“That’s what we are supposed to do”. Rethinking partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse families to ensure real inclusivity.

Dr Fay Hadley
Institute of Early Childhood
Sept 2014
Early Childhood Australia National Conference
Seasons of Change
Opportunities
The research aimed to:

1. Develop understandings of family-centre partnerships for culturally and linguistically diverse families.
2. Investigate the supports and constraints for teachers in developing family-centre partnerships.
3. Unpack how teachers respond to mandatory standards (EYLF and NQF) in relation to developing family-centre partnerships.
Partnerships with families is a critical element of optimum outcomes for children. In English speaking countries, children from diverse backgrounds less likely to achieve the same level of benefit from childcare as those who are native English speakers (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011; National Research Council, 2012).

Mismatch of cultural-linguistic backgrounds of parents and teachers jeopardises successful partnership building (Adair & Tobin, 2008; Cheatham & Ro, 2011; De Gioia, 2009; & Hadley, 2012).

Limited research about how partnerships are understood or enacted, especially when there is a mismatch between the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of families and teachers.
Professional Practice Theory

- Interconnections of cultural discourse (sayings)
- Material and economic factors (doing)
- Social political dimensions (relating)

Kemmis, 2009; Smith, Edwards-Groves, & Brennan-Kemmis, 2010
Australia has new national curriculum framework introduced in 2009 (EYLF)

Australia has new licensing standards (National Quality Framework) introduced 2012

In 2006 in Australia children from diverse backgrounds using child care = 12.3%

Participants

- 5 early childhood teachers
- 27 culturally and linguistically diverse families
- 4 childcare centres:
  - Not for profit
  - Supported by their organisation (not stand alone centres)
  - Sydney metropolitan area
  - Three centres situated within a university environment (two different universities)
Methodology

- A phenomenological approach
  - ‘phenomena’ through the eyes of the participants

- Analysis - parents and teachers values of partnerships (saying and relating) and how teachers utilised the Australia’s Early Years Learning Framework for building partnerships (doing).
Cultural backgrounds of parents

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

American Australia Bangladesh Chinese Filipino French Greek Iranian Korean Malaysia New Zealand UK Vietnamese

centre 1 centre 2 centre 3 centre 4
Ages of children

- Centre 1
- Centre 2
- Centre 3
- Centre 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Centre 1</th>
<th>Centre 2</th>
<th>Centre 3</th>
<th>Centre 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building partnerships is complex

- Surveys showed parents and teachers valued different experiences

- Communication about experiences differed – parents identified less communication compared to teachers
Practitioner Inquiry projects – Phase 3

- Introspection
- Focused
- Individualised
Not taking things for granted… a lot of communication. What I think what happened is sometimes we think families have different beliefs and we take it for granted for a lot of stuff. And the way we communicated we think it’s right. And we think we put in all that we can but the message is not clear. So ok we believe that they understand what we’re doing but they’re not. How can we figure that out? What are we doing next just to be sure that they understand and everyone is on the same page? (teacher 1)
So when I talk to parents I am thinking why am I telling them this and you know what's important about that and what can they see in that, what can we see from that. Do they understand me? (teacher 4)

They may understand…. they probably understand what they read but they don’t actually know how, why are we giving it to them. Why, that’s relevant to them and how it actually links to their child learning’s and their child’s day (teacher 4)
Pretty much connecting. That’s massive to me. I think it’s really interesting, I think the views are really interesting as well and other people’s views. And when I talk to people about cultures, multicultural in general. It’s all really positive. And the main thing is that they are interested because everyone is curious about others. you know how they, live life things and like that. Cause you know, it different to how you do things, comparing. Things like that are fascinating (teacher 2).
Implications: saying, doing and relating

I never realised how important it was. I thought I knew, you know having worked for so long with so many different families. I know how important relationships are. And how, you know, sometimes you have to step up and really make an effort for them. But I don’t think I’ve ever understood just or thought about how hard it must be for the families (teacher 4).
Partnerships are not definitive

Partnerships travel many roads
use it or lose it!

stretches us

many pathways
Joining the mosaic... connecting the neural pathways
Being connected = a sense of belonging

- Attitudes are powerful - it is in our hands to help families feel connected (Arnold, 2007, Waniganayake et al, 2012).
- Take risks - actions speak louder than words.
- Use your wisdom, share your culture
- EYLF – imbed in your practice (practice, practice, practice):
  - belonging
  - secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
  - partnerships
  - respect for diversity
  - cultural competence
  - continuity of learning and transitions
Contact and further reading

- Dr Fay Hadley
- Email: fay.hadley@mq.edu.au
- Phone: 02 9850 9833
- Address: Institute of Early Childhood
  Level 2, Rm 267, Building X5B
  Macquarie University NSW 2109
References

References