
2020 ECPN Pedagogist Review

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Envisioning Our Work: A Reflective Postsecondary Pedagogist Report

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We are five pedagogists who are part of the Post-Secondary Institution (PSI) stream within the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (ECPN). With this reflective report we are attempting to bring a clearer vision to our understanding of the role of the pedagogist and generate some insights about the *transformative* work we have been trying to cultivate over the past year in the various early childhood settings that have ties to our respective postsecondary institutes. As early childhood care and education faculty, we are committed to practicum as an experience that enmeshes theory and practice in ways that shape and nurture particular pedagogical dispositions within our students. We recognize how necessary it is to build strong partnerships with particular early learning centres in our respective communities. It is through these partnerships that we can open up new dialogues with the ECCE community that mobilize change and spark transformative shifts in practice. It is our hope that these shifts will enliven early childhood settings with innovative curriculum practices and a deeper understanding of how to experiment and think with the [British Columbia Early Learning Framework](#) (BC ELF). The overarching vision of the BC ELF is “respectfully living and learning together” and our work as pedagogists is concerned with creating conditions for collectivity alongside educators and ECCE students and cultivating and upholding values that bring this vision to life in early childhood classrooms (Government of British Columbia, 2019, p. 12).

We liken the process of collective thinking to *building a nest*. With this metaphor we imagine the ways in which birds compose something beyond simply a vessel that holds life. A careful weaving of grasses, twigs, hair from horses (as seen in the photo below) – natural and discarded human-made materials – are entwined together as birds give shape and strength to the nest. We envision how the nest exists with the forces of the world, for in its strength it is also vulnerable and exposed to the ever-changing climate and precarity of our times. Together, we notice the steadfast labouring of birds in our surroundings and the ways they attend to composing and recomposing their nests. This continuous process helps us envision our work and magnifies the importance of upholding pedagogical values that are designed to strengthen our commitments to each other and our sense of place. As we think with the metaphor of building a nest, we want to illuminate the intense co labouring, responsibility and care that are involved in weaving together a meaningful collective life (Vintimilla & Berger, 2019).

We describe this work as *transformational* because pedagogy itself asks critical questions that activate new understandings about what it means to live well with others. This pedagogical work is deeply relational and context specific – each early childhood centre has a history and a vibrant culture, and when we step into these spaces, we are compelled to listen and respond to the dynamic life that is

constantly unfolding. That sensitive act of listening helps us to identify and nurture specific values that hold meaning to the children, families and educators in that particular place.



Photo: Kirsten MacDougall Seiler

The nature of our work as PSI pedagogists with the ECPN is complex, and we are guided by a reconceptualist orientation to education and curriculum which welcomes a disposition to engage with “a loss of certainty, control and predictability, openness to the presence of many voices and views, and the need to engage with those other views and explore a world of profound diversity” (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2011, p. 6).

We bring this perspective to how we carefully create assignments or *inquiries* for (and with) ECCE students to engage with in their practicum experiences. These inquiries are designed in ways that provoke students to formulate questions to research into their own lived experiences as “becoming educators” and that generate new understandings about how children learn and actively participate in curriculum inquiry processes. We are acutely aware that the type of language and expectations we bring to the assignments has an impact on the subject formation of the student (Todd, 2001). Our intention is to nurture a disposition within our students to think with the world and create pedagogies that respond to the current times and acknowledge the complex worlds children are inhabiting and will someday

inherit. Together, we are trying to reenvision practicum in ways that invite students, educators and children to think together and embark on a processual journey and a search for new understandings, rather than leading children towards ready-made ideas and outcomes. We encourage the mentors who work with students to take up the inquiry processes in ways that are ***alive, relational, and embedded in life and which can slowly unfold over time***. With this orientation, we are actively resisting a linear approach to curriculum or the implementation of a series of activities that evaluate children's developmental skills.

We hope this descriptive piece has gestured toward not only what orients us in our work as PSI pedagogists within the ECPN, but also toward a continual transformation as we work alongside students, children and early childhood educators to shape new ways of learning and living well together.

References

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