



What approaches to pedagogy, learning, and curriculum does the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care invite?

The ethical and political contexts that the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Early Years and Child Care's professional learning model must respond to, and the pedagogical invitations it offers, are located within the ongoing neoliberal and settler colonial systems present in Ontario. As active participants in shaping the possibilities for early childhood education in the province, the work of educators and pedagogists is political and grounded in our understanding of the urgent concerns and realities facing the field. In naming the pressing debates, inequities, and conditions that we understand to be most salient to the field, the Provincial Centre concurrently offers a vision for early childhood education and stands for a precise orientation to practice. Of utmost consequence is the method the Provincial Centre uses to communicate this situated approach to pedagogy, learning, and curriculum.

Weaving Insights from Literature

Since the early 1990s, reconceptualist early childhood education scholars have argued that the complex contemporary communities of learning that children, families, and educators are part of require that the role of curriculum frameworks, and the implementation of pedagogical approaches, must shift from their traditional function of directing learning outcomes, delineating curricular content, or prescribing practical methods for teaching (Kessler & Swadener, 1992; MacNaughton, 2003; Yelland, 2005). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) contend that in contemporary Euro-Western ECE contexts, "technical practice, finding the most efficient methods to achieve predetermined ends, is the main focus of attention" (p. 35). Often, this assessment-driven imperative toward solution-oriented technical practices requires that administrators and educators name, test, and implement the "best," most appropriate, highest quality practices. For Dahlberg and Moss, this move toward quantifying or instrumentalizing practice can minimize the rich ethical and civic questions that educators bring to their work with children and families. Multiple scholars and educator-researchers push for conceptualizations of curriculum and pedagogy that foreground questions of ethics, politics, inheritances, responsibility, relationships, and locally meaningful learning as a direct response to the perceived universality of Euro-Western educational paradigms (Battiste, 2017; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Patel, 2015; Smith, Tuck, & Yang, 2018; Taylor, 2013; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). These are orientations to pedagogy that understand investigating difficult questions and complexifying taken-for-granted ECE practice as pedagogical work with children and families (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliott, & Sanchez, 2015). Importantly, these scholars never argue for an "anything goes" approach to pedagogy, nor do they propose a new, universal, "better" method for creating curriculum (Nxumalo, Vintimilla, & Nelson, 2018). They assert that when pedagogy orients towards questions of ethics and politics, we must think about how our everyday practices answer to the unique contexts, inequities, injustices, and relational networks that children, families, and educators inherit together (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2016; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2018; Vintimilla, 2018). Where a technical approach to pedagogy focuses on implementing pre-articulated practices and content in order to meet the criteria for learning prescribed by a particular theoretical approach to education, doing pedagogical work as a response to our local worlds enacts an approach to education concerned with intentionally and ethically responding to local politics, experiences, and realities (Kummen & Hodgins, 2019; Hodgins, Atkinson, & Wanamaker, 2017).

Responding to the Ontario Context

In Fall 2018, the Secretariat for Ontario's three Centres of Excellence distributed a survey to directors of the 47 consolidated municipal service managers (CMSMs) and district social services administration boards (DSSABs) across Ontario in an effort to gain insight into the approaches to professional learning currently utilized across Ontario (for a report please see Jobb & Montpetit, 2019). Related to pedagogy, learning, and curriculum, service providers indicated three central methods for integrating pedagogical theories and frameworks with professional learning:



(1) professional learning activities that support educators to activate *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014); (2) linking quality initiatives with pedagogical innovation, reflection, and documentation; and (3) encouraging educators to foster a pedagogy of inquiry with children and families. A notable absence in responses was the naming of specific pedagogical theories that might be promoted through professional learning, such as Reggio Emilia, project approach, or Montessori. This means that existing professional learning activities are not necessarily informed by a particular pedagogical theory or curriculum model but are grounded in an ethos of building meaningful early learning environments. Our analysis suggests that this indicates an overall professional learning climate concerned with deepening the pedagogical character of everyday practice through relationship, inquiry, and locally meaningful learning rather than the advancement of any singular "best" method. Accordingly, the Provincial Centre's approach to professional learning must generate opportunities for educators to explore a range of innovative, locally meaningful pedagogical possibilities while anchoring its philosophical approach within a commitment to address the ethics and politics of learning relevant to the diverse experiences of children and families in Ontario.

Activating the Provincial Centre's Intentions

The Provincial Centre offers pedagogical orientations as touchstones for pedagogists and educators. The Centre supports pedagogists to activate these orientations as they shape their collaborations with educators in the process of grappling with particular locally meaningful concerns. Through a commitment to creating equitable, situated learning environments, the Provincial Center's mandate is consistent with a province-wide push to integrate HDLH in order to develop meaningful articulations of quality. Inspired by HDLH, we take up the necessity of refusing technical implementation practices and orient toward possibilities for relational learning. In particular, the Provincial Centre is committed to activating the calls to action for education put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and the vision for democratic, co-constructed education articulated in HDLH. From the TRC Calls to Action, we learn the importance of ensuring that our professional learning creates possibilities for thinking critically about settler colonial educational paradigms that further Euro-Western worldviews, politics, and inequities. Taken together, the Calls to Action and HDLH require that our professional learning network resists adhering to a singular pedagogical theory as correct, redemptive, or solution oriented. By foregrounding explicitly political orientations, we offer pedagogists and educators questions to grapple with, rather than practices to implement; we stand for ongoing pedagogical relationships. We propose participating in ethical and political pedagogical conversations as a method of professional learning that differs from professional development seminars concerned with gathering information necessary to properly implement an approach; we stand for difficult, public dialogue. Our pedagogical loyalties, mobilized through our orientations, are not committed to any one theory; we stand for creating more liveable, equitable, and democratic collective spaces of learning with children, families, and educators.

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