

# Mind the Gap

The spaces between intentions and practices in using the Early Years Learning Framework

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# Seeing the gaps

- More than a language change
- Understanding learning outcomes

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# Seeing the gaps

- Educators' understandings of intentional teaching
- Tensions between responsiveness and child agency

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# Negotiating the gaps

Educators are invited to draw on multiple perspectives

*“Different theories about early childhood inform approaches to children’s learning and development. Early childhood educators draw upon a range of perspectives in their work”*



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DEEWR, 2009, p11



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# Diverse perspectives provide diverse interpretations

When asked to select up to three perspectives which they draw on, Victorian educators (n=204) selected:

- socio-cultural approaches (31%)
- critical theory (6%)
- socio behavioural (21%)
- developmental (28%)
- post-structural (8%)
- I don't know/ engage with any theory (3%)
- other (1%)



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# Interpretation is key to implementation

*“policy messages are not inert, static ideas that are transmitted unaltered into local actors’ minds to be accepted, rejected or modified to fit local needs and conditions. Rather, the agents must first notice, then frame, interpret, and construct meaning for policy messages”*

Spillane, J. Reiser, B. Reimer, T., 2002, p. 392



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# The National Quality Standard requires an educational program to be delivered consistent with the EYLF

*“An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child’s learning and development”*

Source: <http://acecqa.gov.au/Educational-program-and-practice#sthash.aMZmwCFJ.dnui>



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# However there are some complex ideas in the EYLF that are particularly open to interpretation

For example, I have very poor consistency in my data about whether the EYLF intends

- Educators to *initiate* an interaction with a child when being responsive
- That learning through play leads to children's accurate understandings
- Intentional teaching to always be teacher-directed



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# My quandary...

Given the diversity of the theoretical perspectives in early childhood, and the abstract nature of the early childhood language, how do we mediate our understandings of the EYLF through our own particular theoretical perspective?

What might be the implications of this when we have an imperative towards more equitable outcomes experiences for all children?



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# Avoiding the fall - Looking for the 'safe' space

Curricula documents place a 'responsibility' on educators to ensure learning in specified learning outcomes and in the case of Australia, to show evidence of this specified learning through a national quality standard instrument which...

"..can lead to a view of teaching as instrumental"

"The safe side of knowledge"



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(Säfström, 2003 p.20).

Drawing on Levinas and his ideas of ‘said’ and ‘saying’ (Levinas, 1998), invites possibilities to consider young children as knowledgeable and approach learning, rather than as simply a transmission of desirable knowledge, but as an ‘ethical encounter’.

Viewing the EYLF as a ‘said’, Levinas invites us to listen and watch as ‘inferior’ or ‘susceptible’ (Todd, 2001) to the infant –in order to engage in a ‘saying’ of learning –creating an individualised and personal response to the infants initiations of learning.



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In this way the educator goes beyond being simply 'responsible' for the infant's learning (as implied) in the NQS ... to be 'response-able' – recognising the individual infant's competencies and agency to contribute to decisions and experience learning beyond the limitations of the 'said'.

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