

## EDFD229 Assignment 2 - Portfolio & Reflective Statement

### Part 1. Portfolio

#### Inclusion & Diversity

KU Children's Service. (2016). *NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency*.

<https://www.inclusionagencynswact.org.au/home>

Each child holds distinct values and experiences according to their social and cultural worlds (Outcome 1). Therefore, educators must include and respect children's unique contexts and abilities in the Early Childhood learning environment. '*NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency*' strongly underpins the implementation of high-quality inclusive practices for overcoming participation barriers for all children. They recognise children's right to fully participate in their learning within an appropriate environment regardless of their background and ability. Also, they supervise the Inclusion Support Program (ISP) approved by NSW and ACT government bodies. I chose this web page as it consists of a clear structure of inclusion and diversity at the top corner and encompasses separate sections of 'for families', 'children's voices' and 'professional learning' for educators. From the resource, I was able to review detailed guidelines and resources in order to embrace inclusion and diversity and found how the ISP operates within strategic plans for individuals learners. Furthermore, I understood my role as a transdisciplinary key worker to share the knowledge of children's interests, learning, and skills with therapists and families for shared decision making. I found *NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency* highly effective for EC educators, services and families to expand their awareness of inclusion and diversity and promote support for all children (Outcome 2).

## **Social Cultural Environments**

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). (2021). *Child Family Community Australia (CFCA)*. <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca>

*Child Family Community Australia (CFCA)* is a resource for early childhood educators, policymakers, service providers, and practitioners who engage with Australia's children, families, and communities. *CFCA* is sponsored by the Australian Department of Social Services. They work collaboratively with professionals who support the welfare of children by allowing them to access various evidence-based articles, news and cater free educational programs. *CFCA* aim of making significant contributions to children and families who require support or protection fits my roles and responsibilities.

*CFCA* deals with numerous social and cultural matters that arise with children, families, and communities. I particularly liked how they divided the social and cultural topics into multiple sub-categories such as 'culturally and linguistically diverse families', 'family members and relationships', 'financial issues for families' and many others. *CFCA* will be a valuable resource to extend my knowledge of children's diverse social and cultural environments and provide a range of possible strategies for facilitating a responsive learning environment and build a deeper connection with children, families, and communities in the service. Therefore, *CFCA* is relevant with Outcome 1 and 5 as it demonstrates children and families' complex socio-cultural environment and emphasises the partnerships with early childhood professionals, families, and community members to create better outcomes for the child.

## **Social justice & Inclusivity**

Early Childhood Australia. (2021). *The Spoke - Early Childhood Australia's Blog*.

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au>

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is the leading early childhood corporation in Australia. ECA team works to achieve social justice, equity and all areas of children's education and care services. They value the inclusion of young children, families and early childhood professionals. I especially liked their slogan of 'Voice for Young Children', and their vision of 'Every young child is thriving and learning' as I agree with the importance of visible listening and treating children fairly to allow children to participate in their education to prosper. *The Spoke* is the ECA's blog for educators and encourages discussion of various topics. I could research that *The Spoke* has a large collection of articles on early childhood policy, research, and practices related to 'inclusion', 'ethics', and 'children's rights'. By subscribing the blog, I can receive the latest evaluations and resources from the profound early childhood leaders for my ongoing studies about social justice and inclusivity. Also, I will be able to critically reflection upon my ethical and professional responsibilities to ensure and promote equity with respect and cultural competence in the curriculum and learning environment (Outcome 4).

## **Advocacy & Leadership**

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA). (n.d.). *We Hear You*. <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au>

*We Hear You* is a blog run by ACECQA and the National Education Leaders. Their resource "contains feature articles and guest posts from a variety of contributors offering unique perspectives from the children's education and care sector." The National Education Leaders regularly provide practical guidance through implementing the National Quality Framework to meet expected outcomes for children, families and communities. *We Hear You* also promotes the rights and ideas of all stakeholders to receive a high level of advocacy and work towards empowering early childhood services and educators to build leadership by connecting with people through active communication and having common goals (Outcome 2).

I chose *We Hear You* because I found there were various topics for facilitating advocacy leadership, such as 'educational leadership', 'professional development', and 'collaborative partnership', which suits the key topic. This resource will be beneficial for me as an Early Childhood advocate and leader who must communicate and act out on behalf of children, families, colleagues, communities, and transdisciplinary members. Through continuous reflection and professional development, I will become capable of taking leadership and develop skills to advocate for all stakeholders and maintain a well-managed environment (Outcome 3).

## **Part 2. Reflective Statement**

### **Inclusion & Diversity**

As a preservice teacher, I am developing my skills and competencies to include all children to participate fully within and beyond the learning environment. From NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency, I discovered various information about applying inclusive practices and acknowledging diversity. I realised that inclusion is not about everyone being treated the same, or it is for children with disabilities or early intervention. Inclusion is for everyone with similarities and differences, and it requires careful consideration, accommodation and understanding of each child, family, and community. Previously, when I heard the word diversity, I could only think of cultural diversity, but now I realise that there is diversity for different gender, abilities, and situations. Diversity in the EC environment strengthens the broad awareness of various cultural backgrounds, family structures, religions, and capabilities. From NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency, I developed my teaching identity of inclusion and diversity.

There is a wide range of sources that highlights the importance of inclusion and diversity in EC settings. According to the Early Years Learning Framework, it states “that all children have the right to an education that lays a foundation for the rest of their lives, maximises their ability, and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages.” (DEEWR, 2009, p.5). Similarly, the National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1 and 3, emphasise child-centred responsive programs that include children’s needs and diversity of children, families, staff, and communities and ensure every child fully participates and explores in the inclusive play-based environment (ACECQA, 2012). Therefore, it is vital that Early childhood educators cater to inclusion and diversity in learning environments to support children to participate meaningfully and investigate different cultures, races, and abilities. However, to genuinely help the child and families, educators must communicate regularly and work together with the child, families, educators, communities, and educational practitioners to provide additional assistance.

## **Social Cultural Environments**

Children's identities and perspectives are changing within socio-cultural environments, experiences, and time periods. *AIFS* embraces children, families, and communities unique social and cultural settings and emphasises the environmental influence of children's development and learning. By looking carefully at various topics of *AIFS*, I was surprised that there are so many issues or concerns that can arise with children's diverse environments and how they can hinder children's wellbeing. As a professional advocate, *AIFS* was very beneficial for expanding my understanding of children, families, and communities' various circumstances and possible solutions for the topics such as abuse, relationships, and demographics.

Each child holds distinct interests and ideas in relation to their cultural and social contexts. According to Mallaguzzi, the pioneer of the Reggio Emilia Approach, describes 'the environment as a third teacher' and stresses the real-life and exploratory environment to empower children in their world (Rinaldi, 2013). Similarly, Bronfenbrenner conveys children's co-construction of knowledge and skills in socio-cultural contexts and encourages reciprocal interactions with responsive communications (Margetts & Hoy, 2018). Therefore, it is evident that "Knowledge flows within and throughout social contexts and has the potential to transform relationships and environments" (Blaise & Nuttall, 2011).

According to John Locke, children are active cultural citizens who build inclusive and diverse social relationships within a socio-cultural environment (Morrison, 2021). Therefore, it is essential that educators facilitate a range of socio-cultural setting where children can imagine and grow understandings of their surrounding worlds. Furthermore, AITSL Standard 2, also identifies educators responsibilities for creating and maintaining a supportive and safe learning environment relevant to children's circumstances, interests, and strengths (AITSL, 2018). I learnt how children's lives are as complex as adults and importance of developing a genuine attachment to understand each stakeholder's thoughts and expectations of children. Also, I must share my expertise through regular communications, planning and reflections of children's contexts by working collaboratively with the transdisciplinary team.

## **Social justice & Inclusivity**

I was always intrigued by social justice issues such as racial discrimination, the right to education and poverty. I believe my understanding of diverse social issues relates to my ethical obligations as a preservice teacher, and I must be genuinely concerned about inclusion, inequality, deprivation, and social justice in and out of the service. *The Spoke* articulates how to promote equitable relationships with all members by treating them as valuable members of the services regardless of their vulnerable situation, cultural background, or disability (ECA, 2021). They also highlight the socially just and inclusive pedagogy and practice in the child care services by giving children a voice and supporting children to engage in their lives and learning. This idea links with the National Quality Standard, “Element 1.1.6 Each child’s agency is promoted enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence of event and their world” and “Element 5.2.3 The dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times” (ACECQA, 2012). Therefore, educators must value children’s innate rights and employ children’s values, experiences and abilities in the learning programmes and environments.

English as my second language, I did not recognise the difference between calling ‘children with disability’ and ‘disabled children’. However, now I understand the importance of thoughtful consideration of language and not labelling it as a particular characteristic by using person-first language (Cologon, 2014). Moreover, I learned about teachers’ intentional leadership to foster innovation at the service and advocate for a more socially just society for children, families, and the communities (Hard et al., 2013). Therefore, educators must discuss the ideas and dilemmas of social justice and inclusion regularly to develop maintain an effective environment and develop deeper understanding of individual contexts (Blaise & Nuttall, 2011). Also, it is vital that educators work with colleagues, parents, community and specialists to receive appropriate advice and provide better support for families. Furthermore, I will always critically reflect on my teaching practice and environment to eliminate injustice and establish socially just environments to assure all children are equally participating in the early childhood environments.

## Advocacy & Leadership

My professional identity is developing over time. I am gradually expanding my understanding of professional and ethical responsibilities to improve the lives of all stakeholders by empowering each of them and exchanging clear communication to construct knowledge of children with diverse abilities and backgrounds. Also, I must promote shared goals with communities and transdisciplinary members “in order to enhance children’s health and wellbeing and advocate for the development and implementation of laws and policies that promote child-friendly communities” (ECA, 2021). *We Hear You* guides early childhood education care services and qualified educators’ building leadership and developing skills across the early childhood education sector. They draw on EC educators’ skills and abilities and design various evidence-based research to underpin advocacy and leadership.

The National Quality Standard, Quality area 7: leadership and service management articulates leaders responsibilities of building a secure environment, advocating others, and constantly improving the quality of care and education (ACECQA, 2012). Therefore, good leadership and management must consider diverse people's perspectives and contexts, and I believe advocacy leadership entails knowledge, professionalism, relationship and reflection. Therefore, as a preservice teacher, I will speak and act out on behalf of stakeholders' needs and interests and promote, protect, and collaborate to benefit all. Also, I will maintain the rights and voice of children and engage in professional relationships and ethical practices according to the social standard (Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, as a transdisciplinary key worker and educational leader, I must be respectful, knowledgeable and, communicate clearly with families, staff, communities and build a strong bond to achieve positive outcomes (ECII, 2013).

Throughout the semester, I realised that becoming a teacher is not just simply gaining more information or developing my knowledge of diverse theories and teaching practices, but it is also about establishing my own identity as a professional and ethical teacher who can lead, advocate, include, respect, and facilitate an efficient learning environment for children, family, educators, and communities.



## References

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), (2012). *National Quality Standard*. <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2018). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>
- Blaise, M., & Nuttall, J. G. (2011). *Learning to teach in the early years classroom*. Oxford University Press.
- Cologon, K. (2014). Inclusive Education in the Early Years: Right from the start. Oxford: Australia Chapter 3 - More than a label? The power of language
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2009). *Early years learning framework*. <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/2632>
- Early Childhood Australia (ECA). (2016). *ECA's Code of Ethics core principles*. <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/code-of-ethics-core-principles/>
- Early Childhood Intervention and Inclusion (EICC). (2013, July). *The Transdisciplinary Key Worker* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqzellXaKhY&t=2s>
- Hard, L., Press, F., & Gibson, M. (2013). "Doing" social justice in early childhood : the potential of leadership. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 14(4), 324–334. <https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2013.14.4.324>
- Margetts, K., & Hoy, A. (2018). *Educational Psychology*. Melbourne: Pearson Australia.
- Morrison, T. (2021). EDFD229, WK 2 Lecture - Children and Families philosophical, theoretical and Progressive Approaches: Inclusion and Diversity [PowerPoint slides]. <https://leo.acu.edu.au/course/view.php?id=38180&section=-1>

Rinaldi, C. (2013). *Re-imagining Childhood: The inspiration of Reggio Emilia education principles in South Australia*. Retrieved from [https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reimagining-childhood.pdf?acsf\\_files\\_redirect](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reimagining-childhood.pdf?acsf_files_redirect)

Thomas, L. (2012). New possibilities in thinking, speaking and doing: Early childhood teachers' professional identity constructions and ethics. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 37 (3), 87-95.