

Early childhood educators' intercultural ways of knowing: Calibrating knowledge, beliefs, and practice

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Background

Australian children are growing up in an increasingly diverse society.

- Over 300 different languages, including Indigenous language are spoken in Australian homes (ABS, 2016)
- In 2018 almost half (49%) of the population were people born overseas, or have at least one parent born overseas (ABS, 2019)
- In 2016-2017 it was estimated that over 1.6 million of Australia's culturally diverse children were accessing early childhood services (DEEWR, 2013)



Background

- Prejudice and negative racial attitudes and judgements can begin in early childhood between 3 and 6 years of age (Aboud & Amato, 2001; Harper & Bonanno, 1993; Raabe & Beelmann, 2011).
- Effective interventions must start in early childhood, before prejudice and negative attitudes are well established in adulthood (Dau, 2001; Levy & Killen, 2008; Quintana & McKown, 2008).
- Interculturally competent educators can have a positive impact on culturally diverse children's attendance, learning, and development; and play an important role in promoting respect for diversity and social justice (AIHW, 2015; Baxter & Hand 2013; Harrison, Goldfeld, Metcalfe & Moore, 2012; Hewitt & Walter 2014; Mann, Knight, & Thomson, 2011; Portera, 2014).



Educators' beliefs about diversity

- (e.g., Kumar & Hamer, 2013; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007; Prasad & Ebbeck, 2000)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

- (e.g., Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Durden, Escalante, & Blich, 2015)

Cultural Identity

- (e.g., Han, West-Olatunji, & Thomas, 2011; Marks, Patton, & Garcia Coll, 2010; Miller & Fuller, 2006)



Research Questions

1. How do early childhood educators make meaning of personal experiences with cultural diversity and how does this relate to their intercultural ways of knowing?
2. How might early childhood educators' intercultural ways of knowing relate to their practice?



Models of Intercultural Competence

Classification	Definition	Examples
<i>Compositional</i>	List hypothesised components (e.g., traits, characteristics, and skills) of intercultural competence.	(Deardorff, 2004; Howard Hamilton, Richardson, & Shuford, 1998)
<i>Co-orientational</i>	Concerned primarily with effective interactions and intercultural understanding (e.g., empathy, perspective taking, and shared meaning).	(Byram, 1997; Fantini, 1995)
<i>Developmental</i>	Focus on development of intercultural competence over time, specifying stages of maturity.	(Bennett, 1986; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005)
<i>Adaptational</i>	Emphasise interdependence and typically focus on interactions between members of different cultures; adaptation is seen as a criterion of intercultural competence.	(Kim, 1988; Navas et al., 2005)
<i>Causal process</i>	Detail the hypothesised interrelationships among components of intercultural competence.	(Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen, & Bruschke, 1998)

Deardorff's Intercultural Elements

Deardorff's (2004) Delphi study identified 22 key elements of intercultural competence, which were agreed upon by 80% of the experts (administrators and scholars).

COMPONENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE		
Accept	Reject	Item
20	0	Understanding others' world views
19	1	Cultural self-awareness & capacity for self-assessment
19	1	Adaptability - adjustment to new cultural environment
19	1	Skills to listen & observe
19	1	General openness toward intercultural learning
19	1	Ability to adapt to varying communication & learning styles
18	2	Flexibility
18	2	Skills to analyze, interpret, & relate
18	2	Tolerating & engaging ambiguity
18	2	Deep knowledge & understanding of culture (own & others')
18	2	Respect for other cultures
17	3	Cross-cultural empathy
17	3	Understanding the value of cultural diversity
17	3	Understanding of role & impact of culture
17	3	Cognitive flexibility – ability to switch frames
17	3	Sociolinguistic competence
17	3	Mindfulness
16	4	Withholding judgment
16	4	Curiosity & discovery
16	4	Learning through interaction
16	4	Ethnorelative view
16	4	Culture-specific knowledge/

Ways of Knowing: The Nature of Knowledge & Knowing

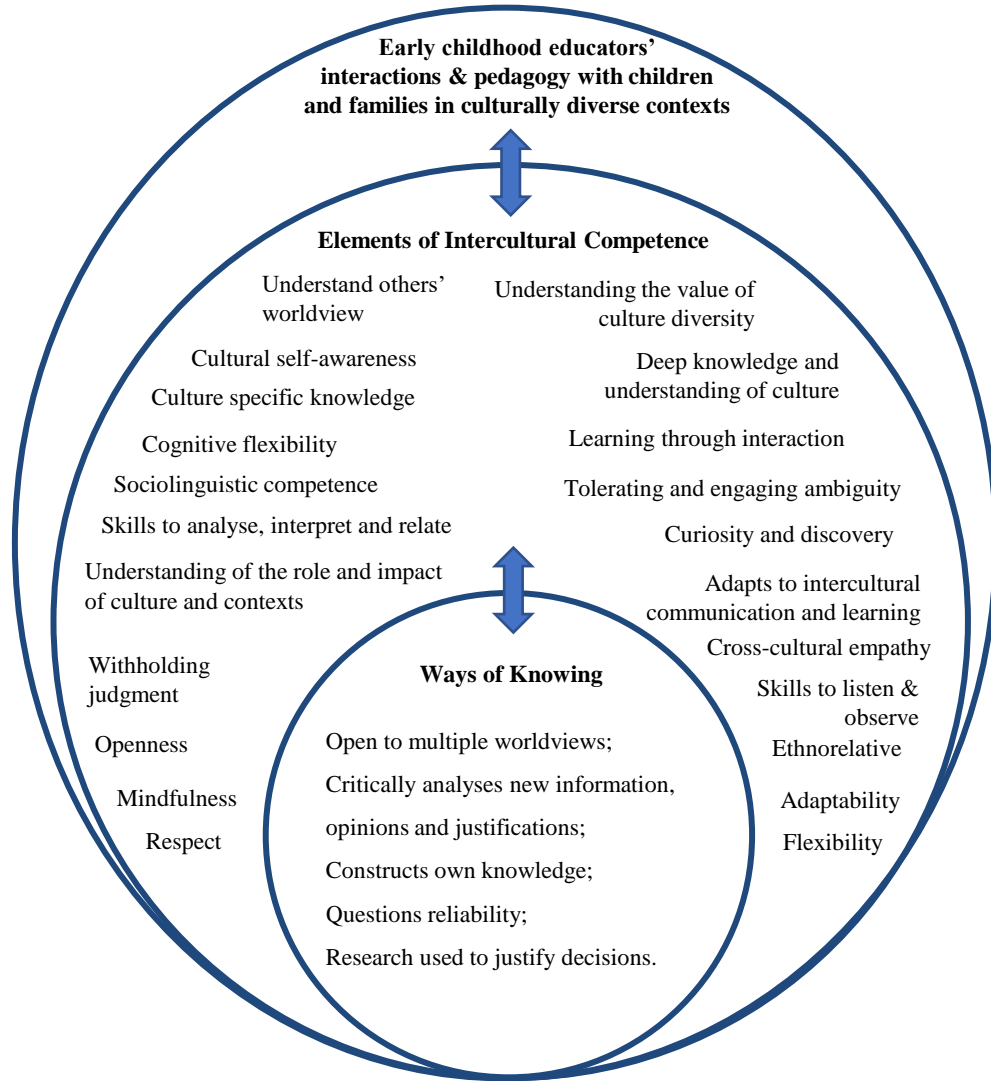
Nature of knowledge	Certainty of knowledge	Knowledge is absolute/unchanging (truths exist) → Knowledge is tentative/evolving
	Simplicity of knowledge	Knowledge consists of an accumulation of isolated facts → Knowledge consists of highly interrelated concepts (contextual)
Nature of knowing	Source of knowledge	Knowledge originates outside oneself/ in external authority → Knowledge is actively constructed through interaction with others and the environment
	Justification for knowing	Knowledge justified through observation and authority → Knowledge is justified through rules of inquiry and evaluation/integration of different sources (Hofer, 2004; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997).



Intercultural Ways of Knowing

- The EYLF and the NQS use the term “cultural competence” rather than “intercultural competence” or **“intercultural ways of knowing”**
- A cultural competence perspective refers to the development of a broad set of **cross-cultural skills and knowledge**; however this understanding often **remains external** to one’s identity, and **does not transform** existing “practices, attitudes, beliefs, and worldview” (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, p. 29).
- The term **“intercultural ways of knowing”** is preferable as it reflects the ongoing development of transformational understandings about culture that can act to **shift our ways of knowing, thinking, and ultimately our practices.**





Research Design: Multiple Case Study

- Stake's constructivist approach to case study allowed for holistic understanding through “thick description” and the production of particular knowledge rather than general knowledge (Stake, 2003, p. 140).
- Simons (2009) notes that particular case studies can resonate with others in similar contexts, allowing them to draw parallels and identify divergence with their own context, rather than broad generalisations.
- Multi method approaches, such as case study design, are required to adequately assess intercultural competence through observation of behaviours and self-report measures (Deardorff, 2009; 2015).



Participants & Kindergarten Contexts

Case	EC service & location	Service type	Other participants	Cultural demographics (ABS, 2013)	Top countries of birth other than Aus. (ABS, 2013)
1. Heidi	Wattle Road Early Learning Centre Rural	Privately owned and operated	Ellen (Director) Bronwyn (Owner)	Born OS 13.6% LOTE at home 8.7% Indigenous/TSI 6.2%	New Zealand, England, South Africa, Philippines & India
2. Bianca	Red Gum Early Education Centre Inner city	Privately owned and operated by an EC management service	Sarah (Director)	Born OS 19.4% LOTE at home 10.6% Indigenous/TSI 1.9%	New Zealand, England, India, Philippines & Vietnam
3. Yoo-Sun	Springtown Kindergarten Suburban	Community kindergarten	Carla (Director)	Born OS 55.5% LOTE at home 51.4% Indigenous/TSI 0.5%	China, New Zealand, Taiwan, India & Hong Kong
4. Vanessa	Seaside Child Care Rural	Privately owned and operated	Elizabeth (Director and Owner)	Born OS 17.1% LOTE at home 6.8% Indigenous/TSI 4.1%	England, New Zealand , Scotland, Wales & Germany
5. Maria	Riverwood Kindergarten Suburban	Community kindergarten	N/A (Maria shared the director role)	Born OS 32.3% LOTE at home 38.4% Indigenous/TSI 5.8%	England, New Zealand, India, China & South Africa

Data Collected

	Case 1: Heidi	Case 2: Bianca	Case 3: Yoo-sun	Case 4: Vanessa	Case 5: Maria
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 scenario interview 4 stimulated recall interviews 1 summarising interview <p>Ellen (Director)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 individual interview <p>Bronwyn (Owner)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 individual interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 scenario interview 4 stimulated recall interviews 1 summarising interview <p>Sarah (Director)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 individual interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 scenario interview 3 stimulated recall interviews 1 summarising interview <p>Carla (Director)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 individual interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 scenario interview 2 stimulated recall interviews 1 written response <p>Elizabeth (Owner/Director)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 individual interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 scenario interview 3 stimulated recall interviews 1 summarising p interview <p>No director at service.</p>
Observations	30 hours	28 hours (Bianca present for 16)	30 hours	28 hours	29 hours
Documents	<p>Kindergarten goals & philosophy</p> <p>Learning stories</p> <p>Policy documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programming Anti-bias/inclusion, Multicultural/ diversity Enrolment process, Orientation <p>Yarn Up booklet.</p>	<p>Bianca's philosophy</p> <p>Policy documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion and cultural diversity Programme philosophy <p>Website information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About us Goals Programs 	<p>Yoo-Sun's philosophy</p> <p>Policy documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion and cultural diversity Communicating with Families from CALD Backgrounds Programme philosophy 	<p>Kindergarten goals & philosophy</p> <p>Learning stories</p> <p>Policy documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-bias/inclusion Multicultural/ Diversity Communicating with parents 	<p>Kindergarten philosophy</p> <p>Family booklet</p> <p>Policy documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion Communicating with parents from CALD Backgrounds

Scenario Interview

Alia is a four-year old child who has recently been enrolled into a kindergarten program. During an orientation visit her mother observes that the children are encouraged by their educators to be independent and self-sufficient during meal times. At home Alia is spoon fed at all meal times, for Alia's mother it is important that this continues at kindergarten. The educators have an understanding that the National Quality Framework encourages children to become independent and take increasing responsibility for their health and wellbeing. From this perspective, the request that Alia is spoon fed may become problematic.

- What would you do in this situation? Why?
- Do you think there is a right answer to this situation?
- How would you gain more information/knowledge about this situation?
- Would you seek out someone else's opinion about this experience?
- If this opinion conflicted with your personal beliefs, how would you resolve this tension?

Data Analysis

- The data were initially inductively coded to gain a broad sense of the educators' intercultural understandings and practices, without trying to fit the data into pre-existing codes.
- Initial analysis occurred during the data collection period and generated opportunities for probing questions in subsequent interviews.
- Informed by Stake (2006) and Braun and Clark's (2006) approach to thematic analysis, the coded data were then compared to existing self-authorship and intercultural competence research.



Case Findings

Case 1: Heidi “Question everything”

“I think I’m maybe a bit of a hippy. **I’m very big on question everything.** I’ve never been one of these people to just go ‘okay I’ve been told that, alright I’ll accept that’... I think you have to be confident to go ‘okay I don’t get that’ and I know I need to ask more.” (Heidi, Interview 3)

Deardorff’s Intercultural Element/s
Curiosity and discovery
Learning through interaction

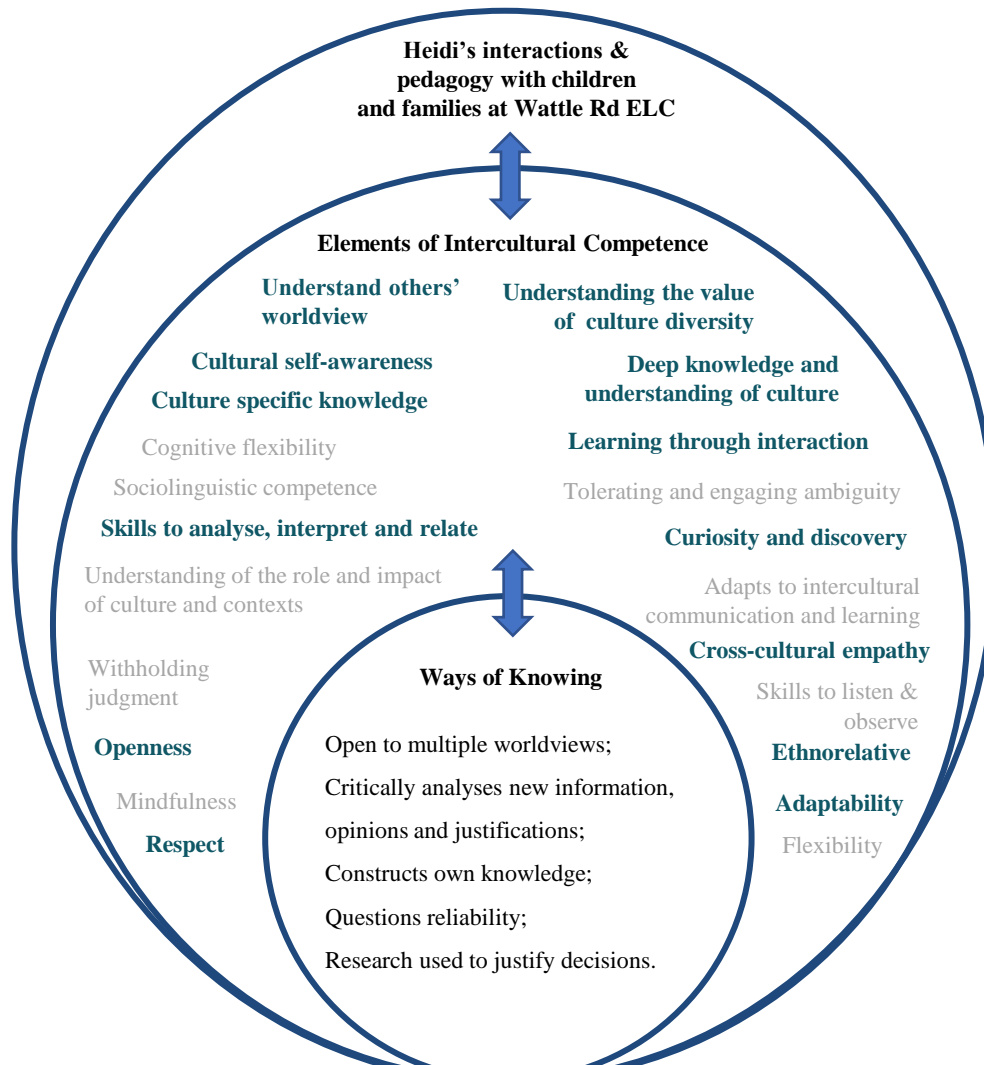
<i>Way of Knowing</i>
Question everything philosophy related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beliefs and knowledge and knowing<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Knowledge is actively constructed- Knowing is evolving, integrated through different sources• Beliefs about herself (as a learner)• Pedagogies (e.g., encouraging children to ask questions) and interactions with others

“I would want to know why and how? How do you know that? Have you done any research? Who have you spoken to? Have you got any experience? I would want to know what your opinion is based on? Then I would need to think okay well you got your information from Wikipedia, well is that a reliable source? Then I would think is that where I would have gone to get that information, probably not. So I probably wouldn't take your opinion, but I might go talk to someone who has ten years' experience working with that culture.” (Heidi, Interview 3)

Deardorff's Intercultural Element/s
Curiosity and discovery
Skill to analyse, evaluate and relate
Culture specific knowledge

<i>Ways of knowing</i>
Source of knowledge: Knowledge is not accepted from authority.
Justification for knowing: Evaluates reliability of sources.
Source of knowledge: Knowledge is actively constructed through interaction with others

Summary of Heidi's Intercultural Ways of Knowing



Case Findings

Case 2: Bianca “It is what it is”

“I don’t think of it as a big thing. It is what it is... A lot of my friends were Chinese and my best friend growing up was from Portugal and it was just, like I’d go over to her house and we’d have, well she’d have tongue for dinner, cooked on the barbeque and things like that. I never actually ate it, but I was exposed to all of that growing up.” (Bianca, Interview 2)

Deardorff’s Intercultural Element/s
Ethnocentric view - Minimisation of cultural differences (Bennet, 2003)

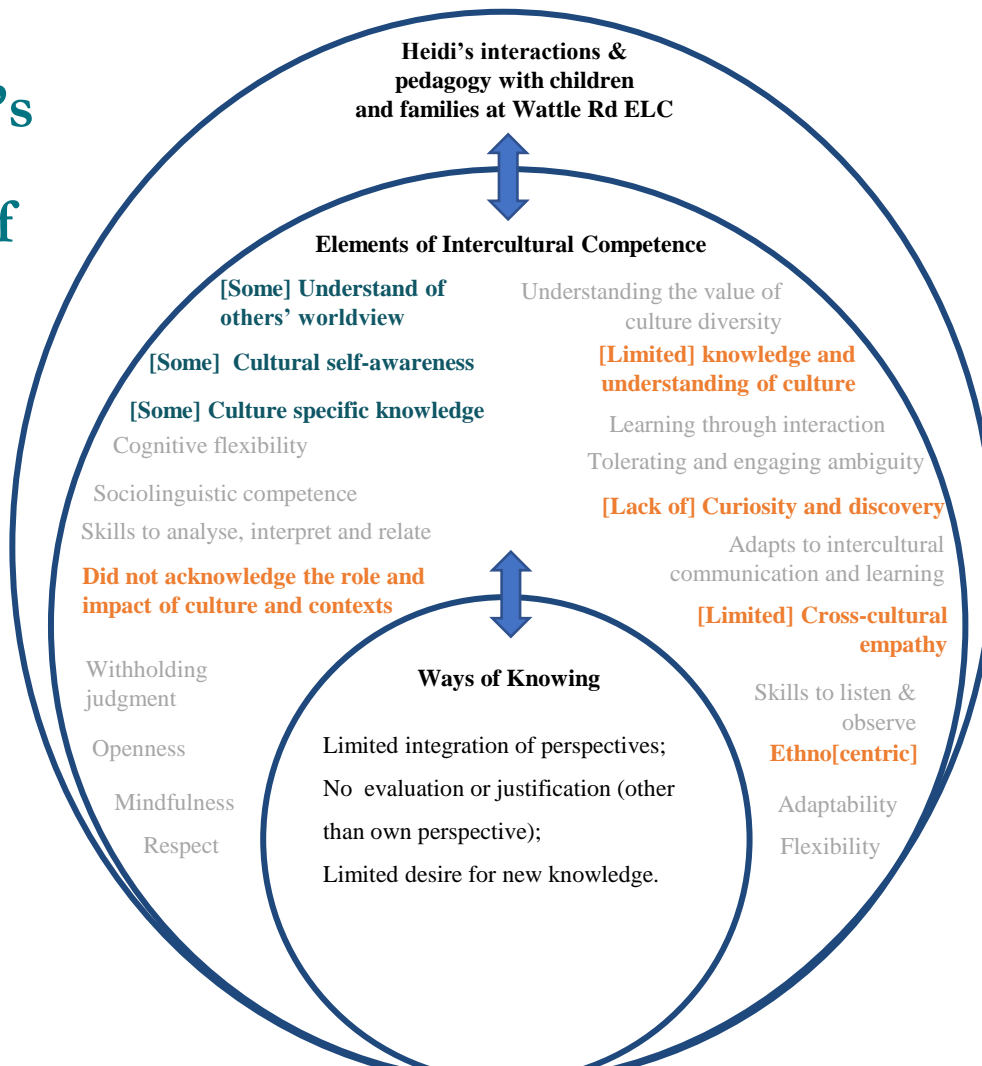
<i>Ways of knowing</i>
Knowledge about culture developed through relationships with diverse others.
Exposure does not appear to influence behaviour.

“I wouldn’t have thought that she would have been excluded because of the colour of her skin. I think she’s just a very shy quiet kind of girl. So I would say to the parents, I would try to encourage more social interactions with her and the other children in the room to develop her social skills... so I would put it to the parents more as a social thing than as a colour of skin thing.” (Bianca, Interview 1)

Deardorff’s Intercultural Element/s
Limited evidence of cross-cultural empathy, understanding of the parents’ worldviews, or the role and impact of culture in social contexts.

<i>Ways of Knowing</i>
No indication that Bianca is willing to see this observation from another perspective
Little concern for the parents’ perspectives, focusing on her own beliefs.

Summary of Bianca's Intercultural Ways of Knowing



Cross-Case Findings: Intercultural ways of knowing

- All five educators expressed beliefs about understanding others' worldviews (Deardorff, 2004), however, the depth of understanding seemed to relate to their beliefs about the nature of knowing and knowledge.
- The three educators with more adaptive or evaluative ways of knowing (Heidi, Yoo-Sun & Maria) engaged in deeper levels of reflection about the influence of their own and others' cultural worldviews and appeared more curious (Deardorff, 2004) to learn about the basis of others' worldviews.
- This may relate to previous research that has suggested a relationship between evaluative epistemic beliefs and skills such as critical thinking and more constructivist approaches to learning (Braten & Stromso, 2006; Brownlee et al., 2004)



Cross-Case Findings:

Intercultural ways of knowing & practice

- The intercultural attitudes of *curiosity & discovery* and *openness towards intercultural learning* (Dearorff, 2004) appeared to relate to educators' way of knowing, specifically their beliefs that knowledge is tentative and socially constructed.
- **Curiosity** relates to the core belief that that others' cultural perspectives are important and valid as one's own (Houghton, 2014), and the ability to identify and evaluate gaps in one's own knowledge base which can lead to intercultural learning.



Cross-Case Findings:

Mismatch between beliefs & practice

- There appeared to be a mismatch between the educators' discussion of their intercultural beliefs and attitudes and the observations of their practice.
- Although the educators articulated a range of intercultural beliefs and attitudes in the interviews. In almost 150 hours of observations, there was not a single instance where an educator proactively engaged the children in any type of learning experience or discussion about cultural diversity.



Discussion: Mismatch between beliefs & practice

Research by Fives and Buehl (2012) offers three possible explanations for this often reported incongruence between beliefs and practice.

1. Beliefs can serve as filters (e.g., beliefs about knowledge and ways of knowing) which tend to influence other beliefs (e.g., intercultural beliefs), however, these beliefs are unlikely to influence practice.
2. The specificity of the observation template, may have been a methodological issue resulting in missed observations of less explicit practices.
3. Limited certainty or knowledge about diversity pedagogies may have been the simplest reason for the mismatch between beliefs and practice.

Previous research has suggested that ECEs often lack confidence or knowledge about diversity pedagogies and address issues of cultural diversity reactively, as they occur, rather than proactively (MacNaughton & Hughes, 2007).



Discussion: Calibrating beliefs & practice

- Poor calibration may account for the discrepancy often found between teachers' beliefs and practice (Maggioni & Parkinson, 2008) .
- Research has found that teachers tend to overestimate the accuracy of their knowledge (Cunningham et al., 2004, 2009; Lichtenstein & Fischhoff, 1980).
- Accurate calibration is important as poor calibration can limit teachers' receptivity to new knowledge, ideas, and practices, as they “do not always know what they do not know” (Cunningham et al., 2004, p. 162).



Discussion: Calibrating beliefs & practice

- A focus on calibrating beliefs and practices may to allow educators to critically examine their own intercultural practice to identify gaps and plan for future action.
- Action orientated practices would involve educators proactively addressing diversity and culture, to tackle issues related to inequity and social justice. As seen in the anti-bias approach (Dau, 2001; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Scarlett, 2016).



Contributions

1. Highlighted the need to better understand why the educators did not consistently put their intercultural attitudes and beliefs into practice.
2. The integrated “Intercultural ways of knowing” conceptual framework
 - a. Provided a new way of theorising about how educators make meaning in intercultural contexts through a social constructivist lens.
 - b. Acted as an analytical framework to analyse the interviews and observations.
3. Qualitative multiple case study allowed for the assessment of intercultural competence to move beyond the use of self-report measures



Implications & Future Directions

For practice

Using reflective conversations and observation of practice to promote calibration between beliefs and practice → intercultural meaning making and identification of potential gaps in practice for pre-service and practicing teachers.

For policy

Shift from a cultural competence perspective to a focus on intercultural ways of knowing – Shifting thinking and practice, rather than just acquiring discreet knowledge and skills.



Limitations

- Convenience sampling
- Number of participants
- Timing and context of the interviews



Conclusions

As Australia's population continues to become more culturally diverse, early childhood educators are faced with an important and challenging task – to promote cultural inclusion and to challenge negative views of cultural diversity in early childhood contexts. Such a task requires a workforce prepared to engage in critical intercultural conversations.



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Thank You

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