

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 17

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Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is, essentially a Western view of childhood, preschool education and school education. It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series will:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
- Explore policy imperatives which shape and have shaped how early childhood education is enacted across countries
- Examine how early childhood education is researched locally and globally
- Examine the theoretical informants driving pedagogy and practice, and seek to find alternative perspectives from those that dominate many Western heritage countries
- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
- Examine concept formation from within the context of country-specific pedagogy and learning outcomes

The series covers theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series also covers a broad range of countries, including majority poor countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies, will also be examined. However, the focus is critical and international (not Western-centric).

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/7601>

Claire J. McLachlan • Alison W. Arrow
Editors

Literacy in the Early Years

Reflections on International Research
and Practice

 Springer

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Preface

Research suggests that children begin to develop understandings of literacy from birth, and emerging curriculum policy in many countries states that children's language and literacy learning during early childhood lays the foundation to later success in compulsory schooling. In some cases, these emergent literacy policies have been followed by local or national investment in particular approaches to supporting children to become literate, with mixed success. However, many approaches to teaching literacy in the early childhood curriculum have been based on rhetoric, ideology, theorizing, or limited research findings, rather than on recent robust evidential research.

Early research on literacy acquisition in children prior to school entry was termed "emergent literacy," building on the research with children learning to read on starting school and the term coined by Dame Marie Clay. Although most of the researchers in this volume identify with the notion of being researchers of emergent or early literacy, the term "early multi-literacies" has been used by the editors to encapsulate the breadth and scope of the studies of early literacy reported in this volume. It also captures the new foci of research in this field since its inception in the late 1970s. The international team of researchers represented in this book all share a common interest in how young children develop a range of literacy knowledge and skills, and many of the research studies also examine the role of teachers, parents, and other children in children's literacy acquisition. Many of the researchers have drawn on sociocultural theories to explain the multifaceted nature of children's literacy learning through oral, visual, aural, digital, and multimodal means, situated within a range of social, cultural, and educational contexts.

This edited collection provides an up-to-date and in-depth exploration of different aspects of contemporary early childhood literacy research, the types of research methodologies being used, and the implications for educational practice. The scope of the book ranges from a focus on children, their perceptions of literacy learning, and the interrelationships with those around them to the challenges that cultural and linguistic diversity pose in literacy learning in early childhood classrooms. It also explores specific aspects of literacy learning, such as writing and morphological

awareness, new issues related to the use of digital technologies in literacy learning, and issues related to the professional learning of teachers.

Each chapter details how the research was done and any issues that researchers encountered in collecting data with very young children, as well as detailing what the research findings mean for educational practice. The ways in which each study contributes to the growing body of research on early multi-literacies are clearly outlined by the authors. The book contains tables, figures, and images, as well as detailed explanations of research methods and their limitations, so the studies can be replicated or expanded upon. Key features for promoting effective literacy practice in early childhood settings are proposed by the authors. This book is an essential read for postgraduate students, researchers, and teachers who are interested in exploring the complexities and challenges of researching, supporting, or planning curriculum for literacy acquisition in the youngest children.

We hope that you enjoy this collection, which provides insights into the literacy worlds of children in diverse countries, as much as we have enjoyed working with all the authors to bring this collection to fruition. We hope that the ideas presented in this collection will inspire another generation of researchers of early multi-literacies.

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Palmerston North, New Zealand

Claire J. McLachlan
Alison W. Arrow

Acknowledgments

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Second, we would like to thank the contributors, who responded so enthusiastically to our message asking for contributions to this volume. It has been a pleasure to work with a group of people who share our interest in early literacy, although their research stems from many different perspectives. All authors have been a delight to work with as we have gone through the reviewing and editing processes that such a volume requires. We have greatly appreciated their timeliness and the thoughtfulness with which each has written and revised their respective chapters.

Third, we need to thank Distinguished Professor William Tunmer for his assistance with reviewing chapters, when he was recovering from surgery. We both want to acknowledge the contribution that Bill Tunmer has made to our professional careers and his influence on our thinking about the literate cultural capital that children acquire in early childhood.

Finally, we want to thank our families for their love, support, and understanding. Claire would especially like to thank her husband, Simon, for his tolerance as yet another book project got completed in weekends when there was gardening to be done. Claire would also like to dedicate this book to her grandchildren, whose language and literacy development is a constant source of delight and interest. Alison would like to thank her husband, Nick, for his patience as weekends were whittled away. Alison would like to dedicate the book to her children, Paige and Emma, who inspire her work every day.

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