

**Curriculum Support Officer – Race Equality,
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I would like to offer warm thanks to all of the staff at the CEIEC for making me feel so welcome and for taking the time to share their remarkable work with me. I am grateful also to Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), the lead organisation for curriculum development in Scotland, who funded this study visit and made this experience possible for me. The Scottish Government, are keen to promote Scottish education and to encourage teachers to participate in international study visits in order to promote professional dialogue between teachers, practitioners and researchers.

I chose to visit the centre because I had become aware of some of the research that had been done by centre staff on issues such as race, gender and cultural identity. These research findings were particularly interesting to me not only because the research was focused in the early years through genuine consultations with young children but also because the research used postcolonial and poststructuralist approaches.

I plan and deliver training sessions for teachers and early years educators on Anti-racist education, Persona Dolls and Global Citizenship and am often told by colleagues that young children are not aware of prejudice or stereotyping therefore there is no need to 'do' anti-racist work with them.

The research evidence from the CEIEC has been invaluable to me, during these discussions with staff, as I have been able to use it to challenge and deconstruct some of the perceptions that teachers and practitioners have about how young children think and respond to race issues.

My Objectives for the study visit were to –

- Discuss recent research findings on race, gender, children's rights and participation and cultural identity and diversity.
- Develop an international partnership that would open professional, reflective dialogue on how to ensure that research findings inform practice particularly in light of ACfE.
- Further develop my skills in Persona Doll Training in order to promote equity in nursery and early primary
- Share good practice
- Contribute to the undergraduate programme at the University as a visiting speaker
- Consider an international perspective to the research that I plan to do for the Masters degree in Equality and Discrimination.

Activities Undertaken –

Before visiting the centre, I had read some of the research papers published by the centre including “Beyond ‘Othering’: rethinking approaches to teaching young Anglo-Australian children about indigenous Australians” by Glenda MacNaughton and Karina Davis. I was struck by similarities between this formal research and the ‘anecdotal evidence’ that I have collected as a practitioner. It seemed to me that Anglo-Australian children’s stereotyped views of indigenous Australians were very similar to the stereotyped views that indigenous Scottish children can have towards those they perceive as ‘others’ - in particular black or Asian (heritage) children. I had also begun to read Glenda’s fascinating and powerful book “Doing Foucault in Early Childhood Studies” and this tied in with the work I have been doing on ideology and the politics of education as part of my post graduate course at Strathclyde University.

During my visit I was able to download various articles from the IJEIECE and spend time reading and reflecting on these. I then had the opportunity to meet with some of the centre researchers to discuss their work further and to consider with them the implications for practice. I am particularly interested in how this important research evidence informs and transforms pedagogies and Initial Teacher Education.

I would like to thank Karina Davis, Jane Page, Prasanna Srinivasan, and Glenda Mac Naughton for taking time out of their very busy schedules to discuss their work with me.

Karina shared with me some of the findings so far on the Enhancing Relationships In Schools (ERIS) project. We discussed the challenges that teachers and practitioners can face when using anti-bias and anti-discriminatory approaches and the support that will be required for them.

The University has recently introduced a new Masters degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and I was asked by Jane Page to contribute to her module *Professional Culture, Dynamics and Change* by delivering a lecture to the students working on this. This was a really exciting opportunity for me and I was impressed by the module content and the enthusiasm and knowledge of the students.

These students have been considering the UNCRC, in relation to General Comment No. 7, and the implications and possibilities for early childhood practice and policy and so I based my presentation *Children’s Voices and Social Justice* around this. I posed the question - *What do we do when the voices of some children impinge upon the rights of others?* I was able to provide examples from my own practice of how we can use children’s voices to identify and challenge prejudicial attitudes, language and behaviours and invite those children to critically reflect and rethink. I gave the example of work I had done with 10 and 11 year old children on racism and discrimination linked to Article 2 of the Convention. The attitudes that had been absorbed by these older children reinforced my firm belief that ECE’s need to be

aware of young children's ability to absorb and manifest prejudice and racism and also require to have the skills and courage to gently challenge these in a proactive way.

I was also able to highlight the work of a colleague, Evelyn Anderson, who introduced the notion of *rights* to 4 year olds. The children were able to make informed decisions about what young children are entitled to: they agreed that all children had the right to a home, a family, healthy food and clean water and that they also had the right to play.

I was introduced to Faith Hill, currently writing up her PHD thesis on Human Rights Education (HRE), who discussed with me the importance and indeed the rights that children and young people have to HRE. Faith invited me to contribute to a lecture for first year teaching students on Human Rights in the classroom. I focused on work that I have just completed with 10 and 11 year old children on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and of how this led on to work on racism and modern forms of slavery, the UNCRC and the UDHR.

Faith introduced me to Gary Foley and I was lucky enough to be able to attend one of his lectures which focused on aspects of Australian history that were not in the taught curriculum. Historical omissions will inform a major exhibition and project on The Slave Trade that I am taking forward with teachers in August. This project will equip teachers to identify the omissions from history and use these to link the past and the present and present 'new truths' to children.

Prasanna Srinivasan, who is currently working with Karina Davis on the ERIS project, invited me to lecture to her 2nd year teaching students on anti-racist education. Again, this was an excellent opportunity for me to work with student teachers and I would like to thank Prasanna for giving me this opportunity.

I was also lucky enough to be able to meet with Glenda MacNaughton and to discuss with her aspects of her research work and training on the effective use of Diversity Dolls.

Outcomes

The short term outcomes of my visit to the CEIEC have already been realised in that I was able to discuss research findings, to share good practice through my work with students and to gain a valuable insight into the work being done at the University of Melbourne and in particular , at the CEIEC.

The study visit enabled me to establish professional dialogue with colleagues in Australia and I hope that this will be maintained over the coming years.

My conversation with Glenda has increased my knowledge of Diversity Doll work and the importance of research in using the dolls to find out where the children are starting from in terms of knowledge and attitudes.

The dissemination process within my own Council will initially be in the form of reports to LTS and presentations within Falkirk Council. However the long term outcomes, to promote social justice and equity through education, curriculum

innovation and transformative practice will require time to process the implications of the centre research and to consider how best to create opportunities for ECEs here in Scotland to reflect and enter into professional dialogue.

As a result of my visit I have decided to review the Diversity/Persona Doll work that has already begun here and to refine the training and support offered to practitioners. Along with the Parents Initiative Officer in Falkirk Council, I have invited nursery parents to join a focus group in order to identify issues and questions that parents and carers may have in relation to race equality. This will inform a series of planned parent workshops on race equality before using Persona Dolls with the children.

The knowledge and experiences that I have gained from this visit has been invaluable and will no doubt impact on my day-to-day work here in Falkirk but will also impact on the research that I hope to begin later this year in order to complete an MSc in Equality and Discrimination.

Elaine Watts 09.05.08