachers): Kaiako used diverse pedagogical strategies to support children to recall, reflect, revisit and advance their understandings of water. These kaiako made full use of the waterways around them to bring a living curriculum to children that is place-based and oriented to the preservation, protection and maintenance of water, while supporting learners to engage in multiple and dynamic ways. In this regard we identify tensions concerning the extent to which water can be utilised as a plaything, as opposed to a living entity, emphasising the pedagogical implications that arose for kaiako as a consequence.

We contrast these representations with perspectives from children across co-pilot countries Norway, Thailand, and Tanzania. A meta-analysis of pilot findings is introduced across countries, with an invitation for OMEP members to participate in a proposed larger project. Children’s perspectives of water offer fresh insights and opportunities to ‘turn the tide’ in finding our way out of the Anthropocene that does not serve them, or the waterways that surround them well.

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## **Intergenerational stories: Recognizing intergenerational engagements as arenas for collaborations, well-being and sustainability**

**Dr Czarecah Oropilla (Western Norway University of Applied Sciences)**

In light of developments in the field of early childhood education, learning is often represented within formal early childhood institutions. Learning anchored in home and community settings is not as recognized, and engagements between young children and their grandparents and other community elders are not typically viewed as arenas for knowledge and development despite the many stories and activities shared between the generations. For this paper, some examples will be presented from the Philippines and Norway of intergenerational engagements where young children and older adults co-create and make meaning together. These examples include photos and videos of intergenerational engagements during the pandemic where learning opportunities were made visible (Oropilla, Ødegaard & White, 2022), as well as narratives from Norway from an ongoing research project with a Norwegian kindergarten that lies by the North Sea. The latter is part of a project called One Ocean, which aims to create opportunities for different generations to engage in sustaining traditional and creating new knowledge, and cultures among and across generations. Local experiences are shared through narratives, which are considered cultural artefacts for meaning-making and exploration (Ødegaard, 2007; 2020). Stories are the vessels of culture, and in this project, culture is seen as shaped by local sea landscapes, historical artefacts, and intergenerational engagements (Oropilla & Ødegaard, 2021). Through these examples, the hope is to recognize intergenerational engagements as arenas for collaborations, well-being, and sustainability.

## **Sustainability in the early years: Interpreting perspectives from Swedish and Filipino preschool teachers**

**Dr Anna May Navarrete (University of Gothenburg)**

The role of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in fostering values, competencies, and practices oriented towards sustainability is a subject that has been receiving growing focus in recent years. This study is part of a larger doctoral research project that aims to explore how knowledge is reproduced in how Filipino and Swedish preschool teachers conceptualize and practice early childhood education for sustainability (ECEfS) in their respective sites. In particular, this presentation will be focusing on the understandings and

practices of Filipino preschool teachers on ECEfS. Using decolonial perspectives as the guiding conceptual framework for the study, three Filipino preschool teachers will be interviewed about what they know about and how they understand sustainability, and how these are reflected in their practice. Their conceptualizations of sustainability, daily practice and activities at the preschool, perspectives on the role of the teacher and their view of the child are some examples of the thematic arenas that will be explored in the semi-structured interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis will be utilized to analyze the interviews and identify implicit and explicit patterns on how sustainability is expressed and practiced and how these can be interpreted considering decolonial perspectives. The preliminary results of the interviews will be presented at the conference, specifically how hegemonic discourses on sustainability are reproduced, decentered, or challenged in the way that the respondents talk about sustainability and ECEfS. This study has potential implications for contributing to discussions that focus on other ways of knowing and doing in ECEfS, with an aim to strengthen equity and inclusion in early childhood education and care.

## **Concurrent sessions**

**Friday 10.30am – 12pm**

### **Strand 1 – Symposium**

#### **Improving the quality of early education in China: Achievements and experience**

##### **ABSTRACT 1 - Development and Implementation of Early Reading Course for Rural Children**

**Dr Limin Hou, Huiyuan Wu, Ying Zhou (Guangxi Normal University)**

The richness and complexity of early spoken vocabulary and the establishment of early reading behaviors of children—motivation, interest, habits, methods, etc. are important indicators to predict their future reading ability development, and also it is indicators of whether children may have dyslexia through early detection.

With the main goal of improving rural children's early language and reading ability, this study has developed a series of early reading course resources that point to children's development level, reflect the positive aspects of local culture and suit the development needs of the new era. In the course implementation process, the research team has explored the following experiences: First, different types of activities should be organically integrated and penetrated to improve children's language learning ability. Second, all activities should followed the requirements of children's language learning and development. Third, in children's language learning, teachers should pay attention to the stimulation of children's interest in reading, the cultivation of listening awareness, the cultivation of reading habits and the improvement of expression ability. Fourth, parents should be included in the implementation of the course, and game activities should be

converted into family parent-child games, so that children can receive educational guidance synchronized with the kindergarten.

## **ABSTRACT 2 - The development and validity study of the Classroom Quality Rating Scale for Early Childhood Care and Education (CQRS-ECCE) within the context of Quality Assessment Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education in China**

**Kejian Li, Hao Lu, Zhen Chen, Zhejiang Normal University**

**Yuewen Chen, University of Macau**

**Yue Liu, Hangzhou Insight Educational Technology Co. Ltd China**

Based on the Quality Assessment Guidelines of China the research team developed the Classroom Quality Rating Scale for Early Childhood Care and Education (hereinafter referred to as CQRS-ECCE), which is used to observe and measure the classroom quality of ECCE within Chinese sociocultural contexts. This paper systematically introduces the development process and validity study of CQRS-ECCE. The core quality conceptions of CQRS-ECCE include child development-oriented education, systematic learning support, and effective interaction and teaching. In terms of content framework, the CQRS-ECCE is basically consistent with the Quality Assessment Guidelines, including five subscales, namely: Educating Conceptions, Environment and Safety, Organization of Activities, Teacher-Child Interactions, and Parent-teacher Collaborations. As a 7-point rating scale, the CQRS-ECCE has 19 items, 51 sub-items, and 460 indicators which are critical and sensitive to young children's learning and development. As a result, the CQRS-ECCE has constructed a classroom learning environment and support system model which is composed by conditions and processes, activities and interactions, and internal and external support relationships. In order to verify the psychometric property of CQRS-ECCE, the research team collected data from a representative classroom sample in Zhejiang Province. Based on item analysis, reliability analysis (internal consistency reliability and inter-rater reliability) and validity analysis (criterion-related validity, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis), evidence at multiple levels shows that the CQRS-ECCE has good educational psychometric properties and that the scale is applicable to the quality assessment of ECCE within Chinese sociocultural contexts.

## **ABSTRACT 3 - Language and literacy classroom environment quality in China**

**Liu Baogen, Zhang Hanyu, Wang Kaiyue, Su Xiaomei (Zhejiang Normal University)**

Language and literacy environment are the conditions and opportunities to support the development of children's language and literacy skills in the classroom and are also the focus of kindergarten education quality evaluation. The study used the ELLCO to analyze the language and literacy environment of the 73 classrooms from 24 kindergartens in Province Z of China. The results showed good reliability and validity for the whole ELLCO, and the ELLCO is basically applicable to the kindergarten classroom education situation in China; Compared with foreign studies, the quality of language and literacy classroom environment is still at lower level, and the structural quality is significantly better than the procedural quality, the quality of reading and writing environment need to be improved; classrooms of different ages have different emphasis on language and literacy quality.

Research suggests that we should improve the procedural quality of the language and literacy classroom environment, focus on solving the bottlenecks in concepts and practices in pre-literacy and pre-writing support, and improve teachers' theoretical literacy and ability in "whole language education".

### **ABSTRACT 4 - Can preschool play-based pedagogy quality reduce SES disparities in early math skills: Evidence of a value-added model**

The present study examined the value added of preschool play-based pedagogy quality to early math skills, using data of 496 children from 24 classrooms of 5 preschools at 3 remote counties of a western province in China. The multilevel models show that, after controlling for child and family level covariates, the quality of overall play-based pedagogy and sub-dimensions provision of physical materials and teacher guidance did not significantly associate with individual children's math skills one year later. The moderation analyses indicated a significant interaction between family SES and the quality of overall play-based pedagogy and teacher guidance in predicting early math skills, suggesting that the impacts of SES on early math skills weakened in classrooms with high-quality play-based pedagogy and teacher guidance during play. But no evidence was found between family SES and provision of physical materials. Findings suggest that the policy should endeavor to increase provision of high-quality play-based pedagogy and teacher guidance in rural preschools in order to ameliorating SES gaps in early math skills and to build an equitable early childhood education.

## **Strand 2 – Symposium**

### **New research on emotional labour in the work of early childhood educators**

**Dr Tamara Cumming, Dr Mari Saha, Ms Joanne Ng, Ms Melanie Dickerson**

The supply and sustainability of early childhood teachers and educators is a global challenge requiring focused attention to what can prevent educators from staying in the sector. There is growing interest in the role of emotional labour in the work of early childhood educators working with children birth to five years, and how this might impact on workforce sustainability. Emotional labour is defined as 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (Hochschild, 1983). However, research on the emotional labour in early childhood educators work is limited, and more research is needed to understand how and with whom educators do emotional labour, and to explain its connections with educators' well-being and job satisfaction.

The purpose of this symposium is to bring together researchers taking new perspectives on emotional labour in educators' work. Melanie Dickerson will discuss her research on educators' emotional labour and potential wellbeing implications while working with families; Joanne Ng will discuss early childhood teachers' use of emotional labour in response to job demands and resources at the sector, service and individual levels; and Tamara Cumming and Mari Saha will discuss findings from their research with educators in Australia and Finland regarding their emotional labour, and future emotional labour research possibilities.

## **ABSTRACT 1 - An exploratory study of Early Childhood Teacher's use of emotional labour and job satisfaction: A search for the sustainable workplace using Job Demand-Resources model**

**Joanne Ng (Macquarie University)**

There is extensive literature on early childhood educators' poor well-being leading to emotional exhaustion, burnout and low retention. Emotional labour is positively related to emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is the most reported dimension of ECE burnout in a systematic review (Ng et al., 2023) to date, it remains poorly understood, especially among early childhood teacher (ECT)s. In Australia, there is an ECT attrition problem where ECTs intend to leave the workforce after four years (Australia Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2021). Issues for attrition are identified at the sector, service and individual levels. This impacts the sustaining of skilled ECTs in the workforce and in turn affects the learning and development of children, especially for children experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation. Using a cross-sectional design, this qualitative study will purposively sample 15 ECTs with a minimum of four years of work experience across three Australian states, five each from the three National Quality Standards assessment-rated early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in a minimum of 50% child-facing role. The Job Demands-Resource Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) would be used in analysis of the ECTs semi-structured interviews using NVivo 20. Findings from this study have implications for understanding ECTs' use of emotional labour in response to job demands and resources at the sector, service and individual levels and to inform provision of sustainable early childhood education and care organisational structure, workplace culture and interpersonal relationship training that improve ECT job satisfaction and retention.

## **ABSTRACT 2 - Working with families: An investigation of early childhood educators' emotional labour and wellbeing implications**

**Melanie Dickerson (The University of Sydney)**

This research investigated educators' emotional labour and potential wellbeing implications while working with families. Educators' emotional labour is relatively under-explored and unacknowledged (Purper et al., 2022), and little is understood about the wellbeing implications of such work (Cumming and Wong, 2019). Emotional labour is theorised as the process by which employees regulate emotions and manage their emotional expressions with others as part of their professional role (Hochschild, 2012). Grandey et al's (2013) three-dimensional conceptualisation of emotional labour— being occupational requirements, emotional displays at work, and intrapsychic experiences— frames this research. As the first component of a larger mixed methods study grounded within a social constructivist paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 2016), an adapted emotional labour survey was administered in 2022 in one Australian state, yielding 145 responses. Statistical analysis of both closed and open-ended questions was undertaken. Respondents anonymously and voluntarily completed the survey after reading and acknowledging the consent form. Details of resources to support wellbeing were included in the survey. Results indicate that emotional labour is prevalent in educators' work with families, but is exercised according to individual and/or contextual factors. Additionally, findings revealed that educators strive to manage their emotions and negative wellbeing

implications to provide families with positive and supportive experiences. Such findings may have implications for how pre-service training programs, early childhood workforce practice and policy, and future research may be informed and/or supported.

### **ABSTRACT 3 - Early childhood educators' emotional labour in Australia and Finland: Comparisons and further research possibilities.**

**Dr Tamara Cumming and Mari Saha (Macquarie University)**

Work in early childhood education and care is very responsible and challenging, and currently the ability of educators to cope with their work is making headlines around the world. There are many possible stressors associated with work, and educators' coping problems and stress are widely reported in the research literature. Working with young children is intensive interpersonal work, and educators are expected to support children's emotional, cognitive, and physical development and wellbeing. It is argued that to enable warm, encouraging, and compassionate interactions with children, educators are expected to 'perform emotions', namely model positive emotion regulation and to suppress negative emotions (Wang et al. 2021). It has been suggested that, similarly as in the service sector, educators must control their emotions, i.e., do emotional labour (Hebson et al. 2007).

In this presentation we will discuss responses to a question about emotional labour included in a survey undertaken with educators in Australia and Finland. Responses to the question 'I need to be nice no matter how I really feel' will be compared between the two national contexts to understand the prevalence of experiences of emotional labour. The findings will also be used as a prompt for thinking about what kind of questions we should ask next better understand the concept of emotional labour in the context of early childhood education. These questions could include attention to what factors in the ECEC work environment and organisational cultures contribute to emotional labour, and how emotional labour is socio-culturally structured in different contexts.

## **Strand 3 – Oral presentations**

### **Effect of an integrated child drowning prevention intervention on ECD and early learning**

**Ms Rehana Parveen, Md Shafkat Hossain, Notan Chandra Dutta, Dr Aminur Rahman (Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh)**

#### **Background**

Drowning causes a higher number of child deaths in Bangladesh due to a lack of supervision. The absence of ECD provision exposes rural children to a high degree of adverse experiences during the critical period in childhood. The Anchal, a drowning prevention intervention under the project Bhasa aims to prevent child drowning and enhance ECD outcomes for children 1-5 years in Bangladesh. Though the intervention has proven effective for child drowning prevention, the effect of ECD intervention remains unidentified.

#### **Aims**

The study aimed to explore the effect of the integrated child drowning prevention intervention on children's early development and learning.

#### Methods

The study applied a quasi-experimental design where the participants were aged between 3.5 and 5 years. Total of 51 intervention and 53 control children participated at the baseline whilst 57 intervention and 55 control group children were assessed at the end-line. The average percentage scores of the domains were calculated by accumulating all the subtasks scores.

#### Results

Children's overall ECD outcome was significantly higher (23%) than the children in the control group (6%). Anchal children outweighed the control children in all four individual development domains. Anchal children's progress was the highest for the early literacy domain (28%), whereas the control group's gain was equally higher for the socio-emotional (7%) and early numeracy (7%). Both groups obtained the lowest scores in the motor domain.

#### Conclusion

Integration of the ECD intervention into the child drowning prevention intervention helped significantly enhance children's overall ECD development. The Anchal intervention, which integrates measures to reduce child drowning mortality and improve early childhood development outcomes, aligns with both Targets 3.2 and 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The intervention has the potential to make a significant impact in reducing child mortality and improving ECD outcomes and can be replicated in low-resource settings

## **The effect of parental emotion regulation on young children's emotion regulation: Evidence from rural China**

**Ms Mei Wang, Dr Qianqian Liu, Prof Xiumin Hong (Beijing Normal University)**

**Abstract:** In the context of China's efforts to promote rural development, the improvement of rural children's well-being has attracted wide attention. China has a large number of rural children, but emotional problems are prominent among these children. This study aimed to explore the current situation of children's emotion regulation, and the effects of parental emotion regulation and parental reactions to children's negative emotions on children's emotion regulation in rural China. We examined children's emotion regulation, parental emotion regulation, and parental reactions to children's negative emotions through a questionnaire survey. A total of 3,931 Chinese rural parents whose children aged 3-6 participated in this study. The results showed that: (1) Children's Emotion Regulation and Lability/Negativity were both above the theoretical median in rural China. Children's Emotion Regulation in one-child and two-child families was significantly higher than that in three-child families. 3-4 years old children's Lability/Negativity was significantly higher than other age groups. (2) Parental emotion regulation had a significant positive influence on children's Emotion Regulation and a significant negative influence on children's Lability/Negativity in rural China. (3) Supportive reactions played a greater positive role on children's Emotion Regulation, while non-supportive reactions played a greater negative role in the effect of parental emotion regulation on children's Lability/Negativity. The findings emphasize that parents should take supportive reactions to deal with children's negative emotions rather than non-supportive reactions. Moreover,



measures should be taken to enhance parental emotion regulation in order to improve children's emotion regulation.

### **Optimization path for supply and demand of young children's family education guidance: Based on the theory of supply and demand adaptability**

**Ms Xin'ge Tan, Ms Xiaowei Li (Beijing Normal University)**

Abstract: Family education for infants and toddlers has an important value. In the face of parents' confusion about parenting, effective family education guidance is a strong need in the current society, and is important for promoting the harmonious development of infants and toddlers, families and society. In order to analyze the current situation about supply and demand of family education guidance for infants and toddlers, the contradiction between them, and to optimize the supply path of family education guidance, 572 parents were investigated, using the Current Situation and Demand of Infants and Toddlers' Family Education Guidance questionnaire. It showed that, the supply of family education guidance is mainly provided through the mass media, in the form of text and video, and is carried out during the daytime on weekdays; but the current demand is not the case, parents want to receive guidance from professional institutions and expert, in the form of expert consultations and courses, wishing the guidance is best held on weekends or holidays; there is a mismatch between supply and demand, and the quality of family education guidance services is poor. Therefore, the correlation, accessibility, quality and adaptability of the supply of family education guidance should be improved according to the "supply and demand adaptability theory", so as to promote the efficient allocation of family education guidance resources and meet the diversified needs of parents.

## **Strand 4 – Oral Presentations**

### **Cultural effects on an early childhood teacher experiencing disability and re-entering work: Interconnecting Indigenous language, knowledges and feelings of belonging**

**Ms Kim Browne**

As an Adnyamathanha and Nukunu Aboriginal Australian woman, my knowledges are interrelational: connected to and with the land, with animals, with the waterways, with language, with Peoples and Country and the spirit world (Martin, 2007). I am used to a certain certainty' one where I am Koorie; confident culturally of my own ontological interconnectedness to what is around me.

Yet, as an Aboriginal woman, I also live as visually impaired through and with dis/ability. There is not an accepted or used term for the word dis/ability in Aboriginal culture (Gilroy et al., 2016; Dew et al., 2019). Like my engagement with dis/ability health providers, challenges between imposed Westernised systems, including educational workplaces, and personal perspectives of living with dis/ability are often incongruent (Gilroy et al., 2016).

My engagement with both dis/ability service providers and early childhood educational workplaces have not always reflected the social knowledges and understandings of my Aboriginal culture – including language - nor of the acts of shared reciprocity which would be expected culturally. For example, Adnyamathanha and Nukunu ways of being-becoming always ask of you 'how you are connected to Country?', where when you are gathering in Community you are already able, competent and in good health. In doing so you are keeping Community in good health as well.

These reflections are drawn from my literature review which are part of my current PhD studies. An autoethnographic study, the account presented here interconnects my experiences of re-entering teaching in early childhood education as a person experiencing dis/ability and also as an Indigenous woman. Indigenous language sustains my sense of belonging and inclusion culturally, but this sense of belonging felt eroded as I sought to re-enter workplace systems as a person viewed as dis/abled and as a risk. Experiences involving dis/ability alongside cultural perspectives here are important. How Indigenous teachers experiencing dis/ability feel about their culture - where languages sustain understandings of and spiritual reciprocal connections with Country and Community - may affect their levels of confidence and hamper (re)entering work in an early childhood service.

This oral presentation aims to extend upon how Indigenous language is currently understood, seeking to allow deeper explorations of its value alongside teacher dis/ablement through Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) understandings of affect, Auntie Karen Martin's understandings of Country and Community (2007) alongside my own lived experiences. Using autoethnographic accounts, the presentation offers recognition of moments during practice where dis/ablement is felt. In doing so, a reconceptualization of recognising interconnections of Indigenous language and its value and sustenance to enabling Indigenous teachers living with disability to feel confident and able to equitably (re)enter early childhood work may be made.

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## **Matjarr Djuyal 'hand talk' in practice: How using gestures in teaching the revitalized Gathang language helps preschoolers learn an aboriginal language**

**Dr Rhonda Radley (Western Sydney University)**

The use of gesture strategy was applied in the delivery of a local cultural program for preschoolers to deepen the connection to totems and cultural practices. The decline of the Guula 'Koala' population and the Guula habitat is a significant concern to Aboriginal traditional custodians especially to Aboriginal people that are kin to Guula. Guula Gimbay 'Koala as a totem/kin' program raises awareness of the importance of the use of Language to care for Country and to revive cultural practices. Guula Gimbay models how to educate preschoolers on the importance to listen to and care for Country and how cultural practices and Language can benefit Guula 'Koala' to survive and thrive.

The findings of the studies contribute to a growing body of research attesting to the effectiveness of gesture for improving language acquisition amongst learners. The findings provide the first detailed picture of how gesture can be effective in an Aboriginal language revitalisation context, both for the learning of preschool children in classroom settings, and as a way of involving their mainstream educators. This evidence should embolden language practitioners and linguists to include gesture in the design of language revitalisation programs since gesture also aligns with traditional Aboriginal teaching practices and offers a relatively low-cost strategy for helping teachers assist their students in acquiring Aboriginal languages.

Dr Aunty Rhonda shares her research journey and the Guula Gimbay program experience.

## **First Nations dance first: A dialogue on Australian pre-service teachers' work with First Nations dance in the early years**

**Ms Kerrin Rowlands**

Recent changes in Australian education policy have led to a new acknowledgment of First Nations dance as foundational for Australian dance (Australia Council 2019; Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority 2022, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2017; Mparntwe Education Declaration 2019). This presentation draws on current doctoral research and a partnership project that investigates pre-service teacher's approaches to First Nations dance to urge dialogue among educators, artists, policy makers and scholars by making visible teacher's efforts to work with the First Nations dance curriculum in the early years.

While considerable research is devoted to a call for culturally responsive pedagogies to disrupt the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories (Morrison, Rigney, Hattam, Diplock, 2019; McCarthy-Brown, 2017; Reihana, 2020), little attention has been given to how teachers will work with First Nations dance with young children. There lies a danger that without appropriate cultural protocols and guidance teachers may reinforce cultural stereotypes and essentialism, rather than disrupt them.

During this presentation I will discuss the notion of 'First Nations dance first' through a recent Australian collaboration with pre-service teachers teaching First Nations dance with

children in the early years of school, thus addressing conference Strand 2. Supporting the supply and sustainability of early childhood teachers and educators.

Through this dialogue our aim is to illuminate how pre-service educators are mobilized through a collaboration with a First Nations teaching artist, to confront traditional western stereotypes of dance. Consideration will be given to how the research may contribute to furthering UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Moreover, I will discuss the importance of relationships that form the essence of culturally responsive First Nations dance pedagogy within the practice of dance education with a focus on the early years.

## **Strand 5 – Oral presentations**

### **Silkworms: Catalysts for gaining respect for lives**

#### **Mr Osamu Fujii (Kyoto Hoiku Centre Welfare Corporation)**

This paper will introduce how to utilize natural environments encountered in children's daily lives at day-care centers and how to foster an appreciation of the environment in which children live. In order to accomplish these goals, we fostered friendly relationships between children and people in the community who have expertise in traditional fabrics, as Kyoto is the representative city of the Kimono industry. I have included sericulture activities at my center as a way for children to experience the natural world since 2005. I have maintained that silk worms are ideal animals to improve children's curiosity and connection with natural creatures and their environments, even though they are domestic animals. Silk is a beautiful and useful material that can fascinate people of all generations. These characteristics of silk have helped to encourage children's ideas, skills, and behaviors towards taking care of living creatures and making artworks from the cocoons through the exchanges of many people who deal with textiles. In addition to the textile specialists based in urban areas, we have also cooperated with villagers further out in the prefecture to help farm mulberry trees to feed the silkworms.

Modern lives have been occupied with many mass-produced goods made from fossil fuels, which seem to be unsustainable and make up a large part of our overall waste. We should consider earlier generations' cultures and skills as we rethink our world system from the point of sustainability. That is why I recommend introducing silkworms into early childhood education. Silkworms have been a fascinating animal for thousands of years in the world. They produce useful materials for human beings while consuming only mulberry leaves. Every child can gain a respect for the lives of the creatures through rearing them. Silkworms are good catalysts between nature, children, and their communities.

### **GPGP (Garden Plan Grand Prix) for the diversity of nature environment and playing types on our nursery school**

#### **Mr Kei Kihara (Oikeashita Nursery School)**

OikeAshita Nursery School is located in the center of Kyoto city, Japan. The garden was a very flat when the preschool was founded, It was a typical Japanese school garden only a few trees and sandy without grass, that is very convenient for adults. But it's a desert-like environment without diversity. When we went to nature place : mountains or rivers, the children were quick to get injured. I wondered why, but we found a secret in their lives.

Most children in urban areas live in apartments, are transported by their parents' cars, use elevators instead of stairs, walk on flat asphalt, and rarely touch the soil. They live in an environment far removed from the nature of our childhood.

Because of the children spend most of their time at our school, we began renovations to make our garden a more natural environment and to deepen the diversity of playing type as well as biodiversity. But It was limits to what our staff could do own, so we had to create a system that would allow everyone involved in the school to participate in the creation for our garden. That is how we came up with the first idea of the "GPGP"

The participation of the GPGP is Teacher, parents, and of course children have rights. Some of the parents were architects and came up with professional plans, they are all treated equally as one opinion, same as a child. All of ideas were posted in our school, and each child had ticket to vote for the grand prize, which was to be used as the plan for future improvements to our school garden.

Five years later, we are improving on the preservation of local species and to connect with the surrounding nature and allow us to feel the diversity.

## **Impact of Climate Change Policy (2018- 2030) on early childhood education in Fiji.**

**Ms Sangeeta Jattan (FNU), Ms Ufemia Camaitoga (Fiji ECT Association)**

The intention of this study is to find out how the Republic of Fiji: National Climate Change Policy (2018- 2030) impacts Early Childhood Education and how it can support young children's learning and development in the current era. According to the Sustainable Development Goals in Target 4.2 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (SDGs 2030). This is articulated in the Fijian Early Childhood Curriculum Guideline Na Noda Mataniciva (2009) and the Pacific Guidelines for the Development of National Quality Frameworks for ECCE (2014). Climate change has significantly affected young children's environmental play as weather determines the safety and security of learning environments. In this study, we intend to use qualitative method through a mixed approach of literature review and participant interviews to describe the impact of climate change on young children's learning and development through environmental play and how the Republic of Fiji: National Climate Change Policy combats the threats posed by the unpredicted weather pattern. This study will be carried out in the western division of Viti Levu Fiji. The findings may bring forth some possible strategies for early childhood teachers to create awareness on climate change in their communities. This should strengthen and amplify community support for early childhood learning settings hence elevating children's active engagement in their environment.

## **Asia-Pacific Presidents Symposium**

**Friday 2pm – 3.30pm**

### **Achieving SDG 4.2: A Regional Symposium on Early Childhood Development and Quality Education**

**OMEP Presidents from Australia, China, Japan, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand**

The regional symposium aims to address the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.2, which emphasises the importance of providing quality early childhood development and pre-primary education for all children. Distinguished experts and Presidents from OMEP member countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, China, Hong Kong-China, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, and Thailand, will convene to discuss strategies, challenges, and innovative solutions. The symposium will serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, fostering regional cooperation, and exploring novel approaches to achieve SDG 4.2 effectively.

The symposium's primary objectives include sharing the latest research, best practices, and policies for promoting early childhood development and quality pre-primary education across the Asia-Pacific region. It also aims to identify the challenges and barriers hindering the achievement of SDG 4.2 and explore viable solutions. Collaboration and partnerships among OMEP Asia Pacific member countries, international organisations, and civil society will be encouraged to implement SDG 4.2 comprehensively. The symposium will explore innovative resource mobilisation and capacity-building approaches for early childhood development and education.

As a platform, the symposium will feature an engaging format, including speaker presentations, a dynamic panel discussion, and an interactive Q&A session. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the region's unique challenges and opportunities related to SDG 4.2 while identifying potential collaboration areas among OMEP Asia Pacific member countries. The symposium will bring together stakeholders to exchange knowledge, experiences, and foster collaboration towards a shared vision. It will contribute to the realisation of SDG 4.2, ultimately creating a positive impact on the lives of children and advancing sustainable development in the region.

### **Poster session**

**Thursday 12pm – 12.45pm**

**In alphabetical order**

### **The role of mindful parenting in preschoolers' approaches to learning among Chinese families**

**Ms Xiaoxin Fu, Ms Lixin Ren**

Approaches to learning (ATL) describes dispositions that support children's learning processes, such as children's learning tendencies, attitudes, and habits (Kagan et al., 1995). As ATL is critical to children's cognitive development, school readiness, and future academic performance (Lee, 2012; Razza et al, 2015), it is important to identify factors that may promote children's ATL from a young age. This study focused on the role of mindful parenting in children's ATL development. Mindful parenting is an expansion of the educational application of mindfulness therapy and mindfulness theory in psychology (Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1997; Steinberg, 2004). As a basic parenting practice, mindful parenting has attracted increasing attention from researches worldwide. We hypothesized that mindful parenting would be related to better ATL in children. In addition, we explored whether children's emotion regulation would act as a mediator in between, since mindful parenting has been positively associated with children's emotion regulation (Zhang et al., 2019; Mafaza & Sarry, 2022) and children's emotion regulation is an important predictor of ATL (Ke, 2022).

A total of 219 parents of preschoolers were recruited from two cities in China. Parents' mindful parenting was assessed using the Chinese Version of the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting Scale (Pan et al., 2019). Parents reported children's emotion regulation and ATL using the Emotion Regulation Checklist (Shields & Cicchetti, 1997) and the Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (Wu et al., 2019).

The results showed that mindful parenting was significantly associated with children's competence motivation, but not with learning strategies. Children's emotion regulation mediated the relationship between mindful parenting and children's ATL. The findings highlight the importance of promoting both mindful parenting and children's emotion regulation skills to support the development of ATL in the early years.

## **Development and content validity of a home learning environment scale for preschool-aged children in China: A modified e-Delphi study**

**Ms Jing Gong, Prof Nirmala Rao**

Quality learning opportunities play a crucial role in promoting optimal child development, as emphasized by SDG 4.2. Global institutions have urged for action to monitor and promote responsive and stimulating home environments for young children. However, most existing measures of home learning environments (HLE) focus on enumerating available resources and assessing the frequency of learning activities, leaving the quality of HLE unknown. Against this background, this study aims to develop and pilot a contextually appropriate measure for the HLE of children aged 3 to 5 years in China.

This study consists of three stages. First, an initial item pool was developed by reviewing available caregiver-report or observational tools related to HLE. Seventy-one items from 19 assessment tools were selected and grouped into three dimensions: availability of learning materials, frequency of learning activities, and quality of learning activities. Second, a modified E-Delphi technique was used to establish consensus among experts on the dimensions and items of the HLE scale based on developmental relevance, clarity, cultural appropriateness, and comprehensiveness. Third, a preliminary version of the HLE scale will be tested with 24 caregiver-child dyads in urban and rural areas of Guangdong, China. Participants will complete an interactive task, and children's developmental competence will be assessed using the East Asia-Pacific Early Child Development Scales-

Short Form. In addition, family sociodemographic information will be collected through interviews to explore the relationship between family socioeconomic status, HLE, and child development. Implications for practices and research will be discussed.

## **Enhancing Psychosocial Development in Preschool Children through Preventive Programs and Healthy Lifestyles (2019)**

**Jarka Kreskociova**

This research delves into the promotion of psychological and social well-being in preschool children, their families, and communities through the implementation of preventive programs and the adoption of healthy lifestyles. The study aims to assess the impact of a preventive intervention on the psychosocial development of preschool children, focusing on the enhancement of self-perception, peer interactions, and attitudes towards personal health. Conducted within Slovakian kindergartens, the research employs a longitudinal experimental approach, employing standardized semantic selection tests and scaled questionnaires for assessment purposes. The study cohort comprises a single class of 20 preschoolers, who engage in a six-month experiential learning initiative. Throughout this period, the children are exposed to a weekly exploration of different vegetables, with active participation encouraged from parents.

The study's findings affirm the positive influence of the preventive program, emphasizing the cultivation of healthy dietary, work, and hygiene habits among preschool children, with a specific emphasis on averting childhood obesity. The "VEGGIE MADNESS" program, designed to instill healthy eating patterns, nurture an early understanding of balanced nutrition, and foster self-care practices, proves effective in this regard. The research highlights the efficacy of experiential learning approaches, notably the "Protege Effect," wherein children learn through teaching others. Importantly, this approach stimulates continued interest and discourse among parents, sparking discussions on child nutrition, the resurgence of home-cooked meals, the advancement of child well-being, and renewed attention to family health.

Furthermore, the study establishes the sustainability of the educational program within the kindergarten context. Notably, the selected kindergarten opts to perpetuate the project, actively nurturing an early grasp of health principles among its young attendees.

## **A study on children's physical activity and health during COVID-19— Through an interview survey with incumbent teachers in Kumamoto Prefecture**

**Mr Takeshi Kurihara**

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread, and even in Japan, we have entered the third year of living under an infectious disease. Life during the pandemic has drastically changed the way we used to live. Various measures were taken to maintain people's health, such as wearing masks, disinfecting hands, and keeping a distance between people. The same is true in the world of childcare and early childhood education. Therefore, in this research, we will clarify what kind of practice was done in early childhood education in Japan to secure the amount of physical activity and maintain the health of children under the pandemic.



Through interview surveys with incumbent teachers in Kumamoto Prefecture, we would like to collect actual cases from educational settings and prepare for the coming next infectious disease. Even if COVID-19 is over, the threat of the next infectious disease, such as a new strain of influenza, is always around us. We deeply believe that this research will be useful in fostering the health and happiness of the next generation of children, their families, and local communities, and leading them to a sustainable society.

## **"Earth Warriors " A case study of early childhood climate education: presenting and reflecting on a curriculum system**

**Ms Ying Li**

**Abstract :** This case study presents and reflects on an early childhood climate curriculum - Earth Warriors - which provides a comprehensive climate education school program for children ages 3-11. This curriculum was developed by a team of high-quality early education professionals who developed the Global Climate Learning Standards (GLS) for children based on a literature review, consultation and peer review. They developed the curriculum with the aim to empower children and combat eco-anxiety. It is currently recognized by UNESCO as a Green Citizenship Initiative and believes that all children have the right to quality and inclusive climate education. This study collected data through a series of ways such as news discovery, website browsing, and resource packages downloading all with this, and then, a comprehensive overview of the curriculum system was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis to draw out the characteristics of the curriculum in learning standards, teacher training, global collaboration, and development teams. The findings suggest that the curriculum is useful for early childhood climate learning and, importantly, that it fills a gap in climate education at the early age of 3-7 years and is a quality curriculum framework appropriate for global early childhood climate learners. Finally, this article discusses how the early childhood climate curriculum can be further developed for the Asia-Pacific and the other regions of the world, drawing on the "Earth Warriors".

## **Early childhood educators' perceptions of children's outdoor activity in Australia during the COVID pandemic**

**Ms Junjie Liu, Dr Shirley Wyver, Dr Helen Little, Dr Muhammad Chutiyami**

The research aimed to explore educators' perceptions of outdoor time and space in Australian early childhood education and care centres (ECEC) during the pandemic. Twelve educators who had been working before and during the pandemic participated in a semi-structured Zoom interview. The educators were selected based on their responses in a larger survey, with an equal balance of those who reported more, less, or the same outdoor time during the COVID-19 restrictions, their educational background and centre location. A standard set of interview questions was used with modifications relating to whether the educators had reported more, less or the same outdoor time in their survey response. Educators were provided the interview questions in advance. Thematic analysis will be used to explore emerging themes on whether there was a change in outdoor time and space provision in the Australian ECEC during the pandemic. The findings will contribute to understanding of influences on the use of outdoor space in ECEC, therefore

offering recommendations for creating more outdoor opportunities for children. Furthermore, it will also provide directions for professional development.

## **How Chinese Parents Accompany Their Young Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Mr. liu Changhai Liu**

This paper conducted an anonymous online survey among 2834 young children's parents through a self-designed questionnaire on Parent-Child Companionship During the COVID-19, aiming to explore the characteristics of parent-child accompanying activities amid the covid-19 pandemic. The results are as follows: Parent-child accompanying activities generally performed well during the covid-19 pandemic, mainly crisis response activities; The average time of parent-child accompanying activities was increased amid the pandemic. In addition, the quality of the activity was also proportional to the time. There were no significant differences in quality among family members, regardless of gender and age. Simultaneously, we also found that the higher the perceived threat of the environment, the lower the parental involvement in parent-child accompanying activities. In the post-epidemic era and possible future public health emergencies, the content and form of companionship should be enriched under regular epidemic prevention and control. Meanwhile, we should establish a progressive psychological intervention system to strengthen the psychological endurance of parents and children to cope with public health emergencies and exploit the advantageous resources in the surroundings to promote high-quality parent-child companionship.

## **Reference Effect of Preschool Teachers' Salary and Its Influence on Preschools' Service Quality: An Empirical Study in China**

**Dr Tianzi Liu**

Research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has found strong links between the pay and conditions of preschool teachers and the quality of preschool service provided. In order to improve the quality of private preschool, China puts forward "Several Opinions on Deepening the Reform and Standardized Development of Preschool Education" at the end of 2018, which mentioned that private preschool teachers' salaries should refer to public preschool teachers. This involves the influence of different types of preschool teachers, and the impact of their salaries on the quality of preschools. Although teacher's salary is an important research topic in the world, the reference of teachers' salary between different types of preschools and its influence on preschools' service quality have not been studied in previous literature. In order to solve this question, this study draws the following three conclusions based on a survey in two districts from China with different numbers of public and private preschools: (1) The teachers' salary of public preschools does have a referential effect on the teachers' salary of private preschools; (2) It works only when the supply of public preschools in a region is relatively inadequate, the teachers' salary of public preschools will play a reference role on the teachers' salary of private preschools; (3) Compared to regions with reference salaries, regions without reference salaries are more conducive to the improvement of preschool service quality. While the education system differ, the problem discussed in this research reflects a challenge faced by many countries.

## **Parental Knowledge, Preference and Needs of Child-Rearing Family Programmes in Chinese Minority Regions**

**Dr Jinjin Lu**

Core parenting knowledge is critical for enhancing children's physical and mental development throughout the early stages of life, and it is essential to understand parents' preferences and needs in acquiring parenting knowledge. In particular, with the launch of the Family Education Law in China, parents, community workers, and early childhood (EC) teachers gather together to engage in scientific and evidence-based programmes. However, Chinese historical and cultural factors, such as parents' authority, family structure, child rearing, and non-scientific programme support, affect the improvement of parents' knowledge and understanding of child-rearing programmes. This study used a qualitative research method to investigate parents' knowledge, preferences, and needs regarding the potential implementation of interdisciplinary child-rearing programmes in Chinese minority regions. The results reveal that most participants were positive and eager to acquire knowledge using evidence-based information to assist children's mental and physical development. However, parents often have mixed opinions on obtaining knowledge and skills to enhance children's academic and soft skills in the context of traditional Chinese cultural norms. Suggestions and implications are also provided for parents, social workers, EC teachers, and policymakers for future research.

## **Preschool educators use of commanding language in China and Japan: A cross-cultural comparative study**

**Dr Zhongjie Lu, Ms Hongxin Li, Ms He He**

The manner that educators use commanding language for directing children's behaviors reflects the communication role that educators play in their interactions with children, which has great significance for children's language learning experiences as well as educator-child relationships. This study investigated nine Chinese and nine Japanese educators' use of commanding language in educator-child interactions during morning free play. Totally, 4296 clauses generated by the participating educators when they interact with children were analyzed, drawn on systemic functional linguistic theory that classifies command based on its semantic feature. According to the results, there was a significant difference in the total commanding language between the two cohorts that Chinese educators generally uttered more commands than Japanese educators. The proportion of direct & non-suggestive commands that reveal speakers' authority dominated in both cohorts, yet Chinese educators rated significantly higher than Japanese educators. The proportion of indirect & suggestive command that carries a negotiation and euphemistic tone in Japanese educators' language was significantly higher than Chinese educators. The effect of children's age on the educators' use of command was identified. The proportion of commands used by Chinese educators with younger children under 4 years old was significantly higher than that used by Japanese educators. Compared to Chinese educators, Japanese educators uttered much less commands in their talk with children under four years, however, the gap was narrowed when they communicated with children above four years. This study illustrates the general feature of Chinese and Japanese educators' commanding language use in a naturalistic context of free play and reveals how the educators create culturally different language experiences for children in spontaneous daily interactions, which has implications for worldwide preschool education in multicultural contexts.

## **“I am a mirror”: A study on preschool teachers' perceptions of their mentoring role in student teaching**

**Ms Jieran Ma, Ms Gu Rongfang Gu**

As “the significant others” of student teachers, mentor teachers are central to stimulating their learning during practicum which is a critical component in teacher education, driving researchers to learn more about mentor teachers.[1]Related studies mainly focused on the expected images and the desirable mentoring behaviors of mentors from the perspective of student teachers or scholars,[2][3]whereas mentors' concern was still obscure. As the role subject, how do they perceive and approach their role as teacher educators? What support do they need to construct pedagogical relationships with student teachers, provide exemplary settings and effective guidance?

To reveal the beliefs and practices of preschool mentor teachers, “Role Theory” based semi-structured interviews were conducted respectively within 30 teachers in China. Nvivo12 was used to analyze their interview transcriptions according to Grounded Theory. Results showed most mentors' understanding of “teacher educator” were limited to being a mirror, who should set an example for student teachers to imitate, causing their practices

and relationships appeared as “apprenticeship”. Only few preschool teachers possessed effective mentoring strategies and perceived the value of mentoring to their professional development. Some mentors assumed mentoring impede their role as “class teacher for children”. Thus, the two roles “teachers” and “teacher educators” were artificially separated.

Meanwhile, lacks of external support for mentoring restricted the motivation and competency of mentors. These findings suggested that a collaborative community should be developed by university, preschool and policy makers to build connections between the professional development of student teachers and that of mentors, which will improve mentors’ motivation and competency and help them to be “co-reflective practitioner” and “sustainable professional developer”.

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## Professional learning through discomfort, disjuncture, and deliberation

### Professor Andrea Nolan, Dr Tebeje Molla

There is now an increased interest in professionalizing the early childhood education and care sector in many countries around the world due in part to the strong link drawn between quality early childhood education programs and successful trajectories in the lives of young children. The professional learning of educators is seen as one way to support quality service provision. This paper focuses on exploring teacher professional learning, positioning it as one that capitalises on moments of discomfort, disjuncture, and deliberation. Theoretically, the paper is informed by Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and reflexivity; Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning; and Boler and Zembylas’s notion of pedagogy of discomfort. The data are drawn from empirical observations taken from a number of studies involving early childhood teachers working in Victoria, Australia. Our research suggests that transformative teacher professional learning through moments of discomfort, disjuncture and deliberation (a) is context-dependent, (b) capitalizes on professional lived-experiences and the prior knowledge of teachers, and (c) manifests in changes in professional dispositions. These findings have informed the development of a model to guide critical deliberations on practice to uncover contradictions and inconsistencies relating to beliefs, understandings and practices, to enable teachers to be adaptive professionals.

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## Parent-child emotional resonance: How does parental responses to emotions to promote preschool children's emotional regulation?

**Tingting Shao, Qianqian Liu, Xiumin Hong**

Parents' supportive and nonsupportive responses to children's negative emotions are the key factors influencing children's emotional socialization, and can also shape children's social adaptability. So based on the family system theory, we tested a mediation model in which parental responses to children's negative emotions impacted children's social adaptation by mediating their emotional regulation ability. We also examined whether this model varied as functions of the number of children in the family and gender. Data from 927 Chinese families with preschool children were analyzed. The result shows that supportive parental responses to emotions were positively related to children's emotional regulation and social adaptation, while nonsupportive responses were negatively related to their emotional regulation and social adaptation. Children's gender had a significant moderating effect in models with supportive parental responses as the independent variable. Supportive parental responses had a stronger impact on the social adaptation of boys than girls. When the independent variable of the mediating model was nonsupportive parental responses, the moderating effect of the number of children in the family was significant. Nonsupportive parental responses had a stronger impact on children's emotional regulation ability in the single-child groups than for children with siblings. The results of this study contribute to understanding the relationship between parental responses to emotions and children's social adaptation and the mechanism by which children's emotional regulation plays a role. What's more, the study also provide new evidence supporting interventions to improve children's social adaptation from the perspective of family, parents, and group differences.

## Supporting preschool children's health and well-being through SMS messages

**Associate Professor Kym Simoncini**

Families are children's first and most important teachers. However, research shows that families vary in their ability to support children's health, well-being and learning at home due to different levels of skills, confidence and knowledge. Family interventions aimed at increasing parents' skills in supporting their children's development and learning are labour-intensive and expensive. In contrast, text messages are low-cost and scalable. Text messages are non-intrusive and can provide bite-sized bits of information available for engagement when convenient. In this presentation, we describe a pilot study that replicated two US studies' use of text messages to increase children's language and literacy development utilising everyday family activities. Approximately 70 families with preschool children in the ACT received three text messages, consisting of one fact and two tips a week, for 18 weeks. Families were randomly assigned into either the language and literacy group or general child development group. The latter group received messages about sleep, nutrition, physical activity and screen time, play and school readiness. Measurement of the impact of text messages on children's development was not feasible due to COVID-19 constraints. We were able to measure parent knowledge and perceptions of the pilot project pre and post-text messages. Of the parents who completed the surveys (n=51) 88% said the text messages were useful and 92% would recommend the program to other parents. Both sets of messages were equally valued by

parents. Our study included highly educated and high-income families, while previous research in the US comprised more disadvantaged families. Our findings suggest that text messages about early language and literacy and general child development are useful to all families. We discuss future research directions and scalability. While not a silver bullet, SMS messages have great potential in all countries and can promote children's health and well-being and support parents and caregivers.

## **New forms of connecting communities with childcare: From children's conditions as seen in the Project OSANPO intergenerational exchange program**

**Dr. Masako Yoshizu, Dr. Hirotsugu Tazume**

The word "rehabilitation" comes from the Latin re-habilis, which means to return to a habituated state. Reflecting this etymology, this project proposes intergenerational exchange starting by strolling with children using a new short-distance mobility solution called "re-hajime no ippo" ("a new first step").

Specifically, it creates opportunities for exchange by encouraging seniors in rural communities, for whom opportunities to go out have become less frequent, to participate in the walks that children take every day. It adopts a short-distance mobility solution in anticipation of cases in which seniors may find strolling difficult due to their physical conditions.

The results showed the potential for learning by the participating children (on subjects such as verbal communication and interaction with social activities) through sharing with seniors the time and space of Project OSANPO walks.

This presentation will discuss prospects for future projects through in-depth consideration of children's appearances in the program, their words, and pictures they drew.

## **Mindful parenting and trajectories of Chinese migrant preschool children's social-emotional development**

**Ms Chunyuan Xi, Ms Jiayi Li, Dr Lixin Ren**

Mindful parenting has been positively associated with children's mental health and psychological outcomes (Duncan et al., 2009; Henrichs et al., 2021; Moran et al., 2022). However, research linking mindful parenting and child social-emotional development is still lacking, particularly in Chinese culture. The primary goal of this study was to investigate the role of mindful parenting in predicting trajectories of social-emotional development among Chinese migrant preschoolers. A total of 108 migrant preschoolers (Mage = 61.28 months at T1, SD = 3.62, 49.07% girls) participated in three measurement occasions over one year. Parents completed questionnaires on their mindful parenting and children's self-regulation. Children's behavioral regulation, emotion knowledge, and social problem solving skills were assessed by using individual assessments. Latent growth curve modeling was used. The results showed that children's social-emotional competence increased from T1 to T3. In addition, several aspects of mindful parenting positively

predicted the initial level of migrant preschool children's self-regulation. However, two aspects of mindful parenting (i.e., emotional awareness of the child and interacting with full attention) were negatively related to children's emotion knowledge. Moreover, we did not find a significant association between mindful parenting and children's behavioral regulation and social problem solving skills. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between mindful parenting and preschoolers' social-emotional development, which would provide promising information for future interventions aimed at promoting migrant preschool children's social-emotional development.

## **An action research on the professional community construction of male kindergarten teachers: A case study of M-District male kindergarten teachers salon**

### **Mr Zhang Le**

With the development of the times, preschool education now has been rapidly developing. Both the country and the people are eager for high-quality preschool education. In this process, enhancing the professional standards of early childhood teachers is an important measure to achieve the objective of high-quality preschool education, and building a professional community of teachers is one of the important methods to promote the professional development of post-service teachers.

A teachers' professional community is a team in which teachers' professional level can be enhanced through professional mutual assistance and sharing. Previous researches at home and abroad show that for teachers, a teachers' professional community can improve the isolation of teachers emotionally, and for the professional development, promote their teaching improvement through mutual communication and sharing; for schools, it can change schools' internal culture and cultivate the sense of collective responsibility; for students, it can finally promote students' learning by improving teachers' teaching practice.

Led by the District Education Bureau, M-District Male Early Childhood Teachers Salon has a history of more than 8 years since the establishment, and in this process, a lot of forms, such as collective teaching and research, micro-courses, lectures are used to improve the professional standards of regional male early childhood teachers. Cross-school and cross-discipline, teachers' independent participation, regular activities and various contents and forms are its features.

Based on analysis, its members reflect the characteristics of overall young age, high educational level, many permanent teachers, wide post distribution and professional title level to be improved. Then, according to the salon activities, a detailed analysis was made on the time, places, participants and contents of these activities. After the study, it is found that there are still some problems in the salon, such as lack of opportunities to build emotional connections, excessive concentration of power and cooperation efficiency to be improved. The main reasons are the large mobility of male early childhood teachers in the region, the contradiction between salon activities and their own work, and much rich resource support required by the salon.

In the past year's course of action, the development of teachers' professional community was enhanced by changing the contents and forms of activities and delegating power to the lower levels. On this basis, the experience, achievements and problems in the process of community development were summarized, and the basic strategies to promote the



development of teachers' professional community were put forward. By this action, it is found that the activities of a teachers' professional community can not conflict with daily teaching work, teachers' professional community activities cannot be successful without the cooperation and support of kindergarten leaders, and a close emotional connection was needed to be built for a teachers' professional community outside the community activities. Finally, we concluded that for a teachers' professional community, members' enthusiasm is needed to be stimulated, a good external environment support is required, and experienced organizers are essential.

## **Competency of early childhood teacher educators: The perspectives of teaching and research officers in China**

**Dr Sijie Zhao, Dr Wenting Zhu**

**Abstract:** The quality of teacher education and teacher educators is critical to the quality of the teaching workforce and the education system as a whole. China now has a nationwide teaching and research system, with trained and dedicated teaching and research officers employed by educational administrative departments. However, we still do not know enough about the competency of early childhood teaching and research officers. This study aimed to explore the competency of early childhood teaching and research officers in China. 634 Chinese early childhood teaching and research officers were investigated. Using interviews and questionnaires, and drawing on the onion model, we developed Teaching and Research Officers' Competency Scale. Then, based on this scale, descriptive statistics and potential profile analysis were used to explore competency status. The results indicated that: (1) Teaching and Research Officers' Competency Scale included five dimensions that incorporate intrinsic motivation, professionalism, instructional guidance, research leadership, and coordination and innovation, showing good reliability and validity. (2) Chinese teaching and research officers' competency were generally good. (3) Four latent profiles of competency emerged: low, middle, upper-middle, and high competency. (4) Teaching and research officers with working experience in kindergarten and professional background in education were more likely to have higher levels of competency. This research developed and validated a scale to evaluate the competency of early childhood teaching and research officers. It also provides evidence in key areas to support the sustainable development of teaching and research officers.