

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

'Mirror, Mirror.....'

Associate Professor Kerry Robinson from the Centre for Educational Research and Cristyn Davies from Semann & Slattery are using innovative research methods to explore how processes of reflection and critical thinking could improve diversity and inclusion in early childhood education. This research has been funded by Child Australia in Western Australia.

'In the latter part of 2009 the Australian Government began to roll out new principles and policies to deliver consistent early childhood education quality across all States and Territories in Australia' Davies and Robinson commented. 'These principles were underpinned by a focus on equity and respect for diversity. Previous research tells us that one way to achieve improvements in inclusive practices is to ask early childhood educators and facilitators to think deeply and critically about the policies and practices in their workplace and to identify possible solutions to problems. This process is called "critical reflection" or "reflexivity", and forms the basis of this research project by involving early childhood professionals in analysis of specific inclusion areas such as cultural diversity, Indigenous issues, gender and sexuality, refugee issues, foster children and disability.'

Online surveys of early childhood centre and services staff will be conducted to explore existing policies and practices around reflective practice, diversity, difference and inclusion. Surveys will also allow early childhood professionals to nominate to participate in the next phase, in which they will choose an issue that will form the basis of an action research project and of a reflective journal. Investigators will use these journals and findings from the action research projects to construct short ethnographic plays illustrating effective strategies or common pitfalls in dealing with diversity and inclusion. These plays will be developed in conjunction with participants and will become a key



resource for educators and other professionals in the workplace and educational sector.

This project will provide a mechanism for transforming the way early childhood centres address diversity and difference, and build capacity of early childhood staff for critical reflection. This may provide the basis for realising the Australian Governments objectives to make early childhood education more inclusive and more understanding of difference; giving young children a healthy start to life by improving their respect for themselves and others.

Project Title: Using performed ethnography for reflective practice with early childhood education professionals

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