

## **EXEMPLAR ONE:**

### **DATA Model**

#### **Learning Outcome 1**

##### **Describe**

During this practicum I have been fascinated by the social interactions of the children in the babies room, (that is, under 1 year olds). On this particular day there were three babies, (2 lying and 1 sitting), who appeared to be taking turns as one gurgled and squealed and the other two watched and then also gurgled and squealed. During this interaction no two babies were gurgling at the same time, as if having a conversation with each other.

I have found that on previous occasions when these interactions are occurring, one of the younger teachers will pick up one of the babies and begin to play with them. I have wondered how to avoid this happening in order to observe the natural flow of the babies' conversation. How will it end? What will they do next? Do they just move on to another experience? So on this day when the teacher came over to the babies, I pointed out the interactions that were going on and how fascinating I found them and said "let's see what happens." The younger teacher appeared to be happy to do this with me.

##### **Analyse**

I felt that as part of a team while on practicum, I needed to communicate my intentions to the other teacher. Perhaps the other teacher feels that she needs to be seen as constantly active or interactive with the children as part of her job. However, I felt that by explaining what I was doing might also demonstrate to the other teacher that it is ok to observe sometimes and that perhaps she doesn't have to feel that she has to be directly involved all of the time.

The children do not appear to be upset or surprised when they are picked up out of their social interactions and are very happy with the one on one interaction that result from the interruption. However, they seem to look like they are trying to find their place again when put back down when the teacher needs to attend to another child.

Prior to becoming a teacher, all of my previous jobs have required that I be part of a team. Unlike my brothers I have never desired to be in a sole charge job. Therefore, whenever I am on practicum I work as if I am part of a team.

##### **Theorise**

I follow the centre's routines and try to keep up constant communication about ideas that I might like to implement so that the rest of the team are aware of what I am thinking. As stated in *Desirable Objectives and Practices*, (M.O.E., 1998), "Communication and consultation are central to the development of effective relationships and partnerships in early childhood education" (p.51). Therefore, in showing my enthusiasm with the other teacher, I could communicate my interest in wanting to continue to observe the children without perhaps giving the teacher the impression that I thought that picking up a child and playing with them is wrong.

Over the course of my practicums, I have also had to come to terms with the fact that I can not always be actively involved with the children at all times. That is, on

previous jobs I have always been typing, writing, negotiating, etc as opposed to stopping and watching, which would not feel to me that this is what I was paid for. However, I think that it is essential for me as a teacher to take a step back and observe children's interactions, both with each other, other adults and their environment in order to gain a greater awareness of the child, such as where they are developmentally, or what their interests might be. As Penrose (2004) states "The only way to gain this awareness is to watch, discover and learn" (p.10).

### **Act**

I will share my thoughts with my AT. I will not always stop the other teacher from her natural interactions with the children as I am also learning from her what she already knows about different activities, (songs, games etc), that the individual children enjoy, as she has obviously known the children for a lot longer than I have.

## **EXEMPLAR TWO:**

### **Four Critically Reflective Lenses Learning Outcome Two**

#### **Autobiographic lens as learner and teacher:**

My learning of new languages supported and encouraged from an early age on through the singing of nursery rhymes and songs in the three main languages of my home country. Without much understanding of the words, those songs were my favourites and I made my own sense of them. I love learning new languages and therefore being able to talk to my friends better and/or their families. This makes my belief strong that learning of a language should be supported. Songs are very powerful tools for the learning of a language, as they teach us the melody, the sound and the culture of a language in a playful and encouraging way and give children an active, participating place in the learning process.

Without the ability to express our feelings through talk, our possibilities for communication are restricted and we start to feel powerless and lonely. As a foreigner to the culture and language of New Zealand I know from my own experience how difficult it can be to express oneself in a second language and in a culture where different rules are in effect, may it only be a small difference like a different sense of humour.

I feel with children having to deal with the transfer from a home and a home language to kindergarten and to a completely new set of words and understandings. I work towards supporting their learning process and towards offering a safe, relaxed and encouraging learning environment.

#### **Student's eyes:**

The children I got to know at the kindergarten, who were brought up by parents or grandparents speaking their mother tongue to the child, not English, were playing on their own often or with children from the same language background, and only engaged in play with others in areas they felt safe and comfortable with.

A is Indian, speaking Tamil at home and only practices English with his older sister and at kindergarten. His mother is very supportive and interested in his progress at kindergarten but continues to communicate with A. in Tamil only.

I could observe A.'s desire to connect with others, to talk and to play, but lacking the words he is very shy and needs a lot of adult guidance with the structures of kindergarten. Having worked together during afternoon sessions in one-to-one situations he gradually started to feel comfortable and safe in my company and began expressing himself in words towards his new friend, who joined in his play at some point and me. One of his new sentences to use is: "it's my turn now" and he learned when and where to use it. This tells me that learning will come, but that children need to feel comfortable with their teachers and safe in the environment of kindergarten.

Other children (Japanese, Chinese and Indian) depending on their character and individual way of expression are more extroverted and engage in play using their mother tongue and learning new words from each other. One Chinese girl is quite able to speak English in complete sentences, but often prefers to remain silent if she feels uncomfortable in a situation.

I found that if a child's parents come from two different cultural backgrounds and if the child is brought up in an environment of two languages spoken he/she has far less difficulties dealing with the kindergarten setting.

#### **Colleague's experiences:**

The collaboration of home and kindergarten was stressed in a conversation with T, how parents can make a huge difference to their child's progress of learning, for example by reading simple books in English as Good-night-story. If children learn English on their own by watching TV their vocabulary is going to show it clearly.

The teachers here support children in learning English by facilitating games and small group activities that engage children in conversation and/or imitation and recognition of objects, feelings and people. The spoken aim of teachers is to create a safe and encouraging environment in which learning can develop without fear of failure. However there is no mention of how children learning English as another language are supported in the statements of the philosophy, culture and the teaching practices of this kindergarten.

T showed me how important the communication between the child's home and the kindergarten is for the child's learning. She always encourages children to speak, and her advice was to try and "bargain" with children to express themselves verbally by not reading body language and signs. Of course only if the child had been seen using words and is regarded capable of speaking the language to some extent.

A lecturer recommended to us during a lecture to try and learn some words in the child's mother tongue to let the child know his/her language is recognised here, valued and happily used. This could lead to the child taking on the role of the teacher at some point and teaching us more words and/or a song in her mother tongue, feeling that his/her culture is an important part of kindergarten and the world.

### **Theoretical literature**

"Language development is essential to intellectual growth. It enables us to make sense of the world around us" (p. 10, Ministry of Education, 1993). Students with developed senses of the major languages of their country will be able to interact and communicate internationally and nationally with people from various backgrounds.

The NZCF (Ministry of Education, 1993) also states that students learning another language from an early age on develop a broader social, intellectual and cultural view onto the world and are generally able to understand other people's point of view and thinking. Learning another language supports general understanding of linguistics and helps students to get to know their own culture and language better.

Clarke (1989) discusses the "silent period", where children from other languages learning English usually don't speak at first. She notes that children already have an understanding of the language, but are not ready to actively participate. This is seen as a natural part of acquiring the language through observing, that children once they feel ready will start to talk. Interaction is seen as a major part to help children at this stage to feel comfortable with the language.

Te Whariki, strand communication, Goal 2 guides us towards the development of communication skills for various situations and suggest the inclusion of other languages/mother tongue for children learning English as a second language.

### **EXEMPLAR THREE:**

#### **DATA model**

#### **Learning Outcome 3**

#### **Describe**

One of the first things I noticed when I started practicum at the kindergarten this morning was the language the teachers use with the children. For instance, when the children are speeding around in the trolleys, instead of telling them off and yelling "slow down" they will make more of a game of it and give them a 'speeding ticket'; and yet it has the same impact. When some of the boys were getting stuck on the mat, and ripping it a little, instead of saying "stop" or even "try going around it boys" instead it was "Look, the mat rips a little when you go over it, what do you think you could do instead of going over the top?" and the children come up with the answer themselves "go around it." This was something quite new to me

#### **Analysis**

I believe the teachers speak to the children like this because they have a philosophy of positive role modelling.

It was new to me because at the centres I have worked at, while not being overly strict, or rude, or mean to the children, they just haven't used quite as positive language as this. Because I came into the centres unqualified and inexperienced, I just assumed that how the teachers there were doing it is the way it should be done, without questioning it too much. Also, I guess I thought that when I was speaking to the children in situations like above, it was as a way to avert an accident or destruction of property, rather than as a means to help children learn at the same time. As I am learning, in early childhood every situation is a chance to learn something. As noted

earlier, the children seem to respond well to this kind of communication, and it results in an atmosphere that feels more positive.

### **Theorise**

Bandura's theory of modelling is relevant to this reflection. Finding a way of making a point rather than getting cross provides a positive role model of communication for children to copy. Asking the children to problem solve (What could you do instead?) instead of dictating also empowers children to solve their own problems; and as we know one of the principles of Te Whariki is empowerment.

### **Act**

This example of how to communicate positively with children appeals to me, and from now on I will endeavour to think before I speak. Could I ask them to problem solve this themselves? Is there a way of getting my point across in a more positive manner?