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Children's Rights at the University of Melbourne

The Children's Rights, Citizenship and Participation Initiative (CCPI) was established at the University of Melbourne in February 2009. It is funded through the University's Strategic Research Initiatives Fund (Vice-Chancellor's Interdisciplinary Steering Committee Grants) which supports the development of interdisciplinary work at the University. The initiative is led by a steering committee co-chaired by CEIEC members Dr. Kylie Smith and Professor Glenda MacNaughton.

CCPI aims to strengthen the growing interest in children's rights at the University of Melbourne and beyond and to facilitate interdisciplinary research of international standing into the issue. It has three phases:

Phase 1. Establish dialogue between key University of Melbourne academics in Education, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, Law and Arts who could contribute to a position paper on the inter-

disciplinary implications of young children's rights, participation and citizenship.

Phase 2. Promote dialogue between academics, policy makers and practitioners from diverse professional sectors such as health, law and education who wish to promote policies concerning children's participation.

Phase 3. Generate an agenda for future inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral research, training, policy development and publications on how to think about, practise and evaluate children's rights, participation and citizenship in diverse areas of civic life.

The committee as part of its work has initiated a public monthly Lunchtime Seminar Series on children's rights and participation.

The CCPI held its first 3 Lunchtime seminars:

29 April Seminar 1 'Children's Participation: Starting an Interdisciplinary Conversation' (John Tobin from Melbourne Law School and Margaret Coady from the CEIEC). More than 100 people attended this inaugural seminar. The audience included staff and students from a variety of Faculties... (continued on page 2)

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Welcome to Anne Farrelly



A warm CEIEC welcome to Anne Farrelly, who has joined us as Project Officer for the Vice Chancellor's Steering Committee on Children's Rights, Participation and Citizenship project (see CEIEC News 7.4 and above). Previously, Anne was a Research Assistant with the CEIEC's RESPECT project. Anne has a background in primary teaching and special education. Anne has an Arts/Law degree (Monash University) and a Postgraduate Diploma in History (University of Melbourne) and sits on the Victorian Institute of Teaching's Professional Conduct Panel. She has been part of the Enhancing Relationships in Schools Project, including the writing of a Cultural Diversity Curriculum, Psychology and the Law and Ethics Module (Latrobe University).



Action-research - Child care centres and schools as space for democratic practice

by Anke van Keulen, Director

Agency MUTANT, The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, we have yet to explore democratic citizenship with young children and their surroundings. A national governmental report stated that a democratic way of living in which citizens (including children and parents) participate in common practices (e.g. schools, child care centres) is not self-evident. There is a lack of places (such as schools or child-care centres) in which to practise democratic life and professionals lack the necessary competences to stimulate democratic citizenship. Moreover, democratic citizenship for young children is not considered to be self-evident.

Bureau MUTANT wants to explore these gaps and to contribute to democratic citizenship for young children in schools and child care centres. MUTANT is a specialist early childhood training agency, with particular experience in using action research with early childhood professionals to help them to respect cultural diversity. The CEIEC is collaborating in our 'democratic citizenship' project, bringing its expertise in action research and providing external project evaluation.

The project asks four questions:

- What competencies do early childhood professionals need to participate within their school/child-care centre?
- What competencies do early childhood professionals need to promote children's participation and democratic citizenship?
- How can training programs strengthen early childhood professionals' ability and willingness to promote children's participation and democratic citizenship?
- How can schools/child-care centres become spaces for democratic practice?

The project will run between 2009 and 2011 and is receiving financial support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, in The Netherlands. The project's pilot phase will focus on four Comprehensive Schools (Brede Scholen), each of which integrates a primary school, a child-care centre, a pre-school and after-school care.

For more information:

<http://www.mutant.nl/en/home.htm>

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and Graduate Schools, together with representatives from local organisations and government.

20 May Seminar 2 'How do we consider Children's Wellbeing from an interdisciplinary perspective?' (Dr. Carolyn Whitzman from the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning and Dr. Jane Page from the CEIEC). Another substantial and diverse audience was introduced to current debates around children's wellbeing.

17 June Seminar 3, 'Children's informed consent: ethical tensions and debate' (Prof. Mary Galea from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and Dr Kylie Smith and Ms Audrey D'Souza Juma from the CEIEC). This session raised questions around the diverse ways we can work with children to support their participation around informed consent.

If you'd like to be involved in the CPPI, please contact:

- Professor Glenda Mac Naughton, Director, Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC), Melbourne Graduate School of Education (gmmacn@unimelb.edu.au) 8344 7780
- Dr. Kylie Smith, Senior Researcher (CEIEC); Leader of the CEIEC's Children and Citizenship research program (kylieas@unimelb.edu.au) 8344 4084

For your diary: Future Lunchtime Seminars

July

Seminar 4: How are young children's participatory rights enacted through the Victorian Human Rights Charter?

Date & Time: Wednesday 15 July 1-2pm

Venue: Frank Tate Room, Alice Hoy Bldg.

August

Seminar 5: Children as researchers.

Date & Time: Wednesday 19 August 1-2pm

Venue: Frank Tate Room, Alice Hoy Bldg.

September

Seminar 6: United Nations General Comment No 7.

Prof. Martin Woodhead, Open University, UK.

Date & Time: Wednesday 16 September 1-2pm

Venue: Frank Tate Room, Alice Hoy Bldg.

October

Seminar 7: Children and risk: balancing protection and participation.

Date & Time: Wednesday 21 October 1-2pm

Venue: Frank Tate Room, Alice Hoy Bldg.

November

Seminar 8: Gender and children's rights.

Prof. Glenda MacNaughton (CEIEC) and Ms. Mercy M. Musomi (Exec. Director, Child Girl Network, Kenya)
Date, Time & Venue: TBA

Please contact Anne Farrelly (annef@unimelb.edu.au) for more information or to RSVP to any of the seminars.

The CPPI also shares its work through its website which is now live. Follow the work of the steering committee and/or contribute to it through the Children's Rights website.

For more information and to contribute to the CPPI's work: www.childrensrighs.unimelb.edu.au

CEIEC Staff Presentations

The CEIEC's Prof. Glenda MacNaughton and Dr Jane Page have given presentations at local and international events recently.

On 18 March, Glenda gave the Occasional address at the University of Melbourne Conferring of Degrees Ceremony; and in May, she gave a seminar on Action research to Professional Support Coordinators in Brisbane. Later in May, Glenda attended the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, where she presented a seminar ('Researching with young children: ethical issues and

challenges in qualitative research'). She then went to the Early Childhood Educators British Columbia Conference, presenting a keynote speech ('Inspiring children's rights in early childhood curriculum') and a workshop ('Dreaming of a Better World: How Practicing Critical Reflection Can Help'). Glenda then went to the Early Childhood Institute at the University of Victoria, BC, where she presented a seminar ('Equity and Respect for Diversity: critical meaning-making as a

key competency for professionals'). Finally, Glenda gave a keynote speech and a workshop at the New Zealand Early Childhood Council Conference in Rotorua, New Zealand.

On 30th April, Jane was invited by the Faculty of Economics, La Sapienza University in Rome, to lecture on 'Rethinking young children as citizens: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child'.

Children, Carer and Country Project holds its latest Learning Circle

The Children, Carer, and Country (CCC) project's eighth Learning Circle was held at Kimberley TAFE in Broome on 2nd and 3rd of May. The theme was Culturally Relevant Curriculum for Children: Storyboards and Storytelling and the event aimed to build confidence in creating stories for young children through art.



Bessie Ejai, Bardi elder

Participants discussed how they could use Kriol and traditional Indigenous language to tell their stories to young children; and Bessie Ejai, a Bardi elder, spoke about her work with One Arm Point School and showed books created to strengthen first languages and to teach children about Indigenous cultures.



A storyboard produced by a Learning Circle participant

The Learning Circle's guest presenter was graphic designer Sarah Mist, from Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency. The Agency assists Indigenous communities in Fitzroy Crossing to use traditional and

contemporary art and artifacts to improve their living conditions. Sarah showed how to create storyboards using ink, textured paper and natural materials, such as sticks, leaves and flowers; then invited participants to create their own storyboards.

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Bayulu Women's Group

The Bayulu Women's Group has been part of the CEIEC's Children, Carer and Country Project. Amidst great excitement and celebration, the Bayulu women's group collected a 'troop carrier' in Broome on 1st of May. This was the culmination of two and a half years of preparing a grant application, submitting it to Lotterywest (see CEIEC News 7.4 and 8.1) and then waiting, waiting for the answer. A big CEIEC congratulations to all involved!



Members and friends of Bayulu women's group

First meeting of the Program Development Learning Group for the JLICED Project

The CEIEC is a key player in the multi-country Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Diversity (JLICED) (see CEIEC News 7.1 and 8.1) and in May this year, the CEIEC's Dr. Karina Davis went to Ghent, Belgium to attend the first meeting of the JLICED Program Development (Racial and Ethnic Divisions) Learning Group. This Learning Group consists of practitioners, policy makers and academics from Belgium, Mexico, Columbia, Argentina, Bosnia, Israel, Australia, Paris, The Netherlands and Morocco; and it is exploring programs programs that support communities in areas of cultural and ethnic division to living together respectfully.

The Learning Group met for two days to discuss its work so far and to begin to identify such programs. Learning group members are now writing a working paper about such programs, which it will then distribute throughout the JLICED. On the third day, Learning Group members gave presentations about the Group's work to an audience of undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Ghent, who were joined by policy-makers and practitioners from Belgium and beyond.

The Learning Group meets next in Mexico in January 2010. For more information: www.jliced.org

Postgraduate Student Profile: Sharon Saitta



I am in my first year of a part-time Masters Degree by Research, after obtaining a BECS (Hons.) from the University of Melbourne in 2007. In my Masters research, I will investigate how a group of children between the ages of two to five years and their teachers improve their understandings and enactment

of a children's rights curriculum on a daily basis within an early childhood service. My interest in children's participation within the early childhood curriculum began some ten years ago. At that time, my colleague Maureen and I were involved in a classroom project that actively invited a group of one to two year old children to contribute their ideas and choices to their weekly program. Subsequently, I became involved in several action research studies into equity and social justice in early childhood spaces. Those experiences, plus my return to tertiary studies, stimulated my interest in how teachers can facilitate and foster democratic participation between children and adults within early childhood classrooms. I am the Co-Director of the Swanston Street Children's Centre, which is part of the University of Melbourne Children's Services. I'm very fortunate to work for Children's Services, because it actively supports staff who wish to undertake further studies and to pursue research leading to innovative and equitable practices. The outcomes have included improved program at the Centre, happier children and parents and recognition within the early childhood field at local and international levels.

International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (IJEIEC)



International Journal of Equity and
Innovation in Early Childhood

The International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (IJEIEC) aims to explore and advance early childhood education and thinking about childhood by publishing work that illustrates, extends, inspires and provokes innovative approaches. IJEIEC is an on-line, fully refereed international research and policy journal published by the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC). A list of the contents of past editions as well as information on how to subscribe is available at: <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/members/IJEIEC/index.html>

The next issue of IJEIEC will have a special focus on gender equality. We welcome papers that explore this topic. For information on submitting an article to IJEIEC visit: <http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/members/IJEIEC/index.html>



The Center for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood Education (CEIEC)

For more information on CEIEC research, resources & publications, memberships and details of upcoming events visit the CEIEC website at: www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec

Congratulations Prasanna!

At the Melbourne Graduate School of Education awards on 23rd June, the CEIEC's Prasanna Srinivasan received the annual Freda Cohen Prize for 'The most meritorious Master of Education research thesis'. Prasanna's thesis 'The inclusion of linguistic diversity in early childhood settings' explored theories of language development in early childhood and the connections of language to cultural identity using postcolonial theories and critical discourse analysis. Prasanna is currently working on completing her PhD. A big CEIEC 'Congratulations!', Prasanna.



CEIEC's 9th Annual International Conference

Key Dates:

31 July 2009 - Early Bird Registration deadline

19-21 November 2009 - CEIEC Conference!

The CEIEC will host its 9th annual international conference from 19-21 November 2009 at the University of Melbourne, Australia. The conference title is: Children's rights in research, policy and practice. This year's conference will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and we invite participants to engage in reflection and debate and to share practices and possibilities concerning children's rights in 2009 and beyond in different contexts and settings. A brief biography of each of the keynote presenters is below; for more information about the conference:

E-mail: education-ceiec-conference@unimelb.edu.au

Conference website: www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ceiec/conferences/conf09/index.html

Associate Professor Hillevi Lenz Taguchi, Stockholm University, Sweden

Hillevi is Associate Professor in Education at the Department of Education, Stockholm University. Her most recent book, *Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education: Introducing an intra-active pedagogy* (Routledge) will be published in August 2009. In this book, Hillevi summarizes her collaborative research over the last five years with preschool teachers, teachers and teacher educators.

Ms. Mercy M. Musomi, Executive Director of Child Girl Network, Kenya

Mercy is a Counselling Psychologist and mentors children of all ages (especially girls) on the importance of education despite their myriad challenges. She is also a lobbyist and a champion of children's rights. Mercy is currently Executive Director of The Girl Child Network, which was started in 1995 to implement the recommendations of the fourth world conference on women held in Beijing in 1995.

Professor Patricia G Ramsey, Mount Holyoke College, USA

Patricia is Professor of Psychology and Education at Mount Holyoke College. She is a former preschool and kindergarten teacher and received her Ed.D. in Early Childhood Education from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She has studied the development of children's attitudes about race and economic class and her research has led to the publication of scholarly articles, book chapters and books.

Professor Helen Penn, University of East London, UK

Helen trained as an infant teacher and taught in schools in London and Kent in the UK. She is now Professor of Early Childhood in the Cass School of Education where she works mainly on PhD programmes. Helen co-founded the International Centre for the

Study of the Mixed Market Economy (www.uel.ac.uk/icmec) which is a 'virtual' centre for information about the operation of the private sector in the field of early education and care. Helen has been a researcher in diverse areas, including the integration of care and education services. Currently, she is researching how early childhood education and care projects in South Africa are costed.

Ms. Geraldine Atkinson, Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood) of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care; President of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc., Australia

Geraldine Atkinson is a Bangerang/Wiradjuri woman who has devoted her career to expanding the possibilities available for Koorie people through education.

Beginning as an Aboriginal Teacher Aide in 1976, Geraldine has since worked extensively in the Victorian Aboriginal community in all sectors of education and has been involved with several Aboriginal community controlled organisations and services.

A recognized leader in Koorie education, Geraldine has been instrumental in negotiating and formalising education partnerships as President of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI), and is the representative for the national Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

Geraldine is Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood) of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and is also Chairperson of Lidje MACS (multi-functional Aboriginal children's service) and Batdja Aboriginal Preschool in Shepparton.