

F1 EARLY EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY 6

Individual Paper

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Being ourselves: Stories of identities and linguistic possibilities of bilingual teachers and children in English-medium early childhood services

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This research reports on a small study that examines the ways in which bilingual teachers use their languages in English medium early childhood education services in Aotearoa New Zealand and addresses questions regarding the possible mediation of bilingual identities for teachers and children. Changing demographics in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Government demands for full participation early childhood education have led to an unprecedented increase in the number of under three year olds from bilingual families in ECE services. Critical multiculturalism drives questions regarding social justice and the impact on children from linguistically diverse backgrounds particularly in relation to acquisition and development of their home/community languages and identities in the absence of government languages policy. A qualitative methodology employing Narrative Inquiry, together with a spiral discourse or 'conversation' approach for data collection is used to interrogate the 'small stories' of bilingual activity of five bilingual teachers. The collaborative insights from each teacher's thick descriptions provide the foundation for further analysis. Findings illustrate the use of two languages as critical linguistic and cultural resources for emerging bilinguals in English medium early childhood services. Bilingual teachers as trusted agents for the educational and home language communities work co-generatively, 'doing self as bilingual teacher' to mediate bilingual identities for themselves and for young children. Voices of bilingual teachers working powerfully construct a critical bilingual praxis to counter deficit discourses of bilingualism in Aotearoa/New Zealand that can serve to guide policy and practice to secure bilingual identities for very young children from bilingual families.

Keywords: bilingual identities; home/community languages; critical bilingual praxis

Developing curriculum guidelines for early childhood education in São Tomé & Príncipe – The challenges and virtues of a collaborative work

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This presentation intends to share the experience of a project aiming to develop curriculum guidelines, strengthen educators and improve early childhood education in a poor African country, São Tomé and Príncipe. Curriculum development in a difficult context where preschool teachers have no or minimal training and have to face several and continued difficulties, needing to change their established practices in order to focus on curriculum guidelines, planning and evaluating their pedagogical practices, based on a continuous collaborative team work (Portugal & Aveleira, 2009; Van Sanden & Joly, 2003). The development of the project implies a collaborative work involving UNICEF, local Ministry of Education, the researcher and field professionals. Its development goes on through different phases: 1 Characterization of the local situation; 2 Development of initial versions of curriculum

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guidelines for early childhood education, considering the local reality, existing official documents, perspectives of partners, difficulties and potentialities; 3 Constitution of a local supervision team to monitor and support the implementation process of the final version of curriculum guidelines in the field; 4 Evaluation of the impact of the curriculum guidelines. Respect for diversity of perspectives, well-being and involvement of participants are assured. Some reflections and data concerning the first three phases of this challenging work will be presented: characterization of the situation and initial expectations, developed processes, difficulties and main achievements. In order to sustain the dynamic activity and the functional structure implemented within the project, an enabling environment is required. This implies political will and commitment and, above all, adequate teacher training must be seen as a basic need.

Keywords: early childhood education in São Tomé and Príncipe; curriculum guidelines; collaborative work

Kindergarten readiness: A bioecological approach to understanding the resiliency of young children in poverty

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Children in poverty are at-risk for not developing the requisite academic, psychomotor and social skills necessary for kindergarten. Social scientists fundamentally believe that risk factors predict negative outcomes for children. This study examined influences that act as mediators in ameliorating negative consequences associated with poverty. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development is the study's theoretical context. It posits that the child's development is shaped by the convergence of biological, environmental and social forces. Subjects were 2,653 boys and 2,674 girls from the ECLS-K data set identified as low-socioeconomic. MANOVA was used to analyze the differential effects of bioecological factors (independent variables: biological, home, school influences) on kindergarten readiness factors (dependent variables: academic, psychomotor, social skills). The data that were analyzed for the study that was submitted to the EECERA 2012 Conference were part of a longitudinal data set collected by the United States Department of Education to be used by researchers using secondary data analysis approaches. Participant consent was collected by the US Department of Education and the individuals from whom data were collected and analyzed were coded so that confidentiality and anonymity of the participants was preserved. In what concerns main findings: 1. Academic readiness (reading, mathematics) was differentially affected by biological (sex, birth-weight, kindergarten entry age), home (parent education, home language), and school factors (kindergarten schedule). 2. Psychomotor readiness (fine and gross motor) was differentially affected by biological (sex, birth-weight, kindergarten entry age), home (parent education, home language), and school factors (kindergarten schedule). 3. Social-competence readiness (approach to learning, interpersonal) was differentially affected by biological (sex, birth-weight, kindergarten entry age), home (parent education, home language), and school factors (kindergarten schedule X teacher certification interaction). Findings imply that low-SES children should be distinguished according to biological, home and school factors. Instructional differentiation reflecting these factors are described and discussed.

Keywords: kindergarten; poverty; school readiness

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