

Within the Borderlands: Beginning Early Childhood Teachers in Primary Schools

BRI02518

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents findings from a study investigating the experiences of four beginning early childhood qualified teachers in primary school settings. The key concern of the study was to explore the metaphors that these teachers used when describing their lived experience stories; and to analyse what these metaphors indicated about the discourses the teachers perceived were available to them, and where they had chosen to situate themselves within these discourses. Throughout the paper, I use the metaphor of 'border crossings' in order to highlight the focus within much of the literature on the difference and separation between early childhood and primary education. Data was generated through in-depth, open ended interviews, a group discussion, visual representations and written material. The thematic recurrences and discursive positionings within the metaphors and narratives of the participants were deconstructed and critically analysed using a framework of feminist poststructuralism. In particular, this paper explores the discursive positionings related to the teachers' movement within the borderland of early childhood education and primary education. I argue that early childhood teachers in primary schools are operating within an exciting space - an intersection between early childhood education and primary education. Rather than focusing on the difference and separation between these points, the focus shifts to working towards creating points of overlap, of connection - a shared borderland between early childhood education, primary education.

INTRODUCTION

When I (the first author) first began this research process, I was aware early on that my focus for the inquiry would be early childhood teachers in primary school settings. The very positive experience of my first primary school practicum in September 2001 is what initially sparked my interest in teaching in the early years of school. At that same time, I was listening to the stories of my friends who were in their first years of early childhood teaching in primary schools. The often very negative experiences that seemed to be recurring in these conversations were a momentum behind my desire to look more deeply into the experiences of early childhood teachers in primary schools.

Through conducting an analysis of the literature and research concerning early childhood teachers in primary school settings, I perceived that many early childhood teachers in schools may be encountering the "mysterious gap between hope and happening" (Kenway & Willis, 1997, p.2). A gap between governmental policy recommendations for the

employment of specialised early childhood teachers in the early years of school and their actual implementation within schools (Collins, 1992, as cited in Briggs & Potter, 1999; Gifford, 1992; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996); between recommended specialist teaching practice and teaching in a predominantly generalist culture (Gifford, 1992; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996; Hayden, 2000; Boardman, 2001; Stamopoulos, 1995 as cited in Hayden, 2000); and between early childhood teachers' expectations of teaching young children and their lived experiences in primary schools (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Goldstein, 1997; Hayden, 2001; Jasman, 2001; Olsen & Sumsion, 2002; Sawyer, 2001). Thus, through this study I was interested in understanding the tensions and experiences of those who are negotiating their way through the "mysterious gap" as beginning early childhood teachers teaching in primary school settings.

Early Childhood and Primary: Difference and Separateness

Much of the literature I have encountered on early childhood teachers in primary schools highlights the "difference and separateness" (Sawyer, 1999, p.50) that is perceived to exist between early childhood education and primary education. Sawyer (2000; 1999) explores the experiences of preschool teachers teaching in primary schools, and focuses on the philosophical, practical and theoretic differences that these teachers believe exists between early childhood teachers and primary teachers. Goldstein (1997) raises similar issues in a case study investigating one teacher's attempts to integrate developmentally appropriate practice into a primary school setting in California, highlighting (what Goldstein describes as) the subsequent 'contradictions', 'mismatch' and 'inconsistencies' in this teacher's approach.

Both Sawyer (2000; 1999) and Goldstein (1997) draw strong distinctions between early childhood education and primary education, echoing what seems to be a common theme throughout most of the research (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Goldstein, 1997; Hayden, 2001; Jasman, 2001; Olsen & Sumsion, 2002; Sawyer, 2001; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). Furthermore, Goldstein (1997) and some of the teachers in Sawyer's (1999) study even go so far as to place primary education in direct and mutual opposition to early childhood education: teacher directed/child directed, developmentally inappropriate/ developmentally appropriate, prescribed curriculum/ individually appropriate curriculum, inflexible/flexible. Thus there appears to be a tendency within much of the research to place early childhood education and primary education within a dichotomous conceptual order whereby the focus is on differences, separation, binary opposition and mutual exclusivity - what I now think of as the 'either/ or' framework.

Border Crossing

In order to further explore these ideas of separation, distance and difference, I have become interested in the recent body of research which uses the metaphor of 'border crossing' when exploring movement between professional, ideological, and/or cultural contexts (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001; Giroux, 1992; Jasman, 2001). I have found this metaphor particularly useful in my thoughts and readings regarding early childhood teachers who are teaching in primary school settings, as issues of language, landscape and culture are highlighted and contextualised. Just as a traveler who 'crosses the border' between two countries may need to negotiate new and possibly different languages, landscapes and cultures, so too may the teacher who 'crosses the border' between the 'professional knowledge landscapes' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of early childhood education and primary education.

Firstly, the 'language' of early childhood education can be seen to differ from the 'language' of primary education. What is spoken about, the language used to speak about it and the ways in which it is spoken reflect the sometimes disparate histories, theories, pedagogies,

ideologies and academic dialogues of the 'schools' of early childhood education and primary education (Briggs & Potter, 1999; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Gifford, 1992; Goldstein, 1997; Hayden, 2001; Sawyer, 2001). The language that has evolved around early childhood education is designed specifically to express and discuss with precision the ideas, needs and experiences of the teachers of young children. This specialist vocabulary caters for the focus on child development theory, theory of learning (see Vygotsky, 1962, 1971), Developmentally Appropriate Practice (see Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), observation techniques, planning and programming (see Arthur, Beecher, Dockett, Farmer & Richards, 1993) and the importance of the social context (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979), as well as the parallel focus on management, leadership and administration (see Jorde Bloom, Sheerer & Britz, 1991, and Rodd, 1994). In contrast, the language of primary school education is designed to cater for the focus on literacy and numeracy, generalised teaching across the whole primary age range, and the implementation of the stages and outcomes outlined by the state mandated syllabus documents and primary school curriculum (Gifford, 1992; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

Secondly, the 'landscapes' of early childhood and primary education may be different. The physical and spatial landscapes of a primary school setting may be unlike early childhood settings (Goldstein, 1997; Olsen & Sumsion, 2002; Sawyer, 2000; Sawyer, 1999). As a friend described to me: "the playgrounds are not the same, the classrooms are not the same, even the furniture is not the same". A difference that may often be particularly apparent to early childhood teachers in primary schools is the use of, and importance placed on the outdoor environment (Sawyer, 1999; Briggs & Potter, 1999). Many teachers in early childhood settings view the outdoor environment as an essential component of programming and planning for children's learning, whereas outdoor play in primary settings is often reserved only for morning tea and lunch times when teachers may have very little contact with the children (Sawyer, 1999). Similarly, the temporal landscapes of primary settings may be dissimilar to those of early childhood settings (Kagan, 1990, as cited in Olsen & Sumsion, 2002), requiring early childhood teachers to rethink some aspects of their teaching methods and beliefs. The routines of early childhood settings may frequently include long blocks of uninterrupted time, structured only by the allocation of time to morning tea and lunch. In contrast, teachers in primary schools may need to consider structured routines within the school, which allocate specific times during each day to other activities such as assembly, recorder, computer, choir, physical education or reading groups (Briggs & Potter, 1999).

Thirdly, early childhood qualified teachers may 'cross the border' into a teaching context in which new and different cultures must be considered (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Goldstein, 1997; Jasman, 2001; Sawyer, 2001). While the dominant culture of early childhood education can be seen to place an emphasis on developmental areas, learning through play, and partnerships with parents in a developmentally, individually and culturally appropriate curriculum; primary education's dominant culture can be seen to place an emphasis more strongly on the six Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of the state mandated curriculum and the syllabus documents' recommended outcomes and stages (Adcock & Patton, 2001; Goldstein, 1997; Hayden, 2001; Jasman, 2001; Olsen & Sumsion, 2002; Sawyer, 2001; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). The separation that seems to exist between the cultures of primary education and early childhood education is often traced back to their distinct historical, theoretical and philosophical origins (Goldstein, 1997; Briggs & Potter, 1999; Sawyer, 2000; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996). This apparent separation is also often reinforced at universities, which may have little or no overlap or integration between their schools of early childhood teacher education and primary teacher education (Hayden, 2001). Other universities have cut early childhood education courses altogether (Briggs & Potter, 1999; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996), and there are also universities which have replaced specialist courses with early childhood electives that

are attached to primary education courses (Briggs & Potter, 1999). Furthermore, the specialist culture of early childhood education, as discussed in chapter one, may be incompatible with the generalist culture of many primary school settings (Gifford, 1992; Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996).

Reflections on Border Crossings

I find it interesting when reflecting on what I have written about 'border crossings' and the new and potentially different languages, landscapes and cultures that they entail, that difference and change can so easily be read as inherently negative, threatening or undesirable. My own lived experience as a crosser of international borders has been none of these things. On the contrary, the experiences have been overwhelmingly positive, welcoming and highly desirable, and have shaped my life from a very early age.

As a young child I traveled with my family across many physical and cultural borders. As an adult I have continued to travel, crossing borders into and across America, Asia and Europe. I travel *because of, not in spite of* the potential difference and change. The possibilities of new and different languages, landscapes and cultures are what motivate me to cross borders. I cross borders with the knowledge that some differences may cause difficulties for me, but that most differences will be exciting, wonderful, beautiful and awe-inspiring.

Crossing borders allows me to experience ways of seeing, thinking, knowing, speaking and living that would not be possible if I stayed, unchallenged, within my own country with the language, landscape and culture in which I am comfortable. Similarly, crossing borders between the 'professional knowledge landscapes' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of early childhood education and primary education may provide teachers with an opportunity to challenge the traditional ways of thinking and to create new professional learnings and knowledges (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001; Giroux, 1992; Jasman, 2001). This context of border crossing may also create an environment that allows teachers to value "multicentric perspectives" and to further the "limits of their own understanding" (Giroux, 1992, p.33).

Borderlands

Therefore I wonder: instead of seeing early childhood teachers in primary schools as crossing the border between early childhood and primary education, could we not rather view these teachers as inhabiting the *borderland* between the two? This metaphor seems to open up possibilities of growth and change rather than fear of separation and difference. Giroux (1992) is particularly interested on the effect that borderlands, "crisscrossed within a variety of languages, experiences and voices" (p.34), have on the broadening of the construction of identity, and calls us to see borderlands as "sites for both critical analysis and as a potential source of experimentation, creativity, and possibility" (p.34).

Indeed borderlands are spaces where disparate "languages, experiences and voices" (Giroux, 1992, p.34) mingle together. They can be seen as sites of overlap, of co-existence, of connection. They are the "space between" (Hopkins, 2001, p.21); places where one can negotiate and connect across difference, and act on similarities (Hopkins, 2001). Within borderlands, therefore, we no longer think in terms of 'either/or', but rather 'both-and' (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001; Hopkins, 2001). When we begin to think in terms of *both* early childhood education *and* primary education, instead of *either* early childhood education *or* primary education, we can start to think beyond binary oppositions and hierarchies in which one term is automatically privileged above the other. We can begin to "replace the slash with a hyphen" (Hopkins, 2001, p.24). Early childhood education/primary education becomes early childhood education-primary education. In this way we can undergo a shift in thinking about the world. We become

inclusive rather than exclusive. The teachers in this study were beginning teachers and as such they could also be seen as operating within the borderland between teacher education and teaching practice - between theory and practice. Due to the constraints of a conference paper, however, I have concentrated on the teachers' positions within the borderland between early childhood education and primary education. The teachers' positions within the borderland between theory and practice, and related issues regarding beginning teachers, are explored in depth in Britt (2002).

Metaphors

As I began this study, I questioned whether I would accept the stories that teachers told me about their experiences as a true reflection of reality; or whether I would view these stories, rather, as "learned cultural practice, so that the process of production and the stories produced can be unpicked, examined and analysed rather than just celebrated or surveilled for the right/wrong voice" (Kamler, 2001, p.46; Doecke, Borwn & Loughran, 2000; Sumsion, 2001). I have been particularly interested in the role that metaphors play in the ways in which we think about, and construct our roles and our identities in life (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Cook-Sather, 2001; Johnson, 1997; Kamler, 2001; Sumsion, 2001). Thus a focus of this study is exploring the ways in which the metaphors the teachers in this study used reflected the way they thought about concepts (as, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) most of our thinking - and therefore our understanding and experiencing - is metaphorical in nature), and, more importantly, the ways in which these metaphors reflected the way they thought about, constructed, and lived their identity - their subjectivity - as teachers. Indeed, recent research on teachers has focused on the ways in which the metaphors we use to describe our experience can be de/reconstructed to highlight the discourses that we perceive are available to us as teachers - and where we choose to situate ourselves and our experiences within these discourses (Cook-Sather, 2001; Johnson, 1997; Kamler, 2001; Sumsion, 2001). For instance, some of the more readily apparent metaphors that are used to construct the identity of teachers and teaching are teacher as: conductor, gardener, coach, executive and mother (Fenstermacher & Soltis, 1992 and Ladson-Billing, 1994, as cited in Cook-Sather, 2001; Johnson, 1997; Sawyer, 1999; Sumsion, 2001).

Metaphors can also indicate the discourses that people perceive are available to them, and their positioning within certain discourses (Davies, 1994; Davies, 1996; Kenway & Willis, 1997; Sumsion, 2001; Kamler, 2001; Cook-Sather, 2001; Wodak, 1997; Johnson, 199; Johnson, 2002). The word 'discourse' has many meanings, but the one I have chosen to use here stems from the framework of feminist poststructuralism, which refers to discourse not just as language, but as "historically and culturally specific categories through which we give meaning to our lives, practise our lives, invest emotionally in our lives and constitute our social structures" (MacNaughton, 2000, p.49-50). In 'crossing the border' (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001; Giroux, 1992; Jasman, 2001) between the two professional knowledge contexts of early childhood education and primary school education, these beginning teachers may be operating within several conflicting discursive systems. For example, Sawyer (1999) identifies the dominant discourses in early childhood as being the discourse of developmentally appropriate practice, the discourse of child centredness, the discourse of professionalism, and the discourse of teacher as mother. In contrast, some of the dominant discourses in primary education that have been identified are the discourse of normalisation, the discourse of outcomes and the discourse of behaviourism (Marsh, 2002; Sawyer, 1999).

In the study presented in this paper, I was interested in exploring, uncovering and deconstructing layers of meaning beyond the surface of words and text, in order to analyse the discursive practices and positioning of beginning early childhood teachers in primary schools. Thus, through my research I aimed to explore the metaphors that beginning early childhood teachers in primary schools use when describing their lived experience stories;

and to analyse what these metaphors indicate about the discourses they feel are available to them, and have chosen to situate themselves within.

PARTICIPANTS

The study involved Belle, Kate, Minnie and Marsha, all beginning early childhood teachers who were teaching in a variety of primary school settings. In the paragraphs that follow, I introduce the teachers who participated in this study. Here, and throughout this paper, each teacher is designated a specific and distinct font to highlight the fact that they are very much individuals with distinct voices and stories, rather than an anonymously massed group of 'participants'. The names given (for teachers and schools) are pseudonyms that the teachers chose:

BELLE

Belle graduated from the Institute of Early Childhood (IEC), Macquarie University at the end of 2000. In April 2001, after working casually for a term, she was offered a targeted graduate position with the Department of Education and Training (DET), teaching first class at Waterlake Primary School in Sydney's northern suburbs. Nearing the end of fourth term, 2001, Belle was offered - and accepted - a position team teaching kindergarten at Heatherbridge Preparatory School - a tiny independent school known for its innovative teaching and small class sizes. Belle and I have been friends for almost ten years now, and she asked me if she could participate in this research.

KATE

Kate graduated from IEC in mid-year of 2000. She taught casually in both public and Catholic primary schools for 6 months before applying for - and being offered - a teaching position at All Saints' Primary, a small Catholic school in Sydney's northern suburbs. In 2001, Kate taught year two, and at the time of the study (2002) Kate was teaching year 4. Kate and I attended the same high school from years 7-10. While we hadn't kept in touch, a mutual friend told Kate about my research, and Kate then contacted me by phone.

MINNIE

Minnie graduated from IEC at the end of 2001. She was targeted very quickly by the DET, and in September 2001, before she had graduated, she was offered a position Cityview Primary School in Sydney's eastern suburbs. Minnie was teaching year one at the time of the study, and was the only beginning teacher, and the only teacher with year one, at her school. A friend of mine at university who was also a friend of Minnie's asked her whether she would be interested in participating in the study. Minnie agreed, and gave her contact details to our mutual friend so I could contact her.

MARSHA

Marsha graduated from IEC at the end of 2001. Like Minnie, Marsha was targeted by the Department of Education in September 2001, to work in Mountainhills Primary School: a disadvantaged school in Sydney's outer western suburbs. She was teaching kindergarten at the time of the study, and was the only beginning teacher at her school. In true snowball style, Marsha heard about my study from a friend of a friend of mine, and contacted me by phone to offer to be a participant.

Generation of Data

My decision to focus on story telling through conversations as the main method of collecting information was influenced by the value of conversations in stimulating a deeper level of reflexive meaning making and in constructing shared understandings of lived experience (Black & Halliwell 2000, citing Francis, 1995, Hollingsworth, 1992, and Goodson & Fleisser, 1995). The use of storytelling and narrative has been widely used as a data collection method in research on lived experience (particularly involving teachers). Various researchers have focused on the values of storytelling and narrative as tools for reflecting, discovering, constructing and passing on professional knowledge; making sense of experience, creating meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Black & Halliwell, 2000; Doecke et al., 2000; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001; Huber & Whelan, 1999; Rust, 1999). However, in my research I have looked at narrative as more than a tool for personal reflection. Narrative and stories can also be seen as cultural texts (Kamler, 2001) that can be de/reconstructed in order to reveal discursive positionings of the narrator (Davies, 1994; Hopkins, 2001; Richardson, 1997; Goodson, 1999; Marsh, 2002). Conversations and narratives were explored through the use of interviews and a group discussion.

One open-ended, unstructured, conversational interview was conducted each with Belle, Minnie, Kate and Marsha individually in order to discuss, reflect on and analyse their thoughts, feelings, stories, images and experiences of working in primary school settings (Seidman, 1998). These interviews lasted between 1 1/2 and 3 hours, and were conducted in relaxed, informal environments such as over breakfast in cafes, or over a glass of wine in the participants' lounge rooms. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim in order to further critically analyse the thematic recurrences and discursive positionings within the words, metaphors and narratives of the participants.

A group discussion was conducted with Belle, Kate and Minnie (Marsha was unable to attend) as an opportunity to share their experiences with each other and further discuss their stories, thoughts, feelings and experiences as a group, and to begin to uncover collective stories that they share (Morgan, 1997). The group discussion lasted for four hours over Saturday brunch, and was audio taped and transcribed.

Visual forms of representation, such as drawings, mindmaps, and webs were gathered in order to explore "that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious" (Weber & Mitchell, 1996, p.304; Johnson, 2002; Black & Halliwell, 2000; Sumsion, 2001). Thus, throughout the interviews and group discussion, teachers were provided with paper and pens, and asked to visually represent their reflections on their experiences

The final method of representation that was used in the study was written forms of representation. Through the collection of letters, journals, written stories and emails, these forms of representation were able to provide: "another layer of understanding" (Black & Halliwell, 2000, p.105) in working towards crystallisation and a more complex 'story line' running through the anthology of experience. All of the participants wrote during their interviews, in further exploring their visual representations, or in highlighting issues or experiences they thought important.

Interpretation of data

The thematic recurrences and discursive positionings within the metaphors and narratives of the participants were deconstructed and critically analysed using a framework of feminist poststructuralism. Thematic techniques such as those described by Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul (1997) were used to identify, categorise, analyse and understand thematic

recurrences in the data. Deconstruction techniques were used to uncover, decode and analyse layers of meaning within the language and images of the data. Discourse analysis techniques were used to explore discursive positionings in the data (Neilsen, 1998; Richardson, 1997; Kamler, 2001; Davies, 1996; Davies, 1994; Hopkins, 2001), in order to make visible the ways in which teachers in the study are positioned and position themselves within the discourses that they believe are available to them (Cook-Sather, 2001; Johnson, 1997; Kamler, 2001; Sumsion, 2001). Discourse analysis often involves analysing the grammatical structures behind language to reveal positioning of identity, meaning and power within a certain discourse or discourses - that is, uncovering meaning behind the words (Wodak, 1997; St Pierre, 2000). My own background is in literature, poetry and fine arts, therefore my experiences of discourse analysis have focused on analysing the metaphors and images that are used to create meaning linguistically and visually. Thus the discourse analysis in this study was focused on the ways in which the metaphors that are used to describe our experiences can be de/reconstructed to highlight the discursive positionings.

Poetic Representation of Data

Following my readings within the feminist poststructuralist field, I have been particularly drawn to the use of the poetic reconstruction of transcripts as a method of representing information which highlights representations of emotion as well as intellect (Neilsen, 1998; Richardson, 1997; Hopkins, 2001; Kamler, 2001; Glesne, 1999; Ely et al., 1997; Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Ellis & Bochner, 1996). "Poetry allows for maximum input - in and between the lines" (Ely et al., 1997, p.135), while also capturing and representing the poetic elements of speech, such as rhythm, pace, rhyme, pauses and repetition (Richardson, 1997; Hopkins, 2001). By setting the words of a transcript out on the page as if they were a poem, the researcher - and perhaps the reader - may become more emotionally engaged with the text than if the words were set out in the traditional report-style of writing). The reader (and researcher) is encouraged to interpret, to analyse, to look for underlying layers of meaning far more so than if the text were "straight sociological prose" (Richardson, 2001, p.142-143). Meaning is highlighted, and identity (through an embodied narrator) becomes more vivid (Richardson, 1997).

WITHIN THE BORDERLANDS: between early childhood and primary education

In telling their lived experience stories, Belle, Kate, Minnie and Marsha did use some metaphors that highlighted difference and separation between early childhood education and primary education. However they did not only position themselves within a discourse of separation. On the contrary, it appears that these teachers did not feel that they needed to remain within the dominant discourses of either primary education or early childhood education. Instead they revealed a fluidity, a flexibility in moving across multiple discursive positionings - choosing, rejecting, connecting, responding to their own context. Thus rather than focusing on just separation and difference, these teachers were focusing equally on the connections and shared space between both primary and early childhood education.

Separation

Metaphors that highlight difference, distance and separation were used by the teachers as they told stories of their experiences. One such metaphor that was commonly used positioned early childhood education and primary education as different countries with different languages and different cultural mores. All of the teachers had experienced the struggles of connecting across what they spoke of as being two quite different languages, both in terms of specific vocabulary, and also, more powerfully, in terms of dialogue, discussion and debate. Adjusting to new and sometimes different vocabulary was an issue common to the teachers. They recalled spending their first term attempting to decipher the

jargon, abbreviations and acronyms that made up the vocabulary in their school. Minnie found the vocabulary surrounding the literacy program at her school particularly confusing:

Minnie - I didn't even know

I didn't even know

what a CVC was, or a CVCV.

And people talk in terms like that.

Right from the second you're in there.

I didn't know

what homonyms and extensions were.

I didn't know

what aural cloze was,

and everyone kept saying 'aural cloze,

you've got to do lots of aural cloze'.

I didn't know

what a diagraph was.

So I felt like I was having to...not show.

I didn't want to say 'what's that?',

having been targeted.

So all of that I had to sort of sneak about almost,

and try and work out for myself.

And I kept saying to people

' how do you know

what letters, what words to teach when?'.

But everyone kept saying 'year one is so fundamental, it's the

most important year'.

Belle noticed that her primary teaching colleagues seemed confused by some of her 'early childhood' vocabulary:

Belle - But the teachers don't speak the same language though, I've found. Like if I said - and some of the language that we were trained in, you know the kind of teacher talk, even words like quality, or developmentally appropriate, because a lot of those teachers come out of a different background, they look at you funny.

As these excerpts highlight, within this metaphor the teachers saw their language (of early childhood) as being significantly different to the language spoken by their teaching colleagues (primary).

Despite the misunderstandings and struggles along the way, these issues surrounding vocabulary seemed to be negotiated and resolved for the teachers within their first term of teaching. However the issues that the teachers raised regarding the differences in dialogue, discussion and debate within primary schools appeared to be more enduring. They all spoke of how they wanted to engage in professional debate, discussion and dialogue with their peers about teaching, children and educational philosophy, but how, unfortunately, they did not see this desire as being reciprocated.

Minnie -No one wants to talk about teaching anyway, the last thing they want to do is talk about teaching when they're not in the classroom, I find

Belle - That's true. It is true. And it's not a professional environment in the staffroom.

Minnie - They talk about the 'Woman's Day',

Belle - Or that annoying kid.

Marsha went further in describing the way in which she believed the perceived lack of professional debate, discussion and dialogue within some primary schools has been highlighted for these early childhood teachers due to the focus on this kind of peer collaboration throughout the early childhood degree. She explained that unlike the extended debates and arguments she participated in with her peers at university, there was only one teacher at her school, Simon, with whom she felt she could discuss anything regarding educational philosophy:

Marsha - So much a part of us

So I think for us,

we would sit and we would argue,

and quite often you would never meet.

So we've come very much from that,

and you know it's very tragic when we all go out

and we'll all start talking educational philosophy,

but it becomes so much a part of us.

But that doesn't seem to be what happens outside.

I don't think everyone's been brought up with that challenge of thinking.
It seems to be very very scary to admit that you have a problem with your class,
or that there's something that you're concerned about,
or that you are challenging the norm.
And I think that's the other thing too
is you can fall into the trap of thinking these people will be like my uni friends.
But they're not.
Which is a let down,
because when you like that sort of discussion, you can't really get it.
If I didn't have Simon I would have *no one* to talk education with.
My husband has no interest in educational philosophy *at all*, so I don't have it here,
and if I didn't have my uni friends,
I'd have no one.
So you find when you *do* find someone it's
blahblahblahblahblah!

These issues of discussion, debate and dialogue that have been explored in terms of language, could also be seen as a reflection of the culture of the schools in which these early childhood teachers are teaching. The issues the teachers experienced regarding what is appropriate to speak about what is not, as well as when and where these discussions are expected to take place, can be viewed as an expression of etiquette - of differing standards and expectations within the cultures of these schools.

These metaphors of language and culture are ones that highlight a discourse of difference and separation. In the excerpts above, early childhood teachers are referred to as 'us' and 'we', while primary colleagues are referred to as 'them' and 'they'. In this way a strong distinction is made between 'us' and 'them' through this metaphoric positioning of early childhood education and primary education as separate countries with different languages and cultural mores. This distinction echoes Sawyer's (1999; 2000) findings of teachers' perceptions of difference and separation between early childhood education and primary education.

Another issue of metaphorical distance and separation that was raised by the teachers is that of time. Belle, Kate, Minnie and Marsha appeared to be struggling with concerns relating to the differences between the temporal landscapes of early childhood and primary education. The teachers spoke of rushing children, cutting short discussion, and struggling to squeeze in the basic curriculum requirements around computer, PE, book week, recorder and other activities required by the schools. They all expressed frustration at these many disruptions throughout the day that took time away from covering the essential units in what

they see as an already overloaded curriculum. Minnie described her inability to include all of the required units and extra-curricular activities within the time provided:

Minnie - The time's not there. I'm really stressed at the moment because I'm meant to have done child protection this term, an anti bullying unit, I'm meant to have done this PDHPE unit, transport for my HSIE unit, and we've got education week that's coming up, we're performing at Fox Studios, I'm having to rehearse the year two kids as well, and it's just

Kate- too much

Minnie - and my program's just gone out the window, and I've just touched on little tiny bits

Kate - yeah, what are my priorities? Is it performing for education week or educating the children?

Minnie - and it's horrendous and it's all broken up

Kate - I hate that

Similarly, Belle commented on how she believed the constant pressures of time constraints influenced what she was able (or not able) to achieve when teaching:

Belle - it's interesting, because I've had two schools I've worked in. Last year was the public system where I felt very much the time pressures you were talking about, and...we were always on the clock and I was chuckling to myself the other day cause I was like 'oh my gosh, I don't think I *taught*, at all, last year'.

The teachers also believed that these time pressures and constraints affected their teaching styles and their interactions with children:

Belle - and [the children] get used to being disrupted all the time, they get used to thinking about something and then it being interrupted,

Minnie - oh I *hate* that!

Belle - and so you get jack of it, as an adult and as a kid, and you get to the point where everybody's a bit like 'Oh! Quick, we've got to go to sport!' and then you're running out the door! The number of times I used to forget to send my kids to library last year 'OHMYGOSH!'

Minnie - I'm like this all day 'RIGHT! 4 MINUTES TO GO! HURRY UP! 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.'

Kate - I *hate* that! I started counting the other week.

The outcome of these time constraints that the teachers appeared the most distressed by, however, was the effect that they believed the temporal landscape has had on their image of and response to children. Belle spoke of how she believed that children can become 'inconvenient' when teachers are in a temporal landscape where time is short and pressured:

Belle - I realised that in the institutional model of schooling, the children become quite inconvenient. And I remember thinking that last year... the problem was... you have to meet these outcomes and you have portfolios and you have this and then you have all these interruptions because it's education week and you've got this topic and that topic. And I got to the point last year where, when a child had a behaviour problem, I was like 'you cannot act up because *if you do I cannot* get through this!'

Kate- yes! Exactly!

Minnie - we don't have time!

Belle - they are so inconvenient!

Kate - you've gone out of class and that's not your fault, but I am trying to *teach* now.

Belle - and you end up in an emotional battle where you feel like you're the victim of their behavioural problems. And you feel like taking them by the scruff of the neck and saying 'Sweetheart, you *may* have problem, but I don't have enough time to actually deal with you as a *person*, I just have to deal with you as an information recipient and you're not listening, you need to move out of my way. Your personhood is not significant in this system.

Minnie -that's absolutely true! I do that. I feel like I do do that though, because it is like the *stress* of what one feels one has to do.

As reviewed above, the research relating to early childhood teachers working in primary schools indeed suggests that these teachers may find the temporal landscape of the structured routines often apparent in primary schools dissimilar to the long blocks of uninterrupted time often apparent in early childhood settings (Kagan, 1990, as cited in Olsen & Sumsion, 2002; Briggs & Potter, 1999). However these issues relating to time that were raised by Belle, Kate, Minnie and Marsha could also be read as issues relating to external control and constraint, and the resultant loss of autonomy that these teachers could be experiencing.

These metaphors which highlight the difference between and separation of early childhood education and primary education corroborate with the literature reviewed above on early childhood teachers in primary schools. However, interestingly, the teachers did not see this discourse of difference as the only position from which to operate. In the section that follows, I explore the metaphors used by the teachers that highlight the connections and shared space between early childhood and primary education.

Connection

While Belle, Kate, Minnie, and Marsha used metaphors that highlight the differences between early childhood education and primary education, they also spoke in metaphors that can be seen as questioning and operating outside of this discourse of separation. In 'Success', the poem that follows, Belle's metaphor of multiculturalism raises the question of whether we should indeed be positioning early childhood teachers in primary schools as people crossing the border between two distinct countries and attempting to let them 'blend in' - to become the same as their 'host country':

Belle - Success

And how many early childhood graduates are successful and survive and they cross the border?

It's like Multiculturalism really, isn't it.

That compromise of 'you can come and live in Australia so long as

you speak English in the shops,

and your culture gets changed,

and you respect our cultural values,

and do what we do.'

And sometimes we measure the

success

of someone's integration into Australia

by the extent to which they have taken on our culture.

But I wonder if those people feel successful in Australia

because they've learnt the system,

they know the language,

they know the values

and they meld.

And I'm not saying that they're not successful,

I'm just wondering if we're valuing the right kind

of success.

In this poem Belle appeared to be questioning the discourses of separation and difference, and alluding to the possibility of creating new positionings for early childhood teachers in primary schools. Thus rather than accepting this discourse of assimilation, Belle has shifted the focus to connection. In the following poem and picture, Belle has further deepened this focus on connection, by using a metaphor of early childhood education and primary education as two houses, side by side, but unaware of their shared space:

Belle: The Houses

Do you know what that reminds me of? If you have a house.

And say these two houses were actually built next to each other.

Say they even share a basement.

And one of them is called 'P' and one of them is called 'EC'.

It's like there's this wall that got built here, really big, quite tall,
so that they don't actually realise that they live next to each other.

And every so often they bump into each other in the basement

but they freak each other out and they call the police.

Because somebody's in their basement who isn't authorised.

And they wonder how they got there.

So these people, when they want to go and work with these people,

they go all the way round here

and they feel like they have to go this really long journey and it's really far.

So it's appearing a far distance but it's not really.

When really if we went down to our roots,

both of us,

and met in the middle,

we'd actually realise that we were right next door to one another

and we could knock that wall down.

But we've actually created a situation where we have to travel a long long way.

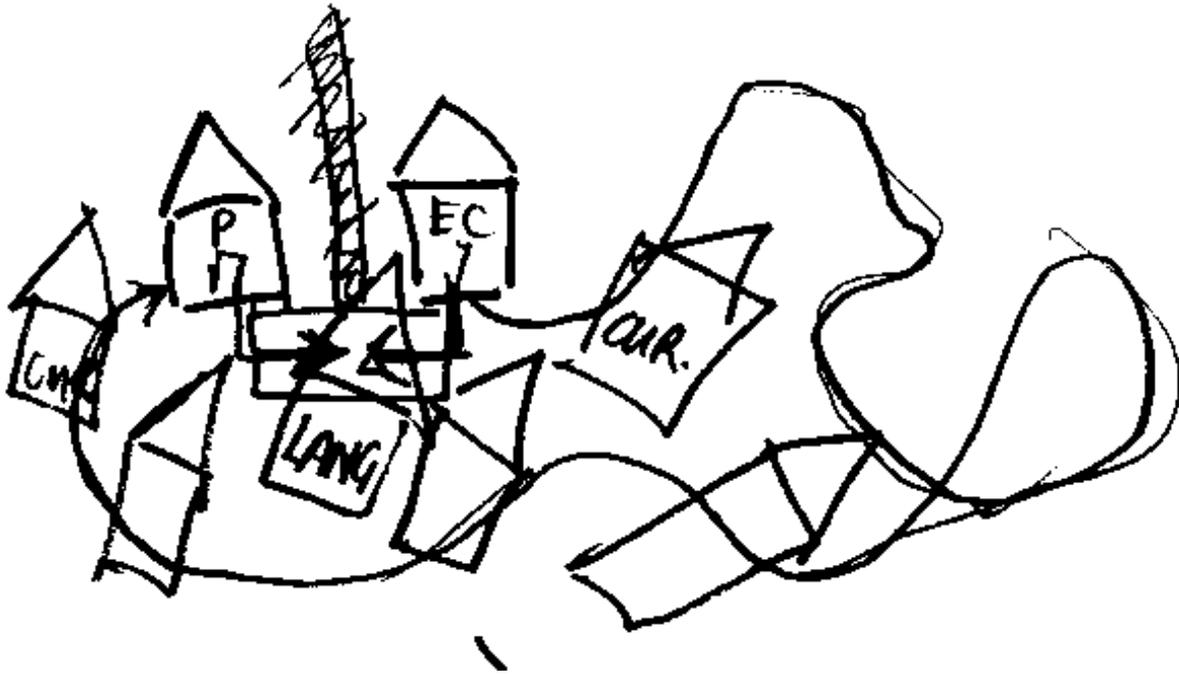
And the problem is, there's all of these other houses

that people have built around systems,

that mean that it's actually very hard to get to the door of either institution.

And these things could be things like curriculum, and how we interpret it differently.

And then you might have language as another block.



So maybe we need to go underground.

Because they share a basement that they're not recognising.
But it's like the basement's a place that we are all a bit scared of,
and it's underground, and it's a bit darker and it's not as clear,
and people haven't been in there sorting out as much.

They haven't tidied that space up
and so it's not the place that you take people when you're going on a tour of your house.

And the place where we have common ground
is actually some of the places of our uncertainty
and it's like if we could find the place to meet in our uncertainty
then we'd be able to start seeing that we're actually not that far away from one another.

And that we actually *don't* have all the answers
and we don't have the ideal.

In this metaphor, early childhood and primary are two houses, side by side, superficially different, and artificially distant. However in reality there is a shared space between the two -

a foundational and fundamental point of intersection. In this way, Belle has suggested that connection between early childhood and primary education therefore may not be so difficult, if both schools of education look to their roots and foundations. Thus the dichotomous conceptual framework of binary oppositions that dominate the literature surrounding early childhood and primary education has been seen by Belle as a false construct - one imposed upon, not reflective of the relationship between early childhood and primary education.

Belle was not the only teacher who could be seen as rejecting the dominant discourse of separation and distance within a hierarchical binary opposition of early childhood and primary education. Kate, who at the time of this study was teaching year four at a small Catholic school in suburban Sydney, appeared to have actively committed herself to finding points of intersection between early childhood and primary education, and working within these by taking from each that which was relevant to her specific teaching context and the children in her class:

Kate - So you try and make it open ended and flexible in terms of doing it a bit around the kids, but there are some things you go back to the old worksheets for, and that's just the way it is, you just have to do that. And you also have to do that too so that you have *time* to work with the other children in small groups. So you might have an activity, rather than filling in a sheet, writing out the problem and working it out with counters and things, and you've got the other groups who are just doing the worksheets, then you've got the other group who are sitting on the floor who need you to go through every single question with them...I keep on coming back to the open ended tasks, flexibility and the understanding that you have this whole class... you've got 28 children who are on totally different levels, and so from that early childhood point of view you are trying to gear your lesson towards that child and not just expect them to achieve what the aim of the lesson is.

Thus Kate appeared to be operating both across and within the competing discourses of early childhood education and primary education and finding a connection point. Rather than operating in terms of exclusivity - placing early childhood and primary in binary opposition to each other (either early childhood or primary), she was operating in terms inclusivity - of both early childhood and primary, both flexibility and structure, both teacher directed and child centred. She can be seen as having taken from what is available in both of the dominant discourses and found what is relevant to her context and merging them. Hence she described flexibility, open-ended activities, small groups and individualised learning alongside structure, worksheets, textbooks and tests.

The physical landscape seemed to be an element of teaching that this particular group of teachers had found to be an easily recognisable point of overlap between early childhood education and primary education. All of the teachers referred to their belief in the importance of the aesthetic environment in teaching young children, and their satisfaction in creating spaces of beauty within their classrooms. Minnie and Kate discussed the book corners in their rooms in relation to this:

Minnie- I've made a book corner, I've made a really nice book corner, and I've got them all to bring in different cushions. I think that focus on the aesthetic, that's one that you really can transfer and is particularly...

Kate - sure. Definitely. Just in talking about the cushions and setting up the book corner and things, is one space in your room,

Minnie- ... to create a respectful beautiful space,

Kate - that shows you respect it.

Minnie - making the environment feel caring in some way.

Hence despite the research suggesting that early childhood teachers may have difficulties negotiating the difference between the physical and spatial landscapes of a primary school setting and early childhood settings (Goldstein, 1997; Olsen & Sumsion, 2002; Sawyer, 2000; Sawyer, 1999; Briggs & Potter, 1999) these teachers viewed the physical landscape as a positive point of overlap between the two.

It is interesting to note, however, Minnie's use of the word "transfer" in the above excerpt. Indeed, analysing the metaphors and language used by Minnie when discussing her experiences reveals that Minnie may indeed have been operating to a certain extent within a discourse of separation - an 'either/or' framework whereby she perceived that she was positioned either within the dominant discourse of early childhood or the dominant discourse of primary education. In the excerpt that follows, Minnie describes her frustration in being unable to realise her visions of 'early childhood education' in her primary school setting:

Minnie - I haven't felt that I *am* incorporating what I *could* be incorporating or should be incorporating as much as I thought I would be. I think that the way you could set up this sort of interactive, team teaching idea, and the kind of activities you could prepare and do are much more appropriate for early childhood kids and would be so in schools too, if it were more recognised. So I like that part of early childhood. I had this *ridiculous* concept of being in a primary school that was one of these incredibly forward thinking ones that embraced all the same philosophies that I was learning at uni, and that I'd just naturally go from uni to there and have this fabulous classroom with enthusiastic teachers all around sharing ideas and doing whatever and it's *not that at all...* But I think I did have some dreams of marrying the early childhood *play* orientated types of learning into school, and had no idea that it would be so difficult to do it. I *know* that I could plan for the kids in year one to learn about volume or area in an early childhood *way...*but I don't really know how to make every single KLA that I'm teaching the way I would *like* it to be, and *appropriate*.

In this way, it appears that Minnie could see the possibility of transferring the discourse of early childhood to a primary context, not to merge the two, but to operate within an early childhood discourse in a primary school setting. And yet despite her frustrations, Minnie still seemed to be working towards realising a vision of "marrying" early childhood into her school setting.

Despite the challenges, struggles and negotiations they faced, Belle, Marsha, Kate and Minnie appeared to be choosing to focus on the creation of connections between, rather than just the separation of, early childhood education and primary education - on the creation of coexistence rather than mutual exclusivity, on *both* early childhood education *and* primary education. In this way these teachers, rather than departing from one place and arriving in another, distinct, different space, are working towards the creation of a new shared space: a borderland between early childhood and primary education within which they can operate as teachers.

Final Thoughts

Therefore, rather than thinking in terms of border *crossings* (that is, the crossing from one land into another) as explored in the literature review above, we can now reposition our

thinking in terms of border *lands* (that is, the shared space between two lands). In this way, we as educators can look towards the creation of a new space - 'the space between'. We can now look for and work towards connections and intersections between two differing places - points of negotiation, of cohabitation, meshing, transforming, combining. Whereas before, the focus was on the gap between early childhood education and primary education as a void, a site of non-existence (because within that model you are either one/or the other, never both, or between the two), now it is a valid space, a site of connection, of intersection, of overlap. The borderland is a space not only of existence, but of coexistence. Thus through this paper I have argued that beginning early childhood teachers in primary schools are operating within an exciting space - an intersection between early childhood education and primary education. Rather than focusing on the difference, separation and distance between the two, I call for us to work towards creating points of overlap - a shared borderland between early childhood education and primary education.

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