

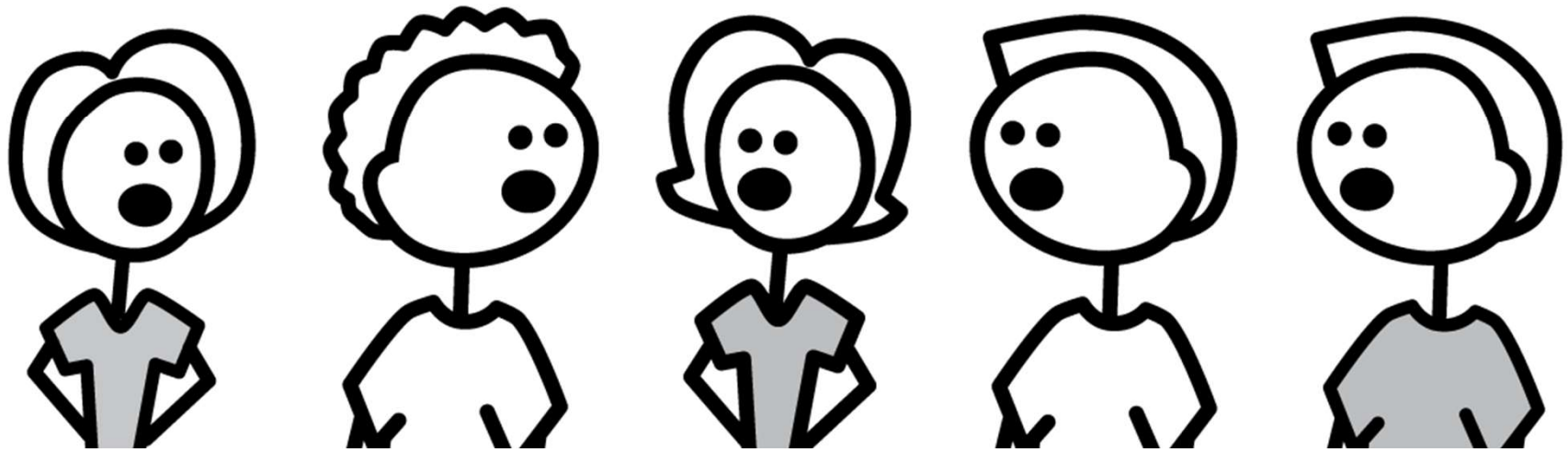
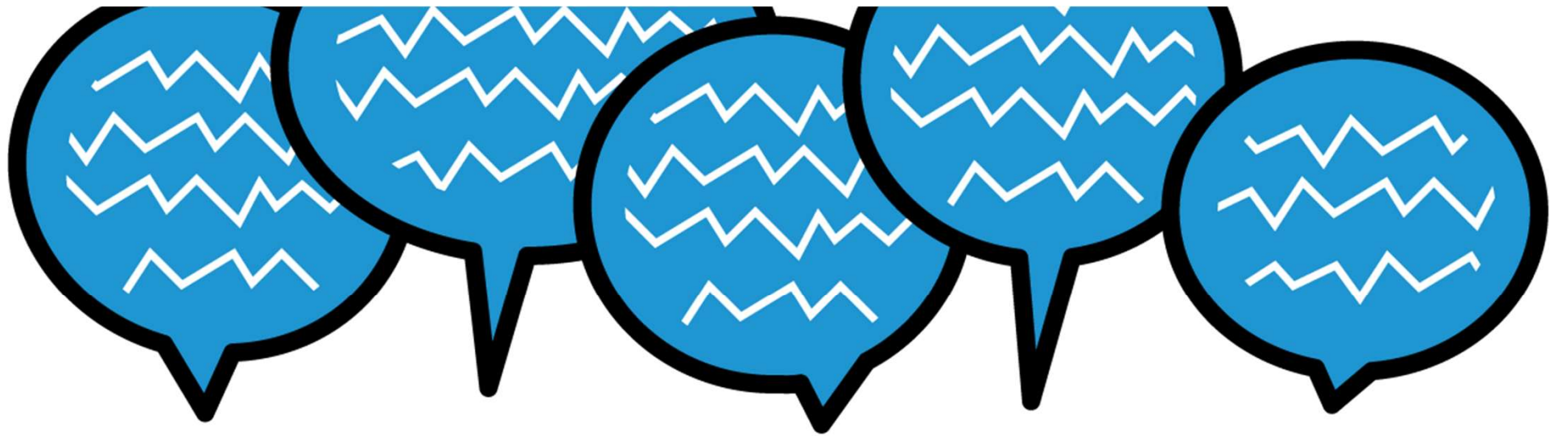


Social justice in the Early Childhood context: Educator voices

Presented online at the Early Childhood Voices
Conference (ECV2020), 16-20 Nov. 2020 – Charles
Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia.

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Background & Aim

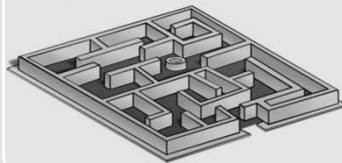
- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia has long been associated with the concept of social justice, however a clear understanding of what this looks like across contexts is not clear.
- Hearing the voices of early childhood educators to gain a sophisticated understanding of their perceptions of social justice, and their role in providing education for a socially just world, is important and necessary.

How do Early Childhood Educators perceive early learning environments as places and spaces for privileging social justice in rural areas?



- Interpretive inquiry
- Semi-structured interviews
- 5 Participants – SE QLD corridor

The findings – a thematic analysis



Social
justice as
complex
and difficult
to define

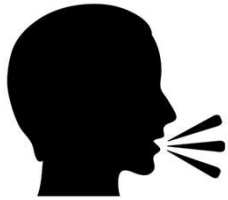


Social
justice as
creating a
learning
place



Social
justice as
contextual
relevance

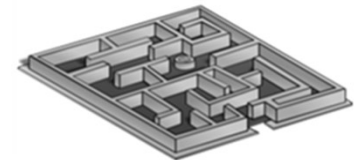
Social justice as complex and difficult to define



"...I don't know if it's social justice – but it's the justice for everyone and then when we talk about it to the children ... we have a lot of discussions about whether things are fair or not..." " ... to me personally it means making sure that everyone gets a fair go..."

"... equal access to things, just helping – kind of helping out – making sure everyone's kind of, you know, just lifting everyone up I suppose ..."

"... We're pretty lucky because our centre was taken over by a not for profit church organisation originally, and their philosophy is for helping these small rural areas to have access to quality early childhood education..."

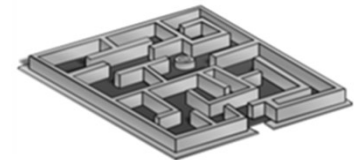


Social justice as complex and difficult to define

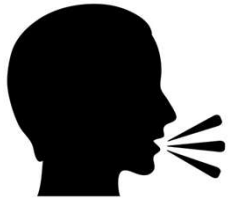


"... I guess what it means to me is – is to ensure that every child ends up at school with equal access so when they leave early childhood to get to school that every child should be on a level playing field and that means supporting the child, supporting the family and supporting the community around them and the wider community as well..."

"... it's just having that real authentic meaning of why we are doing what we are doing which is basically forming that sense of identity for that child and family. A sense of belonging. That's a learning opportunity for our other children. That is social justice coming together and being equality ..."



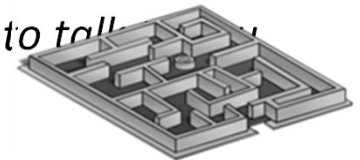
Social justice as complex and difficult to define



"...If you asked a staff member do they teach social justice they would probably say no, but they do every day um yeah I – I think that – I don't think they find many barriers or challenges in it in that they teach at the level that they find acceptable and they understand the level that is accessible to the community..."

"...I don't' think anyone goes above and beyond to teach social justice – it's not a focus of theirs –at this point our focus is coming from trying to manage the staff to ensure inclusivity and working with every family at an individual capacity for what they need.."

"...Well I had to Google what social justice meant – when you wanted me to talk about social justice..."



Social justice as creating a learning place



"...I don't know that we actually intentionally teach it so to speak ..."

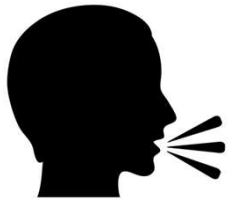
"... probably not so much intentionally but just in our everyday interactions ..."

"... I feel like it's something that you do not really something that you know but something that you do..."

"... I suppose it's just sort of through the course of the day as it comes up. I mean we don't really – unless there's an event coming up – we don't go out of our way to plan it so to speak..."



Social justice as creating a learning place

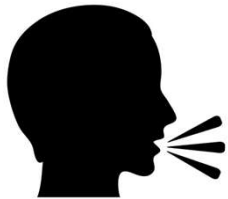


"...We probably try our hardest to make sure we are – with our inclusion support – that we are not just including – because we don't have a lot of cultural inclusion - but making sure we are catering to all family kinds of lifestyle, home environments and kind of things like that..."

"...It's not just their cultural – but their family context as well. How we make sure we're kind of being open to all and just having full access"



Social justice as contextually relevant



"...Yeah it is and I think you need to be contextual – you need to make it important to YOUR community not just an overall view but you know you need to be specific to your community's needs..."

"...You do you really have to be on top of your community issues and make that your – your – that your centre is really catering for those needs..."



Social justice as contextually relevant

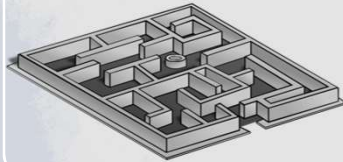


"...I think maybe just getting to know your families and your context because everywhere is going to be different, so you might have come from a different centre, you might not have been to a centre but just making sure that you're catering for your community and families. Getting to know the community really and knowing what their needs are going to be..."

"...Yeah its um – yeah we've had situations here where we're trying to support parents, um through DV situations and stuff like that but having to be very careful because everybody knows who the DV worker is, everybody knows who that family is..."



Thematic Analysis



Social justice as complex and difficult to define

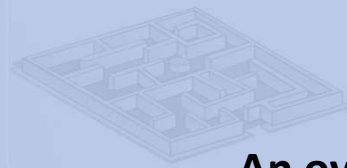


Social justice as creating a learning place



Social justice as contextual relevance

A recursive phase of analysis



An overlaying framework of 'place and space'

Social justice as a complex and difficult to define

Social justice as a learning place

Social justice as contextual relevance

“a lived situation pregnantly alive in the presence of people” (Aoki, 1991, p. 7).

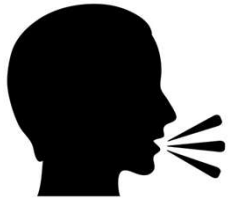
Implications for children

Educators want you to thrive in a place where you feel safe, where things are fair, and where you develop a strong sense of belonging. Educators are learning about who you are and where you come from. You can help by sharing about your family and your experiences at home and in your community.



“...I mean we have one particular child who likes to – you know in terms of the gender we were talking about before – we have one child who likes to dress up as a little girl so – and his parents they just – no way – they don’t agree with it. So that’s a matter for discussion – amongst us with the staff and how can we support him – and keep his family happy...”

Implications for children



“...it’s about participation and rights of people...even in their little game situation...is it actually fair if someone comes and asks for something, do you have to give it to them straight away? ...Is that fair for you or is that just fair for them... that’s where our social justice comes down to everyone has a right to something but there’s a time and place for it so even at our kindy it’s as simple as if they want something they’ll walk over go ‘oh Vicki can I please have that bike once you’ve finished it?’ And then they’ll walk away with the trust knowing that once you’re finished with that bike you’ll come find them wherever they are and I guess we’ve built up a lot of work about that because that’s probably my belief that people shouldn’t have to give up what they want just because someone else wants to use it.....”

Implications for families

Educators are committed to your children, your family and your community. They work hard to understand how they can support you to feel that you belong. Being in partnership with you is both welcomed and appreciated.



“... now we recognise there’s a need to care for the mother’s mental health and make sure that she’s ok and that she’s getting a break ...”

“...That’s really the way that we can take of that social justice is by knowing that families, knowing the difficulties and how we can help them...”

Implications for practitioners

Be confident in your skills, knowledge and dispositions. Take the time to critically reflect on your practice to enhance your intentionality for promoting social justice.



"...Through our approach with relationships, that is our success, because our educators are feeling more connected. They are feeling more of a sense of belonging in their role. They get that professional growth..."

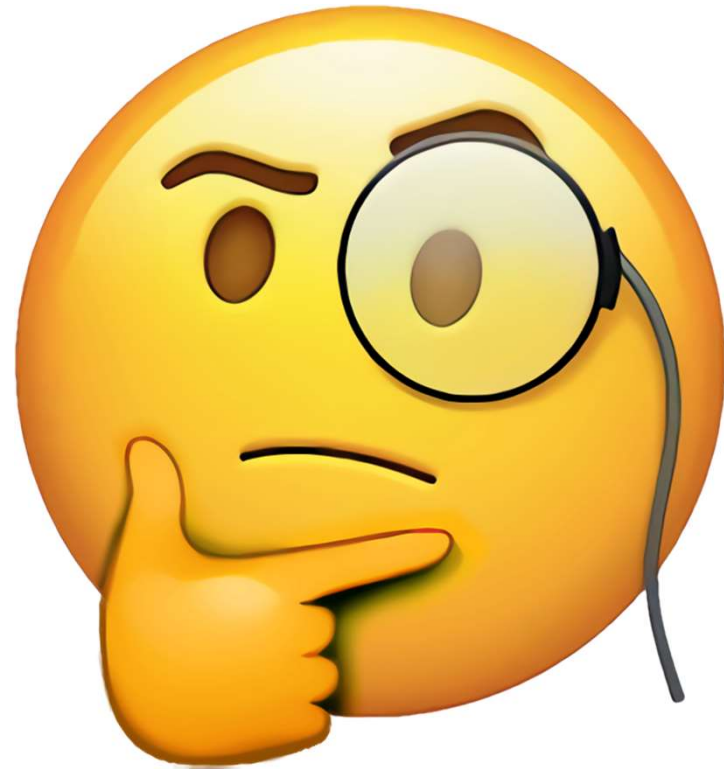
UNSDG4

Quality early childhood education to prepare children for life

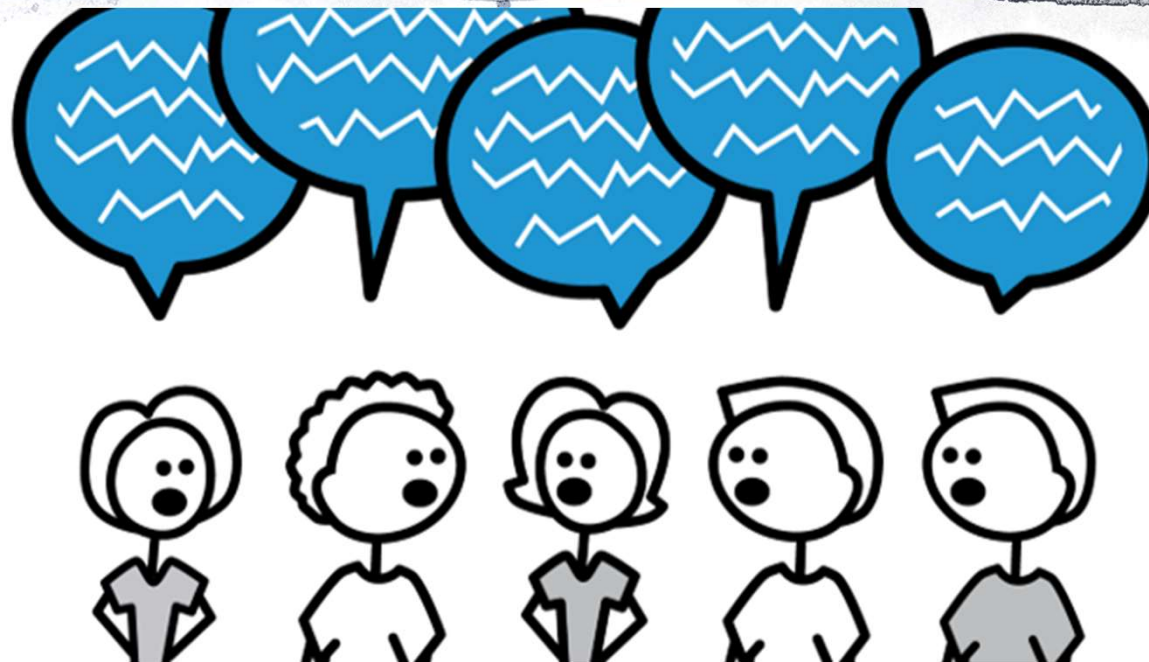
"...critically informed, intentional and strategic organisational leadership can play a pivotal role in creating changed circumstances and opportunities for children and families. Such leadership includes positional and distributed elements, articulation of values and beliefs, and collective action that is mindful and informed" (Hard, Press & Gibson, 2013)



Wonderings...



What do we do with these voices...?



Thank you

Questions?
Queries?
Insights?
Interest?

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