



Post-structural theorising in the context of *Te Whāriki*: working with difference and diversities

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Abstract

Considerable scope for working against injustice, inequity, discrimination and oppressions of the every-day exists within *Te Whāriki* and early childhood education, yet oftentimes when faced with a challenge, we resort to thinking and practice that does little to shift any inequitable status quo. For me this seems partly due to *our* reliance on historical and modern forms of thought – we try to be fair but treat everyone the same; we look to know people (ourselves and others) through stable and readily identifiable categories: boy/girl, abled/disabled; our discomfort with difference may make us shy away from change. In this presentation I plan to bring to the discussion different theoretical tools with which teachers may grapple, should they want to disrupt institutionalised and normalised thinking and practice. I will draw from my own research and work of others to bring queer theory and post structural thinking to the fore.

(pre-19/8/13) Andy said...



Two girls were playing and there was a boy as well, and they were wanting to do dress ups and have a wedding. The boy thought that he was getting married but it was going to be just the two girls and he got quite upset and threw a bit of a hissy-fit about the fact that the two girls were going to be getting married together, and told them that they couldn't... One of the girls... went on to say, "my mummy said it doesn't matter whether it's two boys or two girls, just as long as you love each other..."



Querying ece

- Queer theory
- Displacement of so-called 'normal' heterosexuality is the key project of queer scholars and queer research
- Decouple gender and sex
- Gender performativity



Querying ece



- How is heterosexual sexuality construed as normal, moral, healthy? (revealing heteronormativity)
- Heterosexual/homosexual binary
 - Binaries: sharp divisions in two
 - Oppositional
 - The 'standard' and the 'other'
 - Imbued with power
- What if we invert the binary?



Querying ece



- Queer theory
- How is heterosexual sexuality construed as normal, moral, healthy? (revealing heteronormativity)
- Heterosexual/homosexual binary
- Questioning 'normalcy' or 'norms'
- In early childhood education: the family / genders / sexualities are key constructs around which heteronormativity circulates



Pat:... I will not give out information to anybody apart from the guardians or the parents... I would have done it in the sense of saying to him, 'hey look this information we collect, on our enrolment form we say it's for the parents, so, I just need to get some approval. How about I ring dad...

Rona: mum, dad

Pat: and let him know... and then... I'm really happy to share this with you...



Stacey: ...like you said, that profile book is at that stage collected for the parents, and the parents only, and it's the parents'... wishes as to who they choose to share the information with... and it's not... up to us...

Pat: It's not our right to take that off the parents and who they want to share with... our enrolment form states that we... undertake children's learning journey books... and this is to be shared with the parents

Rona: the legal guardians

Pat: In a way, you have to go with that, that law. The legal I think, well I know here we do.

Who is being construed as parent?



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Parent means –

- i. The person (or people) responsible for having the role of providing day to day care for the child; and
- ii. May include a biological or adoptive parent, step parent, partner of a parent of a child, legal guardian or member of the child's family, whānau or other culturally recognised family group. (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.6)



Queer questions to ponder

- What gender norms do children impose on themselves and others?
- How do particular constructions of family come to dominate in the centre?
- What norms for sexualities prevail?

Bauman's undecidables



- As soon as we try to impose an order we exclude
- The stranger



“all societies produce their own kind of strangers, those people who do not fit the cognitive, moral, or aesthetic map of the world” (1997, p.17)

The stranger and difference



- The stranger is enticing but fearsome at one and the same time
- Fear of difference
- Difference as positive
- Difference gives us options for reframing what we know
- Different ideas give us alternative possibilities for action

The stranger and difference



“Each community to which a child belongs, whether it is a family home or an early childhood setting outside the home, provides opportunities for new learning to be fostered: for children to reflect on alternative ways of doing things; make connections across time and place; establish different kinds of relationship; and encounter different points of view. These experiences enrich children’s lives and provide them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to tackle new challenges.”

(Ministry of Education, 1996, p.9)