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Voices heard and lessons learnt: Exploring multiple knowledges and local participation in a community-based integrated early childhood development project in rural South Africa

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Abstract: Following calls for diverse and contextual perspectives of the rich lives of young children, their families and communities from/in the Global South, this paper presents critical reflections emerging from a three-year (2016-2019) community-based Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Development (ECD) project implemented in the rural Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. It explores the critical relationship established between a range of stakeholders involved in this project as reflected on by two community activists working together in the area of early childhood in the province for thirty years. This article highlights the importance of situating any community development initiative aimed at addressing early childhood provision in marginalised communities within a social justice framework. This includes identifying constraints inherent in unequal relations of power that risk undermining solidarity and agency for community stakeholders. It foregrounds accountability measures that emerge from local initiatives rather than from narrow predetermined project outcomes. This provides an opportunity to learn from, and engage with, experiences from the margins, thereby challenging some dominant narratives circulating, and often informing, early childhood policy and provision.

Key words: early childhood, community participation, South Africa, non-profit organisations, power relations.

Introduction

"Social justice and inequality is a very old theme, but one which seems to have taken on a new urgency, as globalization – and global economies and global communications – intensifies to ever greater levels" (Penn, 2005: xii).

The long historical relationship between global and local ideas of early childhood care and education (ECCE) has emerged strongly in the current great global interest in the provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services (Campbell-Barr & Bogatić, 2017; Pérez & Saveedra, 2017; Ebrahim, Okwany & Barry, 2019). In South Africa, Rudolph (2017, p. 78) notes that "Early Childhood Development (ECD) has slowly gained legitimacy during the 20 years of democratic rule" through its identification as a national priority in the government's National Development Plan (NDP) published in 2011, the development of a National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (RSA, 2015), the South African National Curriculum Framework for children from Birth to Four (NCF) (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Recently South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, announced that responsibility for early childhood development (ECD) centres will migrate from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education with the aim of moving towards "two years compulsory ECD for all children before they enter Grade One" (Ramaphosa, 2019). This migration of departmental responsibility for ECD is "motivated by the understanding that education should be uniform and continuous" and strongly focused on 'early learning' (J. Murray, personal communication, 14 February 2019) in order to "improve the quality of education in the country" (Kubheka, 2019).

Similar to those identified elsewhere around the world (see Adriany, 2018, Lightfoot-Rueda, 2018, Viruru, 2005, Penn, 2005) Rudolph (2017) highlights how dominant global discourses of ECEC/ECD are constructing early childhood policy and practice in South Africa. She cites a range of examples, including "narrow notions of evidence, western child development, understanding of the child as return of investment and referencing urban middle-class community contexts and values" (Rudolph, 2017, p. 77). While 'early learning' is certainly a key component of early childhood programmes and projects, in a country characterised by a deeply troubled socio-political past with continuing, persistent educational and economic inequality, early childhood has been highlighted as an important vector for empowerment and economic and social transformation more broadly.

Currently 12.8 million (65%) children in South Africa are living below the "upper bound" poverty line (with a per capita income below R1,138[1] per month) signalling the very high rates of child poverty that characterise the country (Hall & Sambu, 2018, p. 138). Poverty rates across the nine provinces that make up the country are substantially different. In the Eastern Cape Province 79.6% of children live in income poor households (Hall & Sambu, 2018). Child poverty is most prevalent in the rural areas of the former homelands[2] where 86% of children live below the poverty line compared to 51% of children in urban areas (Hall & Sambu, 2018). The Department of Social Development provides some financial assistance through the disbursement of the Child Support Grant (CSG)[3]. As Hall & Sambu (2018, p. 139) note, "[I] ntroduced in 1998…the CSG has become the single biggest programme for alleviating child poverty in South Africa". Increasing access to early childhood provision is therefore entangled with a range of other structural and systemic inequalities that reinforce the need to carefully trace the relationship between the communities in which early childhood services are located and the ways in which the need for these services are identified and supported. These services include increasing access to healthcare, education, safety and protection, and nutrition.

This article presents the reflections and actions of two community workers tasked with implementing the three-year Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Development (IAECD) project across three marginalised communities in rural parts of the Eastern Cape Province. Findings identify the importance of establishing transversal (rather than horizontal) collaborative partnerships among a range of project stakeholders such as diverse community members, NPO service providers, and the project funder. The findings highlight the value of careful and critical deconstruction of the epistemological frameworks and practices that shape 'ways of knowing and doing early childhood' (Ebrahim, 2012, p. 80) in marginalised communities. Local, contextualised early childhood projects such as the IAECD serve to counter the dominant and historical "reliance on technocratic [early childhood] interventions and a justification for intervention that mostly draws on questionable paradigms of poverty" (Penn, 2005, p. xii) and narrow discourses of early

[1] Approximate conversion as of February 2019: €72

[2] Established by the apartheid government, these were designated areas established to segregate so-called ethnically homogenous groups to permit self-governance. Approximately 3.5 million people were evicted, often forcefully from their homes and relocated to homelands (Ross, 1999).

[3] This consists of a monthly payment of R410 (€26) made to those who 1) care for children 18 years or under, and 2) meet income threshold (R4,100 (€258) for single caregiver, and R8,200 (€516) for married caregivers) (Hall & Sambu, 2018).

childhood as principally about 'early learning'. Through an action learning approach we seek to understand these communities as complex contexts where race, class and culture intersect to inform understandings of young children and their belonging in a diverse South Africa (Rudolph, 2017).

Early Childhood Provision in South Africa: The Role of Non-Profit Organisations

Across South Africa, non-profit organisations (NPOs) remain key providers of a range of services and projects improving access to, and the quality of, early childhood services for young children and their families living in marginalised communities (Atmore, Van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012). As Penn (1997) notes, these organisations were historically established to offer training and support to early childhood educators and developed a range of programmes and resources to support their work. Given the scope of challenges facing these communities, early childhood encompasses not only the provision of education and care to young children, but a range of services that fall within a 'community development' framework. The practice of community development is, according to Bhattacharyya (2004, p. 5) "different from other endeavours in that it aims at building solidarity and agency by adhering to three practice principles, namely, self-help, felt needs, and participation." The way this is achieved in practice is undoubtedly highly variable and largely dependent on each NPOs commitment to addressing social injustice and inequality in marginalised communities.

In relation to early childhood NPOs, Penn (2019, p. 6) states that a commonly held perception is that:

> [A]n organisation that provides some kind of service for young children is per se undertaking an equitable act, whatever the origins and mode of conduct of the organisation and whatever the wider circumstances in which it operates. Intervention in early childhood is deemed to be so important in improving the life chances of any child that niceties of procedure and programming are overlooked.

It cannot, as Penn warns, be taken-for-granted that early childhood interventions are necessarily empowering young children and their families. Without critical reflection on the "niceties of procedure and programming" there are risks that such projects serve to further marginalise project stakeholders. Taking heed of Penn's concern here, coupled with the knowledge

that "Early childhood development, education and care programmes don't exist in a vacuum' (Urban, Cardini & Romero, 2018, p. 3), early childhood service providers are tasked with highlighting the challenges and possibilities inherent in privileging local knowledge production and meaning-making, and the building of trust, solidarity and agency. As Moss (2013, p. 371) contends, "Good [Early Childhood Education and Care] systems…are products of more democratic, more egalitarian, more solidaristic societies – qualities which are themselves good for children and adults alike." Thus, as Penn (2005, p. 44) stresses, "It is important that any policies or practical initiatives to help [marginalised communities] do not make things worse rather than better". Without a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the interconnected dimensions of knowledge(s), practices and values (Urban et al., 2018) as relates to early childhood projects, there is little scope for the establishment of collective activism and sense of responsibility to ensure that early childhood projects are both sustainable and centred on local, culturally informed, ways of life. The focus of this paper is not the diverse range of programmes that comprise the IAECD project, but rather the broader issues that need to be considered when conceptualising and implementing such a project. As Urban et al. (2018, p. 6-7) point out:

> It is a crucial task to enable systematic encounters and democratic dialogue between all stakeholders in order to raise awareness of our own and others' values, and to work towards a shared orientation towards rights, equality, and social justice for all children and families…Education, primary healthcare, nutrition, children's rights, social cohesion, equality and other aspects that contribute to the ECD/ECEC system are often grounded in different, and not necessarily matching, conceptualisations, understandings, terminologies and accepted practices.

Theoretical Framework

Tracing the contours of the 'new conditions of the times' (Malaguzzi, 1969 cited in Moss, 2018) in which early childhood provision is situated both globally, and in South Africa specifically, requires critical engagement with diverse theoretical perspectives and concepts. Drawing on the work of postcolonial and reconceptualist scholars (Freire, 1994; Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Viruru, 2005; Arndt, 2012), critical theory (Giroux, 2009), and international perspectives on community work (Larsen, Sewpaul & Hole, 2014), notions of power, solidarity and agency are usefully employed to frame an analysis of particular community development practices as relates to the IAECD project.

Highlighting the need for careful and critical engagement with the notion of 'community development', Freire's work points directly to the need for communities to clarify for themselves what their dreams are and, of course, how to put them into action (De Figueiredo-Cowen & Gastaldo, 1995). This gives rise to the importance of creating critical conditions in which these questions might emerge, where dreams can be articulated and spaces and relations (re)discovered to translate these dreams into action. Some of these critical conditions would include participation in conceptualising, implementing and evaluating community development projects, while simultaneously acknowledging that "participation is always related to power" (Larsen, Sewpaul & Hole, 2014, p. 7). The careful inspection of these established hierarchies of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1982), shaped historically through experiences of colonial and apartheid ideology and discourses, and more recently by neoliberal forces, sheds light on the unequal and unjust set of broader social, cultural, economic and political relations that directly give form to local lived experiences of young children and those around them. A view of power as 'a multiplicity of force relations' (Foucault, 1979, p. 92) helps identify how it is constituted through action and works to frame "the boundaries of possibility that govern action" (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006, p. 73).

What exactly is meant by the term 'community' warrants further conceptualisation. As Arndt (2012, p. 23) notes, "[C]ommunity is crucial to social and political life" and can be conceptualised in a number of ways, including as an entity or as an encounter. The notion of community might be viewed as an entity seen as representing a particular group of people (Arndt, 2012). However, drawing on the wok of Todd (2004), Arndt (2012, p. 29) highlights how the concept of community might be seen "as an encounter, as a "responsible mode of social togetherness" (Todd, 2004, p. 337). Todd (2004, p. 337) herself draws on the work of Emmanuel Levinas to show an understanding of community "as a signifying encounter with difference that is not founded upon knowledge about the other, but upon a being-for and feeling-for the other". Yet, in community work there is the obligation to act, to work in systematic ways as a "force against a [neoliberal] market that is completely hostile to excluded people" (Astray, Alonso & Alonso, 2014, p. 38). All actors are important as community work "move[s] into communities and [tries] to build from the bottom-up instead of from the top-down as before" (Astray, Alonso & Alonso, 2014, p. 38). Thus, community might be conceptualised as an encounter and as "a moment of signification through which subjects enact a form of social togetherness" (Todd, 2004, p. 340), for example through the avenue of 'early childhood'.

Here Bhattacharyya's (2004) discussion of the need to promote solidarity and agency is relevant and useful. He proposes that solidarity is based upon shared interests and or/circumstances in the face of a complex range of inequalities facing individuals. Importantly, erosions of solidarity at the macro-level (for example, fraught historical processes, large-scale poverty etc.) are mirrored in every social space (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 17) and therefore need to be addressed at the local level in order to increase potential for action. Individuals are agentic, albeit they are heavily constrained by structural and systemic inequalities (Bhattacharyya, 2004). Thus, counteracting locally specific historic processes of erosion of agency (Bhattacharyya, 2004) is entangled with "what people believe they can do and change, however small and non-confrontational those actions are" (Penn, 2005, p. xiii). Agency is especially important in situations of poverty as Munyakho (1992, p. 1, cited in Penn, 2005, p. 21) writes: "poverty is compounded by a sense of powerlessness, of exclusion, of lack of a rightful place that accompanies the failure of some of their expectations and their lack of access to the resources they need or consider they have a right to". Viewing the notion of 'community' as an act of encounter acknowledges the integral part that power plays. Thus, "patterns of power" become "familiar and normalised in a community, and conversely, become disrupted by change (MacEinri, 1994)" (Arndt, 2012, p. 29). The IAECD project, centred on mobilising the community around the needs of its youngest citizens, resulted in a "redefinition of power relations and interpersonal encounters (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007)" (Arndt, 2012, p. 29).

Larsen, Sewpaul & Hole (2014, p. 10) note that "critical reflection and reflexivity is an important part of community work both for the community worker and for the people involved in projects". Critical reflexivity is defined as questioning "one's own practice as a community worker…to understand on what ground one's decisions are taken and what ideas and concerns are leading to one's actions" (Larsen, Sewpaul & Hole, 2014, p. 10). Viruru (2005) asserts that within a postcolonial framing it needs to be understood that the colonized experience continues to constrain how those "subjected to oppressive conditions" are viewed and treated, and that to seek social transformation requires adopting an activist position" (Viruru, 2005, p. 14). It is perhaps to this awakening of the activist position that this article speaks most, especially in relation to those who have historically held power in community development work – the funder or donor, as well as the service provider tasked with conceptualising and implementing the project. This discussion suggests that community workers might come to position themselves as 'border crossers' throughout the project lifespan. As Giroux (2009,

p. 80) notes, "becoming a border crosser engaged in a productive dialogue with others means producing a space in which those dominant social relations, ideologies, and practices that erase the specificity of the voice of the other must be challenged and overcome". This can be a challenging endeavour as "the role of community worker is multifaceted and demands complex skills." (Larsen & Hole, 2014, p. 94). It is in this capacity as 'border crosser' – most notably with regards to the community worker as working at the intersection of the funder/NPO/community interface that raises "questions about established or ongoing practice, the issues at stake and what contributes to the challenges that people meet in their community" (Larsen, Sewpaul & Hole, 2014, p. 10).

Methodology

This article draws on some of the findings generated by a critical action inquiry approach that afforded the opportunity to undertake research 'with' rather than 'on' (Heron & Reason, 2006) two community workers involved in this study. Through co-operative inquiry opportunities were created to foster "understanding, reflection and action" (Lather, 2012, p. 555) on the unexpected, and exciting, experiences of solidarity and agency that began to emerge during the design and implementation of the IAECD project. This prompted two community workers to seek ways to "create new understandings by making conscious the social, political, professional, economic and ethical assumptions constraining or supporting individual and collective action in a specific context" (Trehan, 2011, p. 187). A key part of action inquiry is the element of critical reflection. As Larsen, Sewpaul and Hole (2014, p. 10) note, critical reflexivity is defined as questioning "one's own practice as a community worker…to understand on what ground one's decisions are taken and what ideas and concerns are leading to one's actions" (Larsen, Sewpaul & Hole, 2014, p. 10). To facilitate critical reflexivity, the first author was approached to take on the role of 'critical friend' to facilitate the community workers' cycles of reflection and action in the IAECD project. She has worked in the early childhood development NPO sector in South Africa and her role as 'critical friend' emerges from her long-standing relationship with the community workers in question and a deep, shared commitment to work towards "a more ethical world based on principles of social justice" (Rallis & Rossman, 2000, p. 84). Yet, having moved into a position of research and teaching on early childhood in the Global South, her position as critical friend meant that she provided another lens through which to interpret what was emerging in the IAECD project. As Costa and Kallick (1993, p. 50) describe, 'A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who

asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens...". This configuration was powerful as it was underpinned by a deeply reflective approach whereby the author and the community workers' understanding of advocacy work in the field of early childhood was both problematized and enriched.

From January 2016, bi-monthly detailed conversations and semi-structured interviews were held with one or both of the community workers and provides data for this article. This was complemented with document analysis drawing on annual and quarterly reports to the IAECD project funder, interviews with a diverse range of members from across the three communities that comprise the IEACD project (undertaken by the two community workers). We regularly returned to common themes that emerged during our conversations, interviews and through document analysis. These raised questions about:

- Who has the power to define what early childhood provision looks like at the local level?
- How is the notion of 'community' conceptualised in the IAECD project?
- How might community work in the field of early childhood privilege local knowledge production/knowledge making processes (and thereby resist knowledge transfer processes)?
- How are these processes shaped by broader relations of power and politics?
- How might the IAECD project open up possibilities to create 'a place of encounter for all citizens, children and adults alike' (Moss, 2013, p. 45)?

A key starting point for our 'productive dialogue' (Rallis & Rossman, 2000, p. 84) was the recognition that knowledges is/are produced and co-constructed: it/they are not given. This was helpful in recognising the importance of political choices in early childhood programmes (Moss, 2017). The action research spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) was useful in planning our cycles of action and reflection. The process consisted of the community workers highlighting key actions in relation to a particular part of the IAECD projects, which would then become the focus of our dialogic inquiry. For example, in one conversation the community workers agreed that:

> The underlying assumption that has infused much of our NPO ethos (in this geographical area) has been that power needs to rest with the NPO in early childhood projects in terms of conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation. However, drawing on the ideas of action

> research and learning as inspired by, for example, Freire (1970) and others, the IAECD project has opened up opportunities for a different approach with unexpected outcomes. This is closely tied up with relations of power – who holds it – as well as spaces, or lack thereof, to allow a range of community stakeholders to have a voice. (Community worker 1)

This discussion is a reflection of particular actions taken in the IAECD project, which in turn generated further points of reflection that were de(re) constructed in subsequent conversations, informing further actions. Thus, "the specific purpose of reflective process is to expose or unsettle dominant assumptions with the expressed purpose of challenging and changing dominant power relations" (Fook & Askeland, 2006, p. 47).

Research Setting: Contextualising the IAECD Project

The IAECD project was implemented in three communities in the northern reaches of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. These communities fall under a single ward[4]. Approximately 16 000 people, predominantly black African, live in these communities, of which 1861 are young children (5 years and younger)[5]. According to provincial data 57% of children six years and under live in homes without access to piped water, 36% live in households with no toilet, 57% receive early antenatal care visits, and 13% are born in public facilities weighing below 2.5kg (Hall, Sambu, Berry, Giese & Almeleh, 2017).

In 2015 a Scandinavian funder provided the resources to build an early childhood education centre in one of the communities creating tension with the remaining two communities in the area. This experience prompted the funder to approach the two experienced community workers (employed by Longhill NPO) to explore how available funding could be channelled into early childhood services across all three communities. This initiated a lengthy consultative process with a range of community stakeholders to identify the early childhood needs and available resources within these communities. The community workers adopted a participatory rural appraisal (PAR) approach.

Several standard PAR strategies were used, including, transect walk, community stakeholder meetings, social mapping and door-to door house visits.

[4] Smallest local government unit
[5] Statistics drawn from local clinic figures and are approximate.

In order to get to know each of the communities, the community workers and funder community liaison officer undertook a transect walk in each of the three communities before holding a one-day workshop. They observed the surroundings during the transect walk and stopped to talk to people they met about early childhood matters. They wanted to find out "how it works" for a range of different community members in each of the sites. This helped them to focus discussion in the workshops. Questions centred on establishing what early childhood services were already available in the respective communities, how accessible these services were and what the main reasons for non-participation were.

The next phase of the process, undertaken by service providers with community workers and volunteers from the three communities, consisted of social mapping and door-to-door house visits. Social mapping is a tool used as a springboard for community discussions about inequalities, social problems and coping strategies. Following the social mapping and then throughout the project families identified as marginalised were visited in their homes in order to encourage them to participate in the various programmes offered as part of the IAECD project. Available programmes were described and personal invitations issued in a bid to start forging a relationship with each family. The choice to participate on all or any or none of the programmes was up to the potential participant – if done sensitively they invariably wanted to be part of something that recognized them as people – worthy of time, effort and investment

Through this approach the community workers were able to establish relationships with a range of community members. This facilitated the mobilisation of key stakeholders and structures within that community and the identification, by the respective communities, of the nature and scope of early childhood services most needed by young children and their families. The PRA approach generated a range of shared constraints across the three communities. A high percentage of children did not have access to early childhood education services (approximately 1024 out of 1861 children). These self-described socially fragmented communities highlighted a number of child-headed households or grandmothers caring for young children without receiving the child support grant. Overcrowding and high dropout rates in local primary schools, high rates of alcoholism, foetal alcohol syndrome and unemployment. The Department of Education automatically removed a child's name from school enrolment after ten days if no accompanying identification documentation was presented. A range of individuals also expressed frustration at their inability to intervene in situ-

ations where the wellbeing of children was compromised due to concerns for their own safety.

Longhill NPO can be characterised as a grassroots organisation that values community participation. However, as Campbell (2003, p. 196 cited in Penn, 2005, p. 180) notes, "grassroots participation is by no means a "magic bullet". As the discussion below outlines, engaging with and listening to local voices is integral to inform an early childhood project, such as the IAECD, however, this must be done alongside an acute awareness of "the power structures that shape what change is possible" (Penn, 2005, p. 180).

Findings and Discussion

The two community workers featured in this study have worked collaboratively for Longhill NPO for thirty years. They have run a number of long-term early childhood projects in marginalised villages and towns in the Eastern Cape Province and have an intimate understanding of the challenges facing young children, their families and caregivers. Community members reported feelings of distrust of 'development' initiatives, which could be based on the range of government-led and non-profit sector-led development projects and programmes that have targeted many of the same areas in which they work. For example, one community member expressed that this was as if people had simply come to "view them in their poverty". Add to this the long history of aid and development associated with the notion of rescue (Hayden & Wai, 2013). In other words, "the rescuers identified priorities and promoted those programs that they deemed to be in the best interest of the target populations and communities" (Hayden & Wai, 2013, p. 4). This approach stemmed from the belief that marginalised populations were "monolithic and needy in similar ways" and as such" similar tactics could be applied universally (Toomey, 2011)" (Hayden & Wai, 2013, p. 4). Given such experiences it is unsurprising that a feeling of community cynicism permeated the community workers first contact with project stakeholders. Here the concept of community was a useful starting point in the critical reflection process. Framing these communities as places of encounter, and not only as political and social entities, invoked the recognition of how community development projects might make explicit the ethical framework that underpins the work to be undertaken. Recognising work with marginalised communities as inevitably political praxis requires community workers to "position themselves in relationship to the world they are engaging with" (Urban, 2014, p. 246). A key part of this positioning is challenging what Urban (2014, p. 246) argues is the "epistemological hierarchy". This refers to

"top-down structure of knowledge-production-and-application" in the field of early childhood and the need to replace this with "much more reciprocal and inclusive ways of understanding, orienting and theorising early childhood practices" (Urban, 2014, p. 246).

Two key aspects of the IAECD project emerged as central to its ability to mobilise fragmented communities around early childhood services and thus directly relates to the "power structures" that Penn (2005) claims shape potential for change. The first relates to a reconceptualising of the role of the funder in the IAECD project and the consequences this had for reconfiguring hegemonic power relations in community work. The second aspect relates to the establishment of an intersectoral / intercommunity early childhood forum – the Sinako ECD Forum - that emerged as a bottom-up initiative and mobilised a range of community, civil and state structures in an attempt to ensure locally relevant and sustainable early childhood services. The Forum, which began as a means to build capacity in providing an integrated approach to early childhood across the three communities, soon became a mechanism through which agency was reasserted and forms of solidarity established.

Reconfiguring relations of power in the IAECD project

Upon reflecting on configurations of power in the relationship between funders and Longhill NPO, one of the community workers reflects that:

> Projects are often initiated within NPOs through the development of specific programme plans that have set targets and objectives and include the identification of the location in which the envisaged project is to be implemented. This tends to take place before the actual engagement with the community, in order to apply for, and secure, the funding necessary to sustain the project. In these communities we reversed the process – we first consulted with the communities, listened to their aspirations, what they needed and hoped for, for their children, and the challenges they faced. This was entirely supported by the funding body. (Community worker 1)

The approach described above remains a common feature in the contemporary practice of the early childhood non-profit sector as highlighted by Penn when she writes that most international non-government organisations (INGOs) "rely heavily on charitable donors and foundations, which in turn have their own agendas and priorities, which the INGO must to

a certain extent observe in order to maintain continuity of funding" (Penn, 2019, p. 10). In the IAECD project the funder acknowledged their acute lack of understanding about the community contexts, and thus challenged the hierarchical model of funder driven projects that risked undermining "local confidence, capacity and initiative" (Hayden & Wai, 2013, p. 5). This was integral to establishing a relationship of trust with Longhill NPO (and the community workers), as well as members of the three communities served by the IAECD project.

As the project developed the funder became increasingly interested in gaining a much deeper understanding of the three communities. The funder's liaison community officer thus began to regularly meet with local community members through site visits without these meetings being arranged through Longhill NPO. In past projects, as the community worker notes below:

> The NPO often serves as the 'go-between' in the relationship between the funder and the communities. This means that community workers on the project can decide which community members the funder (or their representative) talks to in order to gauge how the project is going. In the IAECD Project, the NPO did not mediate this relationship as the project developed. This resulted in increased transparency and the deepening of trust in the relationship. This is important because this results in a different kind of accountability – one that is is not limited to evaluating the extent to which a project meets narrowly defined programmatic outcomes. (Community worker 2)

Opportunities for knowledge sharing among the funder and diverse community members strengthened dialogue and served to further challenge hierarchical relations of power in the project. Extracts from interviews with community members provide insight into their experiences on the IAECD project:

> I had a vision for the young children in this place, but alone that vision was meaningless. This project has united us and together we are working for the well-being of children and to break the cycle of poverty. (Community member 1)

> Not once have I been told that my thoughts and ideas don't matter. The impact of this programme on me has been huge, not only as a Health Worker, but as a father and a member of a community…There is a new unity around children in the community. (Community member 2)

> I have really learnt the importance of respecting all people in their spaces. The door to door visits, the social mapping and community gatherings was a remarkable process. People want to be heard and have a need to belong. (Community member 3)

A result of the funder's more nuanced understanding of the IAECD project resulted in flexibility in relation to project timeframes, budgetary requirements, and adherence to strict protocols. What emerged was a sense of solidarity that helped liberate the community workers from feeling "caught in a dilemma" between being responsive to community members and the demands of the project's donor agency (Hayden & Wai, 2013, p. 13).

The establishment of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Forum: A story of 'being able'

The establishment of an ECD Forum to represent the interests across the three communities involved in the IAECD project emerged as a self-mobilised initiative among a range of community members. The ECD Forum chose the name 'Sinako', which translated into English means 'being able', to signify their desire to address the complex early childhood needs in an integrated manner. The Forum consists of representatives from local government departments (e.g. Departments of Social Development, Education, Health, Agriculture, Tourism, Home Affairs), the local municipality and ward committee, the Community Works Programme, as well as local community-based organisations and even the local taxi association. The Forum have monthly official meetings hosted across the thirteen early childhood education centres that are currently established. As a result of expressed community needs the Forum has, amongst other things, co-ordinated a financial management training workshop, undertaken recruitment and communications for early childhood training programmes, and established an active and responsive Whatsapp group. The Forum is made up of six elected members (Executive Committee) from across the three communities. New elections are run every two years with an individual serving a maximum of two terms. Anyone willing to be part of the Forum is invited to join.

This consolidated partnership not only expanded networks of support for young children, their families and the wider communities, it also reconfigured relations of power within the broader IAECD project. Hayden and Wai (2013, p. 11) write that a potential weakness of community-based approaches to early childhood (such as characterised by the IAECD project) is that "participation of locals in development and decision making

could be tokenistic, could unwittingly enhance exclusion of some groups, could undermine local systems and/or reinforce neglect by the state, and could reduce the efficacy of communities that become reliant on external resource allocation". While it may be impossible to mitigate every potential weakness in a community-based project, the establishment of the ECD Forum early on in the IAECD lifespan played a critical part in helping to address some of these concerns. For example, during one round of door-to-door visits undertaken by community programme participants two children with serious health needs were identified. This was communicated to the ECD Forum and that same day two Executive Committee members volunteered to accompany the community members who had earlier in the day visited the households where the children lived. In less than twenty four hours both children had been referred to the relevant medical care. The Forum kept abreast of these developments and both children have recovered.

The ECD Forum is expressly intersectoral in nature as it aims to ensure that the state takes an active role in addressing early childhood related issues across the three communities. This is done by holding local government officials to account when necessary, and drawing on government support mechanisms already in place but perhaps underutilised. For example, where it has been identified that eligible caregivers are not receiving the child support grant, the ECD Forum has immediately contacted the Department of Social Development local representative to ensure the application for necessary documents is swiftly attended to. Through the Forum these communities have, among a range of other examples, successfully accessed a school feeding initiative, ensured children are enrolled at local primary schools, and been connected to a range of support services at both local and provincial government level.

The aim here is not to suggest that the ECD Forum serves as a panacea to early childhood challenges in these communities. We highlight how networks and structures can challenge conventional forms of top-down project management that inevitably limit the decision-making power of the community (Hayden & Wai, 2013). This is supported by a statement from one of the community workers:

> It has certainly not always been easy, or comfortable, for some individuals working for the NPO to accept what they call 'the power of the ECD Forum' in decision-making processes and the like. But I feel it has been an extremely exciting aspect of this particular project. I be-

lieve that the Forum is genuinely working in the best interests of not only the young children in the communities, but for the communities as a whole. (Community worker 2)

Way Forward

In this article an attempt has been made to provide glimpses into how meaningful dialogue might be mediated in marginalised and often fragmented communities. Key themes that emerge as integral to the IAECD project are those of reconfiguring relations of power, taking into account that this is not necessarily an easy or comfortable experience. Establishing relations of trust and solidarity among project stakeholders takes time and commitment, as well as the desire to understand ways of knowing and doing childhood in locally specific and detailed ways. What follows includes a few key considerations when allies and communities commit to establishing grassroots orientated initiatives.

– The nature of the entry into the community influences the foundation for any grassroots oriented initiative. By observing and listening carefully, it is possible to connect with the community context, felt needs and vision for early childhood services, as well as mobilizing maximum participation. This can take time and rushing can be counter- productive. The community workers reported that they spent approximately 3 months in the IAECD project getting to know the people and the environment and seeing the needs for themselves. They explain that while it might seem expensive – this investment of time saves making avoidable mistakes.

– Each community is different and has its own unique dynamics. Connecting with the specific local context increases community confidence and ownership in the process. It also builds community cohesion and social capital as the evidence of what is being achieved becomes visible within the community.

– Participatory engagement connects top-down and bottom-up processes. Inter-sectoral collaboration is key to implementing participatory integrated early childhood approaches. By engaging government officials and programmes with local community contexts and needs, it is possible to operationalise a range of different outreach programmes. Close attention to the ECD national government priorities to target systemic barriers can build community-based organisations and capacity to deliver services at the grassroots level.

– While it might be necessary to import material resources to implement respective programmes, it is possible to draw on the capacity of community members to make decisions about the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these programmes. In this way the work can be transformational as capacity and confidence can be transferred beyond the specific services being provided.

The final word is left to one of the community workers:

> Here, at this time and in this place, all our past experiences of working with communities have finally converged, for us, to make true the African proverb that says, 'If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together'. We have walked together. (Community worker 1)

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Remaking, reweaving and indigenizing curriculum: Lessons from an American Samoa Head Start program

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Abstract: In this paper, we focus on how indigenous Head Start teachers in American Samoa, an unincorporated territory of the US located in the South Pacific negotiated imported policy and curricular models that were not always congruent with local, indigenous approaches to educating young children. Here we place our focus on the negotiation of curriculum within these spaces and in doing so, show that through the reweaving of curriculum, western discourses and influences from the US were altered. We conclude with implications for US territories and other contested spaces across the globe.

Key words: curriculum, preschool, Aoki, globalization.

Background

Through conscious development efforts by NGOs (World Bank, OECD) and by less deliberate educational borrowing and lending (Tobin, Hsueh & Karasawa, 2009) the global expansion and movement of western early childhood education approaches has reached a frantic pace. Early childhood approaches include the commonly accepted beliefs and philosophies of how children learn, the content they learn, and the ways and materials teachers use to support children's learning can now be found around the globe. Montessori methods, materials and a while originating in Italy over a century ago, can now found around the globe (Zhu & Zhang, 2008), often in minority world contexts, western "Child-centered" practices can be found

in Taiwan (Lee & Tsang, 2008) and local schools in Pakistan show evidence of Western influence (Hunzai, 2009). For teachers and local educators of indigenous and culturally diverse children, this movement has potential to present tremendous challenges, as these globally circulating curriculums bring with them cultural assumptions development and education that may be at odds with "indigenous (local) views of the child and how children develop and learn" (Cleghorn & Prochner, 2010 p. 4). The mismatch of western approaches can have significant education ramifications for children when policies fail to recognize the knowledge base, and when they are culturally and linguistically incongruent with the home and community environments of students (Zuricher et al., 2012).

In this paper, we use the metaphor of reweaving to capture how indigenous Head Start teachers in American Samoa, an unincorporated territory of the US located in the South Pacific negotiated imported policy and curricular models that were not always congruent with local, indigenous approaches to educating young children. In discussing curricular practice in terms of reweaving, we build upon the work of the Aotearoa early childhood education system, Te Whāriki. Te Whāriki means "the woven mat" in Te Reo Maori (Duhn, 2012) and is used to describe the creation of a bilingual and bicultural approach to ECE in New Zeland that draws on western and Maori knowledge. In this paper, drawing on our analysis, we find "reweaving" to be a more appropriate metaphor, for as we demonstrate, rather than being asked to construct a bilingual and bicultural curriculum, Samoan educators were handed „a mat." As we show, when this mat did not work, they began a process of carefully, artfully and tactfully reweaving, replacing threads of western curriculum with those from local practices, all the while hoping that their mat would not fall apart.

Study Focus

We draw upon fieldwork from a two-year ethnographic study, which examined how Head Start teachers in Samoa negotiated multiple, conflicting pressures and curricular models in their daily practice. Here we present our analysis of field notes and interviews. We use Aoki's concept of curriculum as lived (Aoki, 1996) and postcolonial lenses (Bhaba, 2012) to understand how Samoan educators engage in a constant reweaving of curriculum, western discourses and influences as they attempt to make the commercialized curriculum relevant for four and five-year-old Samoan Children. We conclude with discussions of the contributions of this research to and curriculum theory to postcolonial, globally focused studies of early childhood education.

While this study analyzes US policy in areas of US influence, given the reach of western models on the global stage, it is far from an isolated concern.

A Global/ Post-Colonial Ethnographic Study

A key question in studies of globalization is how and to what degree globally circulating discourses take hold in local environments. In response, globalization researchers identify with two main theories or schools of thought. On one hand are theorists who suggest that socio-cultural and economic process of spreading various objects, experiences, and ideas result in a homogenous "universal" culture, a global convergence in the ideas about education, the notions and concept of schooling, as well as assumptions about and definitions of curriculum (Baker & LeTendre, 2005). These *world culture* scholars posit that all school systems will slowly integrate into more or less, a single global culture. A second contrasting approach draws on anthropological research, and a *cultural* theorist perspective globe looks to cultural variations and the borrowing and lending of educational ideas within a global context (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Benhabib, 2002; Hayhoe & Pan, 2001; Schriewer & Martinez, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). This interpretive framework recognizes how these importations are negotiated, resisted, and changed by local actors. While many of these studies have taken place in international contexts, research on early childhood programs in US territories has been sparse. As US territories are spaces which differ considerably culturally linguistically and geographically from the mainland, and yet also draw significant influence, federal support, and pressure from the US, how US territories respond to the importation of US models should not be overlooked.

Aligning with the second approach, in 2013, we launched *Negotiating Curriculum in the Pacific*. Our collaborative ethnographic project sought to understand the impact of US early childhood policy on Head Start programs located in American Samoa. Head Start is the premier US federal policy which provides grants to educators in all 50 states, Washington DC and indigenous lands in the US and within the five US territories. In co-conceptualizing this collaborative project, we employed a post-colonial lens, which, building on decades of indigenous scholarship, recognizes the historical erasure and devaluing of indigenous voice and representation in scholarship (Bhaba, 1993; Fanon, 1967; Kaomea, 2003; Lal, 2018; Macedo, 2000; Pachini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Said, 1985; Smith, 2013; Viruru, 2005).

A postcolonial ethnographic approach acknowledges the ways that the perspectives, knowledge, and approaches of indigenous communities have

been disregarded and in some cases erased, only to be replaced with European/western descriptions of the world (Viruru, 2005). As McCarty (2005) so poignantly writes, "With some exceptions, Indigenous peoples worldwide have been minoritized and marginalized in their homelands; they share with other minoritized people a diasporic history characterized by invasion, colonization, displacement, enslavement, and genocide" (p. 2). Like traditional ethnographic methods, it acknowledges the social construction of reality and knowledge and the multiplicity of experiences and belief systems. However, unlike traditional ethnography, postcolonial ethnography is an explicitly political approach as it centers the stories and histories, in what Tuiwai-Smith (2005) calls a "reparative move." For our purpose, it allows a decentering of eurocentric world views, educational practices, and beliefs, which undergird the majority of early childhood educational research. Our goal was to understand better how Samoan teachers' interpreted national policy, in light of the global power relations that continue to devalue Samoan educational perspectives and favor U.S. policies (Hunkin-Finau, 2007; Tinitali, 2002). While post-colonial lenses are far from rare in research looking at American Samoa, research on Head Start in general, and in US territories in particular, has failed to embrace this perspective (Authors/s 2019a; Authors, 2019b).

Curriculum as Lived: A Theoretical and Pedagogical Approach

In comparison to the global focus of scholars working in comparative and international education, the field of curriculum theory is typically more focused on what is taught in schools within a single country. While curriculum theory has addressed issues of globalization in recent years, it often does not address global flows of curricula.

The contribution of curriculum theorists to education, particularly from scholars aligned with the reconceptualizing curriculum movement (e.g., Pinar, Eisner, Aoki) is the recognition of how curriculum models and practices transmit power. For these critical scholars, curricula are far from neutral and often reflect the linguistic repertoires, histories, knowledge systems, and practices of those in power; it advantages dominant groups at the expense of those with less power in society (Paris, 2015). They took particular umbrage with the conceptions of learning as a technical, linear process that could be uniformly applied to schools, children, and teachers and produce the desired outcome. Needless to say, this approach differs considerably (in both epistemological and ontological orientation) from that of curriculum implementation researchers, who primarily view the implementation

of intended curriculums and reforms as progress (Blignaught, 2007) and curricular theorists in favor of instrumental approaches, both of whom view curriculum as a product to be applied to children.[1]

Ted Aoki, a Japanese Canadian scholar, was critical of the application of instrumental curricular approaches in the classroom. His critique was not only that they fail to capture the complexity of classrooms, but moreover that they can dehumanize children and teachers, particularly for children whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds were not in alignment with those in power. Instead, he proposed that classrooms be considered places in which "curriculum lives." Aoki's concept of Lived Curriculum focuses on what emerges and what is enacted in the classroom, by focusing on multiplicity, including of social actors, educational policy, and local cultures. In accounting for social actors and material circumstances, he adequately captured the multiplicity and movement of an actual classroom. His theoretical and pedagogical concept of curriculum as lived (2005) considers curriculum not found merely in the child (as a child-centered approach might suggest), or teacher, or subject (as a teacher-directed approach), but as the active, fluid and changing interaction of children, teachers, and materials/environment. For Aoki, what people are taught emerges from "life in the classroom" "in the spaces between and among all three" (Aoki, 1999)

As a curriculum theorist, Aoki does not write explicitly from a post-colonial or decolonizing approach (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In many of his writings and underpinnings of curricula as lived, there is a substantial influence of postcolonial theory. In conceptualizing the classroom as a place in which discourses and ideas and people assemble to produce a curriculum, Aoki draws on Bhabha's (2012) postcolonial concepts of hybridity, multiplicity, and interstices. As Bhabha's points out, we should have little concern with considering western influences and ideologies (curriculum) and indigenous approaches in binary terms. Instead, one must focus on how these two opposing forces come together and specifically attend to what then becomes produced in the interstices. For Aoki, classrooms are interstices, spaces of constant negotiation, spaces of multiplicity, of doubling "where we slip into the language of 'both this and that, but neither this nor that'... the space moves and is alive" (p. 181). Aoki (2005) notes that classrooms are "binary of two separate preexisting entities, which can be bridged or brought together

[1] For example, Blignaught, (2007) has noted that environment in which educational change takes place is increasingly complex and turbulent, and that individual quality of schools, a gap in knowledge and skills of the teachers, as well as a paucity of materials can account for the ways that curriculums are not taken up by teachers.

to conjoin in an 'and'" (p. 315). His concepts invite us to consider classrooms in light of "ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty" (Aoki, 1999), but more so, they ask us to consider possibilities and what might emerge from this space (Pinar & Irwin, 2004). For teachers in post-colonial contexts that have constant influence on their practice, consideration of emergence, and change, and the multiplicity of meanings and linguistic repertoires allows for consideration of how intended, imported curriculum is taken up and changed in a South Pacific island context, and ultimately why it comes to matter in issues of globalization, education, culture and power.

Methods

We jointly collected written field notes through participant observation and conducted formal and informal interviews with teachers, directors, parents, and educational support personnel such as mentor teachers and program and curricular coaches. In classrooms, we took photographs of classroom environments and classroom materials. In a second phase, we added a third researcher and a video-cued multivocal (VCM) ethnographic approach (Hsueh & Tobin, 2012; Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1991). We recognized VCM to be a useful methodological tool to better listen to these Sāmoan teacher's implicit cultural logic (Authors, 2019). Following this method, we filmed a day in the Sāmoan preschool and then edited the video to 20 minutes. In focus groups, we showed the edited Sāmoan video to the two preschool teachers in the class. We used scenes as a cue to provoke and organize the discussion. We also showed them videos of mainland Head Start classrooms to illustrate ECE approaches more commonly found on the mainland. We then repeated this with other Sāmoan focus groups, which were comprised of teachers and directors. In viewing their video, the teachers can explain their approaches to education. When teachers comment on other teachers' practices, they, in turn, reveal their own cultural beliefs to educating children (Hsueh & Tobin, 2012). In VCM, the video provides a shared prompt for discussion and is not considered data.

All interview data were recorded digitally and then transcribed. Field notes were collected (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). We used a two-tiered coding system to analyze transcripts and field notes (Saldana, 2015). We then revised the codes using a constant comparative method (Glazer & Strauss, 2017), the coded data were then clustered into conceptual categories including, respect for children, and respect for community, respect for cultural continuity and preservation. We later condensed respect for community, respect for cultural continuity and preservation into one theme: fa'a Samoa, or

respect for the Samoan Way. In light of these categories, we used curriculum theory models in analysis.

Ethics and power in research

In conducting research, there are always power differentials between researchers and informants. In keeping with the goals of the project and postcolonial approaches, we attempted to lessen this differential through multiple methods. Two members of the team are indigenous Samoan researchers who were born, raised, and continue to live on Tutuila, a small island of fewer than 55,000 people. (Authors) have decades-long, connected relationships with some of the informants. We used a community based ethnographic design (Lassiter, 2011), translated all consent forms into Samoan, and we were guided by relational ethics (Ellis, 2007). This approach propels researchers "to act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and their consequences" (Ellis, 2007, p. 3). However, rather than privileging this approach as novel, we want to emphasize that this approach to research is simply fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way). Samoa is a profoundly interconnected culture which has long emphasized protocol, consensus, and respect for the community in all aspects of life (Tupuola, 1993). As community members and research partners, we would act accordingly and continually return to informants to verify interpretation (in Samoan and English). As our goal was to listen to teachers and not speak for them, this provided space for Samoan educators to shape and in one case, correct our interpretations of their practices.

Context of Samoa

American Sāmoa is a linguistic, ethnic, and cultural minority island community of approximately 65,000 people located in the South Pacific. According to the Berlin Treaty of 1899, the United States was guaranteed the harbor of Pago Pago, and Tutuila—as well as a group of small islands to the east—came under the rule of the US Navy (Droessler, 2013). Today, it is a territory of the US, and while autonomous in some regards, it is also highly influenced by an outsider nation-state. US territories have been noted as spaces of a dialectical juncture "in which colonial structures and local cultures of resistance are entangled" (Perez, 2001 p. 98). This intertwining of power and influence is reflected in the educational system, which has been tied to and substantially influenced by US philosophies of education for more than 100 years (Zuercher et al., 2012).

The public early childhood education program, which serves over half of all eligible preschoolers in American Samoa is funded almost entirely by a federal Head Start grant (NHSA, 2018). Head Start, for those unfamiliar, is a federal program which from its founding in 1968 has sought to improve social skills, education, health and overall economic security of children in the United States (Currie & Thomas, 1993; Domitrovich et al., 2008). In recent years, with the federal reauthorization of the Head Start program (in 2007) increased attention has been devoted to the expansion of standards, curriculums and assessment and quality assurances in the federal early childhood program (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). A condition of this grant is that the American Samoa Department of Education implements performance standards and aligned curriculum or, as the early childhood educators repeatedly reminded us in our interviews, lose funding for their 71 preschool classrooms. This requirement is a result of the 2007 Head Start reauthorization. A component of this reauthorization was the adoption of newly amended performance standards, which specified that must adopt "research-based curriculums" (Bierman et al., 2008; USDHHS, 2005). This changed the curricular and pedagogical approaches of American Sāmoa preschools which as a Village-based program, created with and administered by Sāmoan educators (Halverson, 2017; Johnson & Savali, 1971), a program which arguably felt less federal influence than K-12. As we soon learned through fieldwork, the Sāmoan early childhood education office, like the vast majority of Head Start grantees in the U.S. (Hulsey et al., 2011) adopted the Creative Curriculum. The creative curriculum is a commercialized curriculum with specific, detailed topics of study, daily schedules, and scripted, pre-planned lessons developed in the southern US, some 8,000 miles and culturally and linguistically worlds away from the island territory of American Samoa.

Results

> *Ms. Ella: "If I'm not doing the study starters, and it harms the program, what is that going to do to everyone?"*

In early conversations with Sāmoan educators, it quickly became apparent that they felt considerable pressure to implement creative curriculum within their classrooms. They were bound by federal policy, and as they assured us, failure to oblige would have deleterious effects, the most notable was the loss of funding. As the director explained, the ECEC program was funded under one grant which provided the vast majority of funding for the program. While the teachers felt pressure to implement the curriculum, in actuality, they rarely endorsed the practices as intended. Below, we organize

findings around three key themes, respect for fanau (children), respect for community, and respect for fa'a Sāmoa. Within each theme, we show how the importance of this value allowed the teachers to enact a lived curriculum which changed the way that imported discourses are taken up in practice.

Respect for fanau (children)

It is a warm afternoon, and Ms. Alma, an experienced Head Start teacher, is sitting in a small child-sized chair in her brightly decorated classroom, leafing through a glossy white book. "See," she says, "this is what they want, this is the way that the lessons should be taught." As we look over her shoulder, we see the descriptions of lessons, the suggested materials, and even questions that teachers should pose to children.

Author: So, what do you think about the curriculum?
Ms. Alma: Well, it's good. I mean it's all there, you know exactly what to do. But here's the thing...the curriculum now is kinda halfway there, and sometimes it doesn't go real well with the students."

Ms. Alma, like many Sāmoan teachers we interviewed, expressed considerable reservations about the curriculum because, as they explained, it did not fit the experiences and lived realities of the Sāmoan children in their class. Their concerns and occasional critiques of the curriculum revealed an extraordinarily thoughtful and caring approach to educating Sāmoan children. Their discussion made clear that their understanding of appropriate instruction was not included within the packaged curriculum,

To care for and adequately educate students, the teachers explained, linguistic repertoires of the children must be accessed and honored. This practice of honoring their language was considered respectful, but also essential for the children to learn and participate in class. As Ms. Alma and other teachers pointed out, the creative curriculum is written in English. While supplementary books are available in Spanish, they are not available in Sāmoan. Although these teachers are bilingual, many of the 3-5-year-olds in their class speak Sāmoan. As Natia explained, "without Sāmoan, the children wouldn't know what we are talking about in a lesson. I mean, they could follow other children, but would they really understand"? Creative Curriculum materials are translated into Sāmoan, first at the ASECE office which oversees all 71 classrooms and later in classrooms through books made by teachers, and classroom materials. In fieldnotes and videos, all signs were in Sāmoan, with some in both Sāmoan and English. As

the teachers explained, the use of Sāmoan language was essential. They noted the necessity for communication, but also a continuity to the children's lives outside of school. They believed that Sāmoan children should be taught using Sāmoan as it is the primary language on Tutuila, used in homes, churches, and businesses. As Sāmoan scholar Sauni (2011) notes that "Language is essential and fundamental for bridging understandings, translations of conversations and maintaining relationships within Sāmoan culture.

Importantly, these teachers made a distinction between merely translating Creative Curriculum into Sāmoan and making lessons relevant through local context. In the vast majority of the focus groups, the teachers extolled the importance of teaching lessons that relate to and build upon what the children experience in their lives in Sāmoa. This was revealed in their discussions of the packaged lessons being "boring."

Ms. Salu: well…like the study starter (topic) "pipes" for instance?
Author: Pipes?
Ms. Sāmoa: Yes, it is one of our lessons, our topics, pipes. We have pipes in Sāmoa of course, but the ones (children) in my class, they don't want to talk about that, they don't find that interesting." She explained she would spend time introducing topics through "presentations" rather than in the inquiry model that was recommended, as the children were often unfamiliar with the things they were to be teaching. Other teachers expressed similar concerns about the lessons, many of whom pointed directly to the "pipes and box studies" within the curriculum.

Their discussion made clear that their concern was not with pleasing the children, but that the ill fit of the content, as it held no interest for the children be effectively useless and considered a waste of time. This wasted time was for these teachers detrimental to the cognitive development of these children.

> Ms. Lanuoa: Well, in the old curriculum, before this I was able to watch the kids, talk to them and create lessons based "on the interest of the kids, what was in the community."
> Ms. Samaria (nodding in agreement) Then, then they catch up (sic) real fast. But now, we are showing them these things that they've never; they've never seen and often don't really know.
> Ms. Natia observed that "while the kids would sit patiently through the lessons," she didn't feel they always "really would get it" as they often

did not engage in the same way that she remembered they did with the old curriculum. As Ms. Lori explained, "We have to provide our own kind of activity in order for the topic to be relevant to the students if you are teaching in Sāmoa." As Ms. Ella explained, "If there is an activity in the book that day or a lesson that you know doesn't work with the kids you can't do it. And that's not going to benefit them because sometimes activities are boring and useless. The lessons don't work with the kids. So we try to change those activities and do our own activities to go through the lesson."

As these teachers' discussion indicates, they felt that they must significantly change activities to capture the interests and facilitate learning for these 3-5-year-old children. A lesson exemplified this that we observed one morning in may in Ms. Lisa's classroom.

We (author and author) arrive at the I'a sa (turtle) early childhood center in American Sāmoa. In the center of the room, the lead preschool teacher, Lisa, is sitting at a table with twelve three and four-year-old children clustered around her. The children are in school uniform; the girls are dressed in brown jumpers and starched white shirts, the boys are dressed in brown shorts or brown lava lavas, wrapped fabric coverings. In Sāmoan, Lisa calls the children to attention and begins the lesson by telling the children that they are going to listen to a story about transportation. She raises the book and shows the children the cover, which has a young blonde haired Palagi (white) boy playing with cars, trucks, trains, etc. Lisa holds the book and reads the book, word for word. As she turns the pages, she reads about people traveling on foot, cars, subways, planes, trains, and boats, word for word. She interjects in Sāmoan to further explain. When she finishes, She places a large poster board on the table and shows it to the children. On the poster board, she has drawn and labeled the various types of Va'a (boats) that are commonly seen around Tutuila.

As we watch, Ms. Lisa points to, names and explains each of the eight boats, including longboats, commercial fishing boats that populate Tutuila, canoes, and other types of ships and vessels. In the lesson of the va'a, Ms. Lisa included the names, purposes, and history of each boat. Throughout her in her lesson, she focused exclusively on boats found in Sāmoa. This was done in a teacher-directed manner, and for 40 minutes, we watched the children pay rapt attention to Ms. Lisa. Following this, the children are then invited to join in a whole group song

that talked about boats and cars. It was led by the two teachers, one who played the ukulele and one who played the pate, an indigenous Sāmoan musical instrument. The pate is a hollowed log, which changed tone depending on where it is struck by the teacher, similar to a slit drum.

When discussing this scene, the Sāmoan teachers spoke with high praise for the lesson; they highlighted the fit of Ms. Lisa's focus on boats to the children. As Ms. Lisa explained in her initial interview, she chose the boat lesson given what she knew about the children. In the lesson, we noted that she changed their language of instruction to Sāmoan, she created materials and most importantly changed the foci to relevant and exciting topics for the children.

As many of the teachers pointed out, Pago Pago is one of the largest natural harbors in the world, and boats are incredibly plentiful. Children in Sāmoa spend time fishing with families and much time outside of school and church is spent in the water, in canoes, and in "Longboats" enormous boats similar in form to crew boats that hold up to fifty men from each village. Furthermore, for many of the children, boats are integral to their household functioning (Moll, Gonzalez, Neff & Amanti, 1992). Some of the largest and most visible industries are fishing and canning. The Star-Kist tuna is one of the major employers on Tutuila and highly visible in the harbor.

Notably, their responses and justifications for their approach were much in line with those of asset scholars who, since the 1990's, have unequivocally demonstrated the highly beneficial outcomes for culturally and linguistically marginalized children when schools acknowledge, value and build on their home and community experiences (Gay, 2010; McCarty & Zepeda, 1995)

Respect for Fa'a Sāmoa

Interviews with Sāmoan teachers also revealed that they sometimes felt incommensurable tensions between expectations from Head Start policy and their local environment. For these teachers, the responsibility of teaching children in ways consistent with fa'a Sāmoa or the Sāmoan way of life was onerous within a policy that mandated the use of commercialized curriculum and which offered standardized assessment tools to comply with mandates.

Ms. Corrine: "We have to adapt it (the curriculum) to our surroundings and our culture.

Ms. Harmony: "It would be better. Basically, if we could concentrate more

on our culture, we would bring up more things that we were raised up with, especially in our culture."

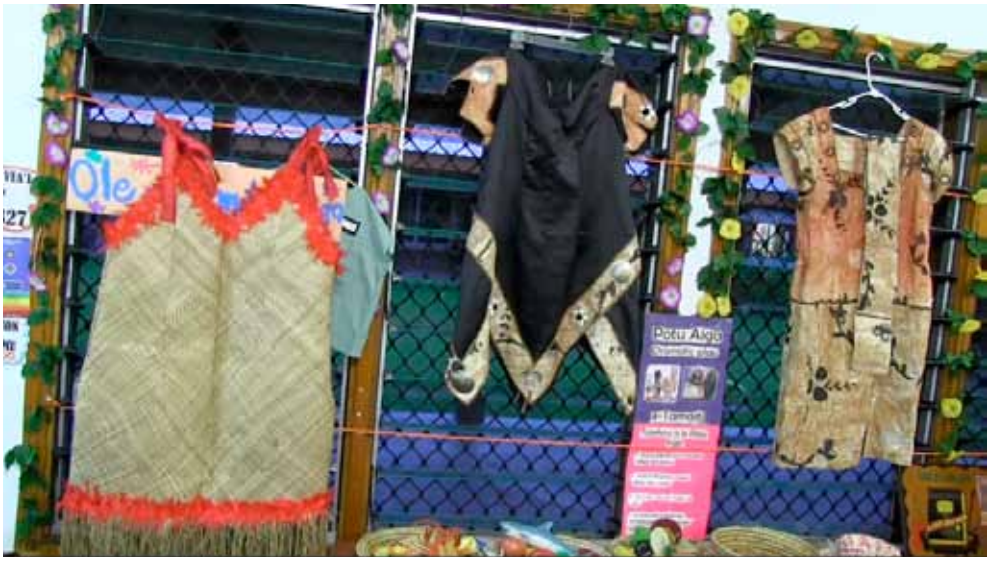
For Sāmoan teachers, this was considered a moral and ethical imperative. In focus groups with more experienced Sāmoan teachers, they expressed concern about a loss of indigenous knowledge "as in some of the households...children are being taught other things, not Sāmoan things." In Sāmoan Head Starts, we observed teachers who taught lessons in ways that more closely matched the directions in the Creative Curriculum. Often, these were less experienced teachers. In other classrooms, more experienced teachers taught lessons that differed significantly from what might be seen on the mainland. One example is a lesson we call Lava Lava Sāmoa, taught by Ms. Lora, a Head Start teacher with 25 years' experience.

> *One morning we arrive Ms. Lora rushes to great us "oh good, you are here... you will see the children. It is the clothing unit" As if on cue, Teuila, arrives with her father, waiting at the door. She is wearing a Siapo, made from a traditional u'a cloth. U'a cloth that is harvested from the paper mulberry trees on the island and scraped with the use of clamshells and then dyed using o'a lama, loa, ago and soa'a dyes, sourced from local plants. Teuila is also wearing an ornate crown headdress with seashells, which we later learn has been made by her family. She is greeted at the door and led by Teacher Tua to sit in a chair around the rug. She sits in front of a large bulletin board that has the words Lava lava Sāmoa (Sāmoan Clothes) prominently displayed.*

The letters are cut from woven palm leaf mats, a typical floor covering in Sāmoa. Besides the title, there are pictures of Sāmoan families wearing traditional (Siapo) and more contemporary Sāmoan clothes (Pulatasi and Lava Lava). As we look around, on the wall are hung traditional dresses made from tapa, under photographs and drawings of men with traditional Matai tattoos, in traditional dress are models of fales, or open-air Sāmoan houses, which are made from coconut shells and sticks. One by one the other students arrive, many in Pulatasi and lava lavas. Once all the children arrive, the parents remain in the room as children are led outside and invited to reenter the classroom. As each child enters, in a voice similar to a pageant MC, Lora introduces the child, "Sua is wearing a… " In her address, she acknowledges the type of clothing, the family members who have constructed this outfit, acknowledges the village they came from, and detail the materials used in the clothing.

In their viewing of this lesson, Sāmoan teachers explained that this lesson allowed children to understand traditions reinforces the importance of family, and allowed the children to learn how to carry on Sāmoan traditions.

Author: Tell me about this lesson. What are you doing here?
Ms. Mona: " Well, she…. we do this with parents." "Sometimes we have to reach up to the parents for them to help us."
Author: Help you with what? The lesson?
Ms. Lora: So the clothing units in Creative Curriculum don't look like this (laughing) but these things, the children need to know how and why.



> For as Ms. Lora explained, in Creative Curriculum, they were required to teach "the clothing unit." Yet the teachers didn't, per se. Instead, fieldnotes revealed that they altered the intended curriculum through the planning and implementation of a Sāmoan centered unit. In doing so, they called on parents, children and extended families from surrounding villages. As Ms. Lora revealed, these articles of clothing were constructed from the local environment. Far from arbitrary, the teachers recognized how this practice reinfused Sāmoan values.
>
> Ms. Harmony: "We go into raiding our culture and making things with what we have. And showing the children how to make them. And we use it in our classroom. So we go and weave. We make the baskets, we weave. And we show them that they can use things. And there is a bond and interaction in learning how to make (Sāmoan) things."

Within this lesson, parents were asked to escort their children so that the teachers could thank and honor the families. The children, they told us were to understand the history and significance. This pageant approach was a way in which they could pay reverence to and how their appreciation for the work of the parents and community. Within the lesson, they named and explained each type of clothing, identified the significance, and honored the families who provided them. As the teachers told us, Sāmoan values and principles undergirded this, practices such as "respect, love and service," which are inseparable in Sāmoan culture (McDonald, 2004).

By integrating family and intergenerational knowledge, the teachers aimed to convey the importance of a collective approach to educating children. Surprisingly, this approach was very similar to the 1960's Village ECEC approach in which family members were asked to accompany and join in during preschool activities in village *fales* (houses). In viewing this lesson, the teachers also pointed out the importance of the Sāmoan language. They explained that many of the clothes and associated values have no actual English translation. If this lesson were taught in English, it would fail to capture the interconnectedness and the significance. As Sāmoan writer Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (1996) notes, Gagana (or language) "is a blessing because it affirms your cultural identity. Language is a useful tool in contextualizing and consultation processes within Sāmoan contexts. communicates and gives meaning to all social and cultural relationships between groups or individuals, and this should not be ignored."

Discussion

Considering Samoan teachers' practices through the theoretical and pedagogical approach of lived curriculum (Aoki, 1979; 2004) and postcolonial theory affords multiple possibilities for understanding how global flows of curriculum come to matter in indigenous communities. While this study is focused on areas of US influence and analyzes how Sāmoan teachers, children, and parents transformed US educational ideas in their local context, it has application and influence in many other contexts.

One of the strengths of this analysis is that it contributes detailed understandings of how local practice and local actors can and do reformulate global policy and ideas from the US (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Vavrus and Bartlett, 2006, 2009). For as these teachers show, they in part rectified tensions in the global/ local nexus by their rejection of the *intended curriculum* (i.e. 'curriculum-as-plan') to a dynamic *lived curriculum*.

A central concern for Ted Aoki was that by approaching curricula as an instrument to be applied uniformly, and which is assumed to produce results, we ignore the educational experiences of learners in the classroom. As the Samoan teachers show, his concerns are alive and well in preschool classrooms in the Pacific. While Aoki never wrote about young children, as Samoan teachers demonstrate, the only option was to enact a lived curriculum. By recognizing students' lived curricular experiences (Zheng & Heydon, 2014) Sāmoan teachers made clear they could better educate young children by attending to their linguistic repertoires and interweaving indigenous

knowledge within their lived curriculum. As demonstrated in their practices and their rationale, enacting a lived curriculum can also be a process by which colonial practices are made and envisioned. By weaving indigenous knowledge, local examples and divergent linguistic repertoires, they are able to invite complexity, multiplicity and possibly find a way to attempt to rectify what were previously incommensurable tensions in practice.

Their approach to enacting a lived curriculum meant a constant analysis of the children's interests and the relevance of this knowledge on Tutuila. As they demonstrated, a lesson on boats held more relevance than discussing a train or a subway on an island without a single stoplight. Similarly their choice to focus on traditional Sāmoan clothing within a clothing unit rather than talking about woodland creatures in a mitten set in a Scandinavian context (the focus of one of the supplemental books for use with the clothing unit) the teachers were able to engage in a creative weaving of seemingly disparate elements. In their literal linguistic translation interpretation, their making of materials, the inclusion of student experiences and approaches and the quest to connect the classroom to the broader context and the lived realities of students, Sāmoan teachers responded.

These findings align with globalization scholar Anderson-Levitt (2004), who writes that there are substantial differences between policy as dictated and how policy plays out on the ground. The reason, she writes, is that local actors often oppose reform. In the context of Sāmoa, the teachers did not openly disagree with the policy, and yet, through their everyday practice, they significantly changed the curriculum from intended, to curriculum as lived. This curriculum as lived produces "new and hybrid forms of culture that articulate the local with the global" (Stromquist, 2002, p. 2) through a 'mixed dialogue' between politics and culture, in both global and local contexts. As "school philosophies tend to mirror national cultures and borrow from cultural beliefs, and as local cultures evolve under global influences, school systems are transformed and begin to reflect those changes that are encountered in local realities. In other words, globally circulating discourses, "which take root through policy, are always filtered, negotiated and remade in local context" (Anderson-Levitt, 2012).

But our data also shows that this was far from a harmonious panacea, in keeping with critical postcolonial and indigenous work, this negotiation and enactment were tenuous, delicate, taxing and in some cases fraught for Sāmoan educators, as they attempted to live amongst and between competing discourses. Western reforms can create dilemmas for culturally diverse

teachers, who must choose between being considered professional through western standards and their local cultural knowledge. In these spaces, teachers can be "torn between the claims of western values and their indigenous culture" (Canagarajah, 1999, p.1). This study shows that these tensions were alive, well, and palatable. Focus group responses made clear that ECE teachers in American Samoa felt considerable pressure to implement western models and curriculum. For these teachers, the conflict created a dilemma that was not easily overcome, as their responsibility to the children and the community conflicted with the expectations of their profession.

In one way, a focus on the way that teachers enact a lived curriculum in light of intended curriculums is far from significant. While important and influential in curriculum studies, Aoki's lived curriculum has been a central theoretical and pedagogical approach to understanding the complex interplay of teachers, discourses, children, curriculum and classroom materials for the past twenty years. Many theoretical and empirical pieces have noted the efficacy of considering practices through this model. Yet to date, the significance of this model in post-colonial contexts has not been emphasized, particularly in understanding the curricular practices of young indigenous children. As our data illuminates, consideration of this approach in a global, post-colonial context has significance beyond typical considerations of the curriculum as lived.

With the expansion and commercialization of early childhood curriculum and its increasing pace of movement across the globe, more tools are needed to understand what happens on the ground and what that means for children whose cultural knowledge and linguistic practices don't match those of imported curriculum. As this study has demonstrated, by examining the pedagogical and curricular approaches of indigenous teachers through a lived curriculum in light of global pressures, can allow for a more thorough lens in which to understand how power is negotiated in the global and local nexus. In identifying the specific ways in which indigenous teachers altered and negotiated curriculum, we also show that understandings and strategies for indigenous teachers and curriculum studies.

Conclusion and Implications and Considering the Metaphor

The enactment of a lived curriculum has substantial and promising implications for culturally and linguistically diverse teachers and thus contributes crucial understandings of what this means for indigenous children

and their teachers in individual early childhood programs around the world, too many of whom are facing increasing global pressures. But it also contributes valuable understandings of the bidirectional manner in which early childhood "educational borrowing and lending" occurs (Steiner- Khamsi, 2004; 2014) on a global scale.

In highlighting how indigenous teachers were able to enact a lived curriculum to some degree, we do not wish to suggest this is simple or unproblematic. Our intent is not to excuse neo-colonial pressures that create dilemmas for indigenous women. Furthermore, while experienced teachers had confidence, capability, and understandings to enact a lived curriculum, we did not always see this with younger and less experienced teachers. In these spaces, colonial discourses have more authority and power. Furthermore, attending to the words and approaches of these teachers reveal that this intermingling is far from simple or without issue. It is arduous and laborious. The multistep process in which these curriculums were digested and changed must be seen for what it is, an undertaking that requires substantial work on the backs of Indigenous women. Moreover, within this process are different pressures, fears, and tensions that teachers of color must navigate in their teaching. These teachers, like many others, must live with the constant concern and in some cases fear that their process of indigenization and enactment of a lived curriculums will not be looked on favorably by policymakers, and government officials who control the purse strings to their programs.

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Rebo nyunda: Is it decolonising early childhood education in Bandung, Indonesia?

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Abstract: Since 2012, Indonesia has been obsessed with the notion of *melestarikan budaya lokal* (preserving local culture) as part of Indonesian Cultures. In West Java, Indonesia, the cultural revitalisation program is called "*Rebo Nyunda". Rebo* means Wednesday; *nyunda* means being Sundanese. Sunda is the dominant ethnic group in West Java and the second largest ethnic group in Indonesia. Childhood often becomes a site for implanting ideologies, including nationalist ideology through the rhetoric of *anti-West. Rebo Nyunda* is expected to be able to shape future generations with strong cultural roots and unshaken by negative foreign ideas. Using focus group discussions this paper investigates the extent to which teachers understand *Rebo Nyunda* as a mean of cultural resistance to foreign forces amid the wholesale adoption of early childhood education doctrines from the West, such as the internationalisation of early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practices, neuroscience for young children, child-centred discourse, economic investment and the commercialisation of childhood education. This paper examines the complexity of and contradictions in teachers' perceptions of *Rebo Nyunda* in Bandung, a city considered a melting pot of various ethnic groups in Indonesia.

Key words: early childhood education, post-colonialism, cultural revitalisation, Indonesia.

Introduction

Indonesian early childhood education (ECE) development has never been independent of international influence. Western influence started from the

era of Dutch colonisation, followed by education globalisation in the postcolonial era. The World Bank and other international agencies such as AusAID and PLAN play a significant role in the universalisation of ECE in postcolonial Indonesia (Newberry, 2012). Adriany and Saefullah (2015) argue that the universalisation of ECE should be examined critically since the concept of childhood is not universal. Rather, it is contextual and culturally specific. Hence, decolonising ECE should focus on finding an ECE approach that better fits the concept of childhood in the respective context.

In a country with such enormous cultural diversity as Indonesia, the concept of childhood can vary from region to region, culture to culture. However, from 1928 to 1998, an Indonesian national identity was built at the expense of local identities, and this affected the concept of childhood too. Unitary politics was used to fuse the diverse cultures in the archipelago as part of the pre-independence anti-colonial struggle and the post-independence national stability in the Sukarno (1945–1967) and Suharto eras (1967–1998). Only after the fall of Suharto did cultural diversity and local identities come to be celebrated (Budianta, 2006). Since 2012, Indonesia has been obsessed with the notion of *melestarikan budaya lokal* (preserving local culture) as part of the Indonesian cultures. Wallace (1956) refers to this as a cultural revitalisation movement: "a deliberate, organised, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." Although the revitalisation movement began before 2012, Joko Widodo, the governor of DKI Jakarta (2012–2014) and now president of Indonesia (2014-2024), introduced the compulsory wearing of traditional dress day on specific days. He instructed the government officials in his municipality to wear Betawi traditional dress on Wednesdays. Many other government leaders, local and national, followed in Joko Widodo's footsteps and made the wearing of traditional dress on Wednesdays compulsory for government officials, school pupils and children attending kindergarten.

The rhetoric behind the policy is infused with a neo-colonial logic: that modernisation and the invasion of foreign cultures, mainly Western ones, has eroded Indonesian cultures (see Hafid, 2017; Presiden RI, 2016). In West Java, the wearing of traditional dress on a Wednesday is called "*Rebo nyunda". Rebo* means Wednesday; *nyunda* means being Sundanese. Cultural revitalisation movements, such as *Rebo nyunda,* are a form of ethnic movement celebrated in the Indonesian democratic era. It is difficult to find research about *rebo nyunda.* Most of the available research focuses on the importance of *rebo nyunda* in revitalising and preserving local Indonesian culture (see Choirunisa & Alia, 2015; Mayangsari, Noviyanti & Adham, nd).

This study investigates *Rebo nyunda* from a critical postcolonial perspective. We examine the complexity of and contradictions in teachers' understanding of *Rebo nyunda* in Bandung; a city considered a melting pot of various ethnic groups in Indonesia. We analyse the extent to which kindergarten teachers understand *Rebo nyunda* as a means of cultural resistance to foreign forces amid the wholescale adoption of early childhood education doctrines from the West, such as the internationalisation of early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practices, neuroscience for young children, child-centred discourse, economic investment and the commercialisation of childhood education (see Adriany & Saefullah, 2015; Solehuddin & Adriany, 2017; Adriany, 2018).

Postcolonial Perspective

Postcolonial theories are diverse (Young, 2001); nonetheless, their main purpose is to critically analyse the various forms of continuity in colonisation in the contemporary world (Hall, 1996). According to Said (1989) colonisation continues through the persistence of the colonial knowledge hierarchy that promotes the otherness of some cultures. Within a postcolonial perspective, it is important to understand that historical colonial experience is interconnected with the contemporary neo-colonial condition (Williams & Chrisman, 1994). Although it initially emerged from scholars interested in the anti-colonial struggles of formerly colonised countries (Young, 2001), in the postcolonial perspective the definition of colonisation has been extended to cover not only the domination of one nation/country over another nation/country, global over local, but also the domination of one type of knowledge/discourse over another (Subedi & Daza, 2008; Crossley & Tikly, 2004). Feminist encounters with postcolonial theory have also highlighted the way in which postcolonial theory intersects with multiculturalism (Dryzek, Honig, Phillips & Gilroy, 2008). Therefore, the postcolonial framework is often used to analyse issues such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, slavery, identity formation, hybridity, nationalism, language and indigenous rights (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995). One of the main points in the postcolonial perspective adopted in this paper is that colonial history has to be examined if we are to understand the contemporary multicultural condition.

The field of education is often used to promote nationalism. The postcolonial perspective is useful for critically examining the formation of a national identity, often at the expense of minority identities (Subedi & Daza, 2008). In a formerly colonised country like Indonesia nationalism is always strongly associated with a rejection of Western cultural discourse.

In this paper, we use the postcolonial perspective not only to analyse the power relations between the Global North and the Global South, the international world and a country or nation, the global and local, but also to analyse the domination of one group or one identity over another in a local multicultural setting. This paper uses the postcolonial perspective to understand how the hegemonic culture is perpetuated in the Indonesian context through the *Rebo Nyunda* project, which claims to revitalise and lend a voice to the local culture (in this case, Sundanese). In a culturally diverse country like Indonesia, *Rebo Nyunda* may potentially marginalise other local cultures associated with Sundanese culture coexisting in the geographical location, which we assume contradicts the postcolonial spirit strongly related to multiculturalism and the recognition of differences, diversity and plurality (Kubota, 2014; Dryzek et al., 2008). Drawing on Dryzek et al. (2008), we combine the postcolonial perspective with multiculturalism to enable us to critically examine the hierarchy within Indonesian diversity.

The Context of the Study

Indonesia is an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands and has around 1,300 ethnicities. It is difficult to define Indonesian culture due to the great diversity in culture, religion, race, language and customs. Sunda is the dominant ethnic group in West Java and the second largest ethnicity after Javanese. According to the last population census, in 2010 the Sundanese represented 15.5% of the total population of Indonesia (BPS, 2011). During the Dutch colonial era (1600s–1949), the Sundanese area was called the *priangan* regency. This area is now called *Jawa Barat* (West Java). The way in which the ethnicities and cultures on the island of Java and in the Indonesian archipelago are categorised is part of the colonial legacy. The Dutch distinguished between regions and cultural units on the basis of the spoken language in the region (Moriyama, 2005). Unlike Javanese culture, which dominates Indonesian culture, Sundanese culture has no single centre of cultural and spiritual power that could influence the Sundanese region as a whole (Moriyama, 2005). As a result, Sundanese culture is not monolithic. Different regions have different dialects and cultures. Therefore the term *rebo nyunda* is problematic since it is not clear which version of Sundanese culture the programme supports.

The research was conducted in Bandung, the city we live in and whose culture we are most familiar with. Bandung is a metropolitan city and the capital of West Java province. It is also a melting pot of many ethnicities from across Indonesia, with its three famous state universities and more

than twelve private universities. Bandung has been becoming urbanised due to the unequal economic development in the region and its popularity as a location for higher education (Nurwati, Setiawan & Suwartapradja, 2005; Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017). There is no accessible data about the ethnic composition of Bandung; however, the last census showed that in 2010 the Sundanese domination of West Java had decreased by two per cent from 73 per cent in 2000 to 71 per cent in 2010 (Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017).

Method

As university lecturers who have worked in ECE for more than fifteen years, we have access to an extensive network of ECE centres in the West Java region. We chose two of the government-owned public kindergartens in this network as the data collection site. Public kindergartens were chosen as they have to implement government policies and programmes. We invited the kindergarten principals to participate in our study and obtained consent from the principals and teachers. To gain extensive information about the teachers' perspectives on *Rebo nyunda,* we held focus group discussions with five teachers in each kindergarten. The discussions focused on the background, main purposes and pedagogical activities related to *Rebo nyunda.* Throughout the discussions and interviews we listened to the participants' comments without interrupting, so as to avoid influencing their answers. We did not give any negative feedback or signal approval/disapproval of the participants' comments. We conducted a thematic analysis of the data and generated the teachers' general ideas about *Rebo nyunda.*

Reflexivity is critical in this type of research. As we are Sundanese people who have been exposed to Western theories, we realised that we might not be sufficiently critical in examining our own culture. We thought we might become trapped in what Narrayan (1997) defines as an emissary mindset, the assumption that everything that comes from the West is problematic or vice versa. There was a risk we might take a Western idea for granted. Therefore, in the process of the research, we constantly checked our perspective, maintaining a critical attitude to both our own culture and Western ideas.

Findings

Rebo nyunda takes place every Wednesday. Teachers and students have to wear traditional dress that day. Girls and women wear the *Kebaya* and boys and men the *Pangsi*. The teachers use Sundanese as the language of instruction, and teach the children Sundanese songs, poems, games and

etiquette. Both the colonial legacy and postcolonial thinking can be seen in the way teachers explain their understanding of *rebo nyunda.* The following sections explain the complexities of that understanding.

Sundanese as local content in a curriculum

For teachers *rebo nyunda* is part of the local content of the curriculum – more a top-down policy than a bottom-up one. They call it *muatan lokal* (local content). Erni, one of the teachers interviewed, said,

> It [*Rebo nyunda*] started in 2004; we joined a training session about preserving Sundanese culture through Sundanese language, performance arts and culinary traditions. Around that time the government introduced a new curriculum, the 2013 curriculum, which required every school to identify its locality. Our principal thought that it was good to adopt this as part of the curriculum's local content. So she [the principal] decided to do it [teach the children Sundanese culture], but it was not called *Rebo nyunda*. It has only been called *Rebo nyunda* after 2012, with the Mayor's Decree. (Erni, FGD on the 7 January 2019)

Since 2004 the government has encouraged schools to adopt their own curriculum to ensure contextual education. The change was a consequence of the law on the National Education System established in 2003. The law states that the diverse reality of the Indonesian archipelago, including the differing cultures, local wisdoms and other local potential resources or regions, and the children's diversity (Law of Republic of Indonesia No. 20, 2003) should be respected in education. In the law, diversity is understood in relation to grasping the potential differences in learning and teaching in the various regions (Marliana & Hikmah, 2013). The contextuality of children's learning is seen in line with Vygotskian recommendations about the importance of understanding the socio-historical context in children's learning and the development of children's knowledge (Rogoff, 2003; Gauvain, 2001; Tudge et al., 2006; Ball, 2010; Spodek, 1996), which should be at the core of decolonising education.

At a glance, this is consistent with the postcolonial spirit which is critical of universalisation projects in education (see Viruru, 2006; Crossley & Tikly, 2006). However, the law serves to perpetuate the "persistent neo-colonial relations" (Bhabha, 1994, p.9) evident in the Indonesian education system, especially in ECE. The law specifies that the child/student-centred approach should be used at each stage of education, including ECE. Developmentally

Appropriate Practices (DAP) should be the foundation of children's education in ECE (Herlina & Indrati, 2010). There have been a number of scholarly works critically examining child-centeredness and DAP from a postcolonial perspective (see Viruru, 2005b; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2004; Soto & Swadener, 2002; Gupta, 2006). Adopting DAP and a child-centred approach will not break the cycle of colonialism, as it is nothing other than the continuation of colonialism through the global ideation of individualistic and independent neoliberal agency (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015).

Wita, a teacher, realised that there had been a change in children's etiquette such as in the manner in which they talk to and behave in front of an older person and their peer group. However, Wita and other teachers do not aware of the individualisation embedded in the child-centrism that might have caused the change. Wita explained,

> Kids these days are not as polite as we used to be. They are not as obedient as kids in my time. We were scared to say no to teachers and parents. Kids now are more critical; they need to know the reason. They can decide what they want or do not want. (Wita, 7 January 2019)

The child-centred approach unquestionably remains the default and ideal in ECE practices. Thus, local content is limited to deciding which cultural products – such as songs, foods, dance, games and stories – should be taught to children rather than being a means of finding a Sundanese way of learning and teaching, of knowing and being, which are, according to Subedi & Daza (2008), the key point of decolonisation in education.

Protecting Sundanese identity from global influences

In a similar vein as the Mayor of Bandung's Decree on the preservation of the Sundanese language, most of the teachers agreed that the Sundanese identity is under threat. Susi, a teacher, commented,

> Western values, now Korean values, easily reach the children. The children absorb them very quickly because of technology. As a consequence, our children now have a different attitude towards older people. They are becoming *ngalunjak, culangung, calutak.* They do not respect older people the way we do. (Susi, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Ngalunjak, culangung, and *calutak* are Sundanese words used to refer to a disrespectful act towards someone who is older or from a higher social

hierarchy. Sundanese society was a feudalistic society with a recognised social hierarchy and a people's code of conduct that reflected that hierarchy. The social hierarchy is reflected in the language hierarchy[1] and in the embodiment of hierarchical cultural norms. Susi and other teachers were concerned about the lack of respect for older people, reflected in the demise of making respectful gestures towards older people. When younger people walk past an older person or someone from a higher hierarchy, they should bow to an angle of roughly 30 degrees, with their right arm and hand stretched a little bit forward to show respect. Using their right hand, younger people should take the older person's right hand and kiss the back of it. One teacher said that the children's lack of understanding of Sundanese etiquette was the result of contemporary parenting methods that prioritise the children's freedom to think over obedience. She said,

> When we were young, it was imperative we obeyed our parents and teachers. What they said was our command. We cannot say no. We always believe whatever they say. They [parents and teachers] were authority figures. They taught us about *pamali,* and we believed them. Kids now do not believe in *pamali.* Kids now are critical and need a rational explanation. (Rani, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Rani talked about how her parents and teachers had taught her to do or not do things through the notion of *pamali. Pamali* is a Sundanese word that means something we must not do. If we do it, there will be consequences. The consequences are not rationally related to the forbidden conduct. For example, it is *pamali* (forbidden) to sit on the doorway, because if we did, we would not get a husband or a wife for the rest of our lives. Rani did not say that she wanted *pamali* to be upheld. However, she thought that it would be easier to control the children if they believed in *pamali.* Rani did not relate teachers' loss of control to the child-centred approach in ECE, which enhances and encourages children's autonomy.

The teachers' sense that the identity is being subverted emerges from the perceived symbolic threat to Sundanese values in the adoption of foreign values. A symbolic threat arises when a group of people perceive another group's norms, values, worldview and way of life to threaten the continu-

[1] There are three hierarchical registers in Sundanese: *kasar* (colloquial), *sedang* (middle), and *lemes* (refined/polite) (Wessing, 1974). Sundanese also has different words for referring to oneself (the speaker) and to others (the addressee). The rules of the language are complicated. Using language not accordingly to the hierarchy in Sundanese can be considered impolite.

ity of their group's cultural identity (Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008). Susi made this point, saying,

> Sundanese culture should continue to exist. Do not let foreign culture take over our generations and wipe out our culture. If we did not preserve the culture the people, the language, the morality and the culture itself would vanish. (Susi, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Throughout the discussion, the teachers used the words *foreign culture/values* interchangeably with *western culture/values*. Although Susi's comment seems to be strongly aimed against foreign values, other teachers did not see foreign values in completely negative terms. They agree that globalisation is unavoidable. They thought that there were positive western values the children could adopt. They realised that in education they had adopted a lot of western values which they think are good, such as discipline, punctuality and awareness of safety, cleanliness, law and order. However, they also think that some western ways of life are morally unacceptable in Sundanese culture. As Rina said,

> We cannot work against the *zaman* [time]. This is the era of globalisation. It [globalisation] is not all negative. We took a lot from the West, like education. However, our children are also exposed to global information and global culture, which do not fit in our culture. We need to build a wall so that our children are protected from bad influences. We want our children to be able to filter out what is bad for them and retain what is good. Which one is acceptable in our culture and which one is not? I remember in the 70s, Indonesian young people liked to go to discotheques, which wasn't and isn't part of our culture. Now, our children like songs from foreign and western countries. The music is good, and the children dance to the songs, but the lyrics are bad! *Rebo nyunda* introduces Sundanese morality to the children. This [Sundanese morality] will be the filter for [rejecting] unacceptable western or foreign values. (Rina, FGD, 7 January 2019)

Blaming the West is not new or unusual. Sukarno, the first president (1945–1967), used strong anti-West rhetoric to build nationalism (Anwar, 2008). The West has often been blamed for various issues, from morality, economics to politics. The Western way of life is seen as a threat to Indonesian identity, especially to Indonesian Muslims. As documented by Mashuri et al. (2016), many Indonesian Muslims believe in an anti-West conspiracy theory about terrorism in the country, despite there being significant evi-

dence that Islamic radicals were behind the terror. Anti-West rhetoric is also used in political campaigning to gain votes (see Aspinall & Mietzner, 2014). Recently, the West Java Broadcasting Commission (WJBC) prohibited TV and radio stations from broadcasting 17 popular songs from the West before ten o'clock at night due to the sexual content of the lyrics (Ispranoto, 2019). Example songs are "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran and "That's What I Like" by Bruno Mars. Although there are many Indonesian and Sundanese songs that contain sexual lyrics, it is Western songs that are blamed for corrupting children's innocent minds regardless of whether children understand the words of the songs. Even though the children may understand the words better than they do those in Western songs, Indonesian and Sundanese songs are not seen as corrupting as Western songs. Banning Western songs and music was part of Sukarno's anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism policy in 1959–1967 (Soyomukti, 2010). The teachers in this study used the same rhetoric as Sukarno used; children need saving from the negative influence of the West.

The paradox of protecting the Sundanese and Indonesianness

Rebo nyunda is seen as a symbol of resistance to the cultural homogenisation that has been going on for more than 50 years. At the same time, it is also seen as a way of protecting the uniting "Indonesian" identity, which is also significant in the weakening of Sundanese culture.

> We need *Rebo nyunda* to preserve our culture. The Sundanese language has almost gone, replaced by Bahasa Indonesia. Modern families choose not to teach their children Sundanese. Indonesian is taking over because it is easier to teach. (Rina, FGD 8 January 2018)

Rina's comment implies that the Sundanese identity is disappearing as Indonesianness grows stronger. This is related to the Indonesian historical background. Indonesia, as a nation, came into being in 1928 when youth organisations from various cultural and ethnic milieux in the archipelago gathered in the spirit of nationalism and to build a unitary national vision as a political struggle against Dutch colonialism (Foulcher, 2000). On 28 October 1928, young people from Java, Celebes, Sumatra, Minahasa, Batak and Ambon declared that they were one nation with one homeland and one language, the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia). A unitary identity was needed for the struggle.

After independence in 1945, the making of the Indonesian identity was in-

tensified by the anti-colonial policy adopted by President Sukarno, in office from 1945 to 1967. Given that Indonesia consisted of various ethnic groups, ethnic politics were undermined as they jeopardised national unity (Tanasaldy, 2012). The discourse of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) was strongly internalised by Indonesians through various superficial means such as carnivals of cultural traditional costumes and songs.

In the New Order era (1967–1998), led by President Suharto, the repression of ethnic politics continued in tandem with an attempt to homogenise Indonesian culture through the adoption of the culture of the dominant ethnic group (the Javanese), to which Suharto belonged, as the national culture. The process was known as "Javanisation" (Sutarto, 2006, p. 40). Javanisation involved the use of Javanese proverbs, terms and symbols in the state's ideology and formal institutions (Wongkaren, 2007) as well as the adoption of traditional Javanese dress as the national costume.

After the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, Indonesia entered a phase of democratisation and decentralisation that gave voice to ethnic differences. The government allowed multi-culturalism and ethnic movements to grow so long as they were not aimed at political separation (Tanasaldy, 2012). Decentralisation enabled local people to take office in the local and regional governments. Ethnic politics emerged but were relatively weak since ethnic coalition and cooperation had been the norm (Aspinal, 2011). The norm of Indonesian multi-culturalism is shown in Rina's comment below,

> Indonesia is diverse. If Sundanese were to go, Indonesia would lose one of its cultural assets. Indonesia would be less diverse. Thus, protecting Sundanese is also about protecting Indonesia. (Rina FGD on the 7th January 2019)

Despite being aware that building an Indonesian national identity has led to the weakening of the Sundanese language, Rina agrees that Indonesianness is also essential and she stressed that diversity was "the root" of Indonesian identities.

As explained earlier, the making of the Indonesian identity involves the subtle repression of local cultures other than Javanese. Nonetheless, due to the doctrine of *Bhineka Tunggal Ika,* people have internalised the repression as part of their identity. Instead of seeing Bahasa Indonesia or the nationalism project as the cause of the weakening of the Sundanese, Rina implied that all ethnic groups in Indonesia had contributed equally to the making of

Indonesian national identity. She did not acknowledge the historical fact of Javanese domination. A nation is indeed an imagined community which is built upon the stories told among themselves (Anderson, 2006). Rina seems to have internalised the narrative of unity in diversity; the story Indonesians have told themselves since 1928. The story she tells her students.

However, the understanding of the importance of diversity as part of Indonesian culture did not extend to recognising other ethnicities that might attend the ECE centre. Ethnicity is a social construction, partly by lineage and partly by society (Yang, 2000). *Rebo nyunda*, however, is not only applied to children with Sundanese ancestry but to every child enrolled in an ECE centre located in West Java (the Sundanese territory).

Most of the teachers involved in this study agreed that all the children in their centres should be committed to learning the Sundanese language and culture because they live in Bandung, a Sundanese centre of culture. Thus, in *Rebo nyunda* ethnicity is seen as being tied more to place or to region than to ancestry. This idea is related to Indonesia's colonial past. The Dutch categorised the ethnicities according to the linguistic differences between communities and within geographical territories (Errington, 2001).

Today, Bandung is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural metropole. Thus, ideally, the doctrine of unity in diversity in Bandung could be achieved by celebrating all the ethnicities attending the centre. *Rebo nyunda*, however, compels every child in Bandung to learn Sundanese regardless of ethnic lineage. When we asked whether there was any resistance from non-Sundanese parents, they answered,

> There is no resistance to this program (*Rebo nyunda*) from parents. There was a child who resisted this program. Every Wednesday he refused to come to school. His parent said that it was because of the language; he could not speak the language and could not understand anything. He was Bataknese. His parent, however, did not protest. His parent supported the program. They also learnt Sundanese [the language]. Slowly the child could understand Sundanese and everything was back to normal. (Nita, FGD, 8 January 2019)

Teti, Nita's colleague, added that there was also a child who refused to wear traditional dress out of dislike. Teti said, "It was only the clothes. It was a typical complaint from a child." Children's rejection of *rebo nyunda* was ignored because it was a minor complaint. The postcolonial spirit is about

critically examining the domination of a certain way of life, culture, doctrine and discourses (Gandhi, 1998). *Rebo nyunda* is paradoxical: on the one hand, it tries to protect the Sundanese from domination by other cultures, but on the other hand, it also imposes domination over other ethnicities within the Sundanese territory.

Revising sundanese culture

Teachers see *Rebo nyunda* not just as a means of protecting the Sundanese culture, but also of adapting the culture. The layers of historical Sundanese marginalisation are manifest in the colonial mentality of the Sundanese. The colonial mentality is a mentality in which the colonised tend to have internalised feelings of inferiority by admitting the colonisers were better (Paranjpe, 2002). This internalised inferiority, the result of cultural oppression, is reflected in Susi's comment about how the Sundanese are reluctant to speak Sundanese.

> Some Sundanese feels inferior about speaking Sundanese. It does not bring them prestige. They feel they fit in better when they talk in Indonesian. It is different from Javanese. The Javanese speak Javanese all the time no matter where they are. (Susi, FGD, 8 January 2019)

We asked why the Sundanese were less confident than the Javanese, Rina answered,

> We [the Sundanese] are not proud of our own culture. Many of us think that *Bahasa Jakarta* and Indonesian are better. Maybe it is related to city versus village. Jakarta is a big city; it has more prestige than Sunda. The children also learn English better than Sundanese. Probably because it [English] has more prestige. (Rina, FGD, 8 January 2019)

The inferiority can also be dated back to the pre-colonial era and the improvements that came with Dutch colonialism. In the pre-colonial era, the Javanese kingdom, Majapahit, was obsessed with conquering other kingdoms in the archipelago and uniting them under one ruling kingdom, the Majapahit. The Sundanese kingdom was one of a small number of kingdoms that Majapahit failed to conquer (Putri, 2018a). Nonetheless, Majapahit tricked the King of Sunda into entering Majapahit territory, and then surrounded the King's troops. The troops and the King of Sunda were killed; the princess killed herself during the war of 1357. The war led to long-term

deep cultural prejudice between the Sundanese and the Javanese, and cultural reconciliation did not take place until 2017 at the behest of the Governor of West Java and the Governor of Central Java (Nisa, 2017). During the colonial era, the dividing line and prejudice between Sunda and Java was reinforced by the publication of a book about the war. Many Indonesian historians believe that maintaining the dividing line between Sunda and Java was important in sustaining the colonisation (Putri, 2018b).

Moreover, in the era of Dutch colonialism, the Malay and Javanese received special attention from the colonial government. The Malay and Javanese domination was perpetuated through printed books and newspapers (Moriyama, 2018; Paauw, 2009). The Dutch first printed books in Malay and Javanese in the 17th century, while books in Sundanese were first printed in 1849 or 1850 (Moriyama, 2018). Moesa, a Sundanese writer, wrote that the Sundanese had remained hidden and desolated by the absence of printed Sundanese books. He said the Sundanese had lived "in a valley between two high mountains, the Javanese and Malay" (Moesa, 1867, p. 5).

In post-colonial Indonesia, the Indonesian language is associated with education, literacy, modernity, the elite group, the urban community and social mobility (Wright, 2004; Paauw, 2009). Therefore, Rina's comment about Sundanese lacking prestige makes sense. Those unable to speak Indonesian are seen as uneducated and un-modern; this is why local (ethnic) languages, including Sundanese, have received less attention than Indonesian, especially during the Suharto era when urbanisation was associated with modernity (Nababan, 1985).

The Sundanese and other ethnicities in Indonesia experienced layers of domination. The Sundanese were not only colonised by the Dutch but also by the Javanese and Indonesians. Thus, the Sundanese feeling of inferiority is not only aimed at Western culture but also against Javanese and Indonesian.

All the teachers in this study agreed that the feelings of inferiority need addressing. They think ECE is the correct field in which to do that. In this sense, the teachers perceived ECE as a site for disengaging with the subconscious colonial knowledge (Crossley & Tikly, 2004). The teachers emphasised the need to build a sense of pride in being Sundanese. Some of the teachers agreed that building pride can be done by eliminating negative stereotypes about the Sundanese. Titi, a teacher, said,

> Do not teach the bad side of Sundanese, such as "*pinter dandan hungkul*" [only good at dressing up, focusing more on how they look than on inner quality], "*orang sunda mah siga peuyeum*" [the Sundanese are lame and weak]. Very often the Sundanese compare themselves to the Javanese. We would say, "Don't be lame! Be strong like a Javanese! They are [thumbs up gesture][Titi gave a thumbs up, a symbol of great or good]." (Titi, FGD, 8 January 2019)

Dewi, a teacher, suggested they modify the folktales and eliminate the slyness in the stories. They should emphasise positive values rather than negative ones. The awareness of the negative sides of Sundanese culture shows that the teachers were capable of being critical toward their own culture. Thus, *Rebo nyunda* is not only an opportunity to revive Sundanese culture but also to revise it.

Conclusion

The teachers' understanding of the cultural revitalisation embedded in *Rebo nyunda* is paradoxical. In the context of contemporary Indonesia, where every big city has both multi-ethnic and multi-cultural characteristics, implementing a cultural revitalisation program that does not ignore the minority cultures in the region is not without challenges. The first paradox of *Rebo nyunda* is that it revitalises Sundanese culture, but suppresses other cultures in the centre. Second, *Rebo nyunda* is expected to be able to shape future generations who have strong cultural roots and are unshaken by the negative foreign ideas. However, the teachers also criticised some of the Sundanese values and suggested they should be revised through *Rebo nyunda.* Third, the teachers perceived the children's individualism and the fact that the children are able to express their opinion strongly to be down to western influence yet they did not criticise the doctrine of child-centrism which encourages these characteristics. For *Rebo nyunda* to become a means of decolonising ECE, it will have to be expanded from merely introducing, revitalising and revising Sundanese culture so that it also explores Sundanese values and finds a way to incorporate the multicultural values that are more relevant to the contemporary West Javanese context. Decolonising ECE should be aimed at finding a suitable ECE approach that places the children's characteristics at the centre rather than placing them within the culture of the location of the centre's cultural association.

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Negotiating local and glocal discourse in kindergarten: Stories from Indonesia

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Abstract: This paper aims to explore how kindergartens in Indonesia become a space to negotiate local and global discourses. Informed by postcolonial theories, it seeks to identify a hybrid space that goes beyond the binary between South and North. Based on fieldwork in three different kindergartens in Indonesia, this paper illuminate different forms of negotiation adopted by the kindergartens. Two most pervasive global discourses found are related with child-centredness and neoliberalism. The kindergartens negotiate these discourses through a social aspiration, character building, and religious values discourses. The finding suggests how juxtaposed ideas continue to intersect with one another ECE.

Key words: kindergarten, postcolonial, hybrid space, negotiation.

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country with more than 300 ethnicities, each with its own traditions (Misachi, 2018). However, it is also a country with a long history of colonialisation and was colonised by the Dutch for more than 350 years, followed by the Japanese in 1942–1945 (Kingsbury, 2002). The legacy of colonisation remains very pervasive in Indonesia. Spivak (1988) argues that when colonisation is still alive in the minds of the colonised, a postcolonial condition develops. In Indonesia that condition is evident in almost all aspects of life. From TV shows and the existence of multinational companies and international brands to the country's education system, postcolonialism always comes about through the country's interaction with globalisation (During, 1998; Gupta, 2008).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Indonesia has not escaped either the neocolonial nor the postcolonial condition. Most ECE practices in Indonesia are based on theories and practices from the Global North, such as Piaget's theory of child development and the work of Vygotsky and Montessori, as well as programmes such as BCCT (Beyond Circle and Centre Time) (Adriany, 2013, 2018a). However, as Bhabha (1994) suggests, in the postcolonial era, the local culture and the colonial culture negotiate each other. This produces a new area, a grey and hybrid area. A hybrid place is a place that goes beyond "the old dichotomy of coloniser/colonised" (Prabhu, 2007, p. xiii).

Previous research has attempted to explore ECE practices around the globe through postcolonial lenses, such as that by Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015); Viruru (2001, 2005). Critical approaches have been used to gain an understanding of how ECE can become a space for resistance and decolonisation. Other studies, such as those by Gupta (2006, 2008, 2018), Huang (2013b), and Jahng (2013) reveal the hybridisation process that allows the local and global culture to interact and negotiate with one another. Despite Indonesia's long history of colonisation, there has been little research attempting to understand ECE practices from a postcolonial perspective. This paper therefore aims to explore the extent to which ECE in Indonesia is becoming a space of negotiation between local and global discourses.

On Using Postcolonial theories in Early Childhood Education

This paper draws on postcolonial theories. The application of postcolonial theories is essential, particularly if we wish to understand the lived experiences of children in the South. As mentioned earlier, children in the South are often assumed to the development standard and norms developed in the North (Penn, 2011; Viruru, 2005). Hence, the binary division between children in the North and South persists.

Postcolonial scholars such as Gupta (2006) have considered the extent to which Western penetration of ECE may involve the legacy of colonisation, a result of the activities of the Global North in countries in the Global South. As Childs and Williams (1997) assert, the legacy of colonialisation sustains even once the country is no longer occupied. It becomes more salient, controlling the minds of the people (Spivak, 2000). The Western construction of children and childhood is privileged and seen as the norm against which

children all over the world should be understood. There is no doubt the Western construction has become, to use Foucault's (1980) notion, "the regime of truth": the only way to understand children's development. Hence, non-Western constructions of childhood are often seen as inadequate, and thus, the children are often seen in terms of being other (Tesar, 2015).

The ongoing effect of colonialisation is also evident in the ECE curriculum. The work of Adriany (2018a) in Indonesia, Gupta (2006) in India, Huang (2013a) in Taiwan, and Jahng (2013) in Korea points out just how much the curriculum in these countries relies on Western theories. Developmentalism is widely used in many Global South countries. Piaget's theory of children development, Vygotsky's concept of learning and the various ECE movements such as Montessori, High Scope, and Roger Emilia, all demonstrate the influence of Western theories in ECE. While these theories do contain some critical insights into curriculum development, as Viruru (2005) asserts, there are discrepancies between theory and practice, since they are frequently not culturally sensitive.

Government policy in the South is also affected by the postcolonial condition. Many countries in the South rely on loans provided by global financial institutions such as the World Bank (Adriany, 2018b; Penn, 2002, 2011). To qualify for these loans, governments must agree to implementing economic, social and education reforms set out by the international donor agencies. Very often, education reforms follow a neoliberal agenda in which education is perceived merely as a means of achieving economic development (Peach & Lightfoot, 2015).

The postcolonial aim, however, is not to perpetuate the binary divide between the North and the South. Instead, the aspiration is to go beyond it.

As mentioned before, Bhabha (1994) has suggested there exists a third hybrid space that allows for constant negotiation between the colonised and the coloniser. Within that act of negotiation, resistance can be made visible, even though the act of resistance sometimes uses the languages of the coloniser (Spivak, 1988).

In addition to the use of postcolonial theories, this paper is also informed by Foucault's notion of discourse (Foucault, 1984). Here the discourse refers to a system in which regulatory and governmentality become the dominant values (Kaščák & Pupala, 2011). It holds hegemonic power and hence becomes the regime of truth, the only way to perceive the reality (Foucault, 1980, 1984). In this paper, I will demonstrate how the discourse operates

within ECE in Indonesia. However, because of my engagement with postcolonial theories, this paper will also show how the dominant discourse continues to be negotiated in kindergarten settings.

ECE Practices in Indonesia

Indonesia is a vast country, with approximately 17,508 islands, about 6,000 of which are inhabited (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, n.a.). It has 34 provinces, over 580 languages and ethnicities, and Javanese is the largest ethnicity in Indonesia. Currently, it is home to more than 270 million people; around 90% are Muslims (World Population Review, 2018). Given this depiction, one can only imagine the complexity of Indonesia, including in the field of ECE.

ECE practices in Indonesia can be traced back to the Dutch colonisation when the Dutch government introduced a pre-school that adopted Froebelian and Montessori approaches (Thomas, 1992). Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, in an act of resistance, established the first national kindergarten in 1922. The kindergarten adopted and modified the Frobelian and Montessori approaches to the Javanese context. In other words, child-centred practices have existed in Indonesia since the period of Dutch colonisation.

Although ECE was established long ago in Indonesia, greater attention began to be paid to ECE in the 2000s with the push from the international agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO and Save the Children (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015). The government used a World Bank loan to initiate programmes to develop ECE in rural areas such as the one village, one ECE centre programmes (Satu Desa, Satu PAUD) (Ministry of Human Development and Culture Coordinator, 2016). Within the programmes lies the idea of constructing a more legitimate version of childhood because the existing village childhood is seen to be inadequate. In addition to focusing on the children, the programme is also directed at parents in an attempt to improve their parenting style (Tomlinson & Andina, 2015).

The fact that the government cooperates with international agencies demonstrates the penetration of neoliberal ideology into ECE. Among the ideas circulated by international agencies is the link between ECE and a country's economic development. ECE is seen as a form of investment that can bring a higher return to society in the future (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Without doubt, this demonstrates the pervasiveness of the human capital discourse within ECE (Peach & Lightfoot, 2015).

Neoliberal ideology is also disseminated through another discourse. ECE in Indonesia is not part of compulsory education, and hence it is the responsibility of the parents to select the best ECE for their children. This provides room for private kindergartens to emerge. A growing number of early childhood education institutions follow market-driven pre-school programmes or are operated by international franchises (Newberry, 2010). Many market-driven school programmes are franchises of global international programmes such as High Scope, Tumble Tots, Beyond Centre and Circle Time (BCCT) and many more.

The neoliberal ideology is also disseminated through the child-centred discourse. The national education law stipulates that ECE practices in Indonesia must subscribe to the child-centredness principle ("Law of the Republic of Indonesia: National Education System," 2003; Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). The child-centred discourse echoes neoliberal principles with its emphasis on individuality and rationality (Duhn, 2010). Even though child-centredness has existed since the Dutch era, it has now become a state-sponsored practice.

Methodology

This research was conducted in three geographically distinct kindergartens in Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach is used. My understanding of case study research is informed by Merriam (1998), who defines it as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a programme, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). In this paper, the bounded phenomenon is the kindergarten and the research is an attempt to present the complexities between the three kindergartens. The first kindergarten, the Rainbow Kindergarten, is located in a small village in South Sulawesi. The second kindergarten, the Colourful Kindergarten, is situated in a small town in Bengkulu province and the last kindergarten, the Flower Kindergarten, is in a town in West Java. The participants are the teachers and children in the kindergartens. The data was gathered mainly through interviews with the kindergartens' principals and teachers. Non-participatory observation was also used to understand the daily practices of the kindergartens.

The data analysis faithfully follows Merriam's (1998) approach. She argues that a qualitative case study involves six types of analysis: "ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, constant comparative method, content, and analytic induction analysis" (Yazan, 2015, p. 130). In case study

research the analyst seeks a thick, detailed depiction of the unit or units being studied, and compares the groups being investigated throughout. To achieve this, I tried to compare and contrast the three kindergartens. At the same time, when analysing the data, I was also guided by my theoretical framework: postcolonial theories. Hence, I focused my analysis on how local and global values mutually interact and negotiate.

Conducting research in which the unit of analysis is an institution, like the kindergartens in this research, is always fraught with difficulty. I adhered to ethical principles throughout. Prior to conducting the research, consent was obtained from the adult participants, and from the children's parents. In addition, because research with young children always entails problematic ethical issues, I implemented what Warin (2011) refers to as continuous consent, where the children's consent is sought verbally and attention is paid to their non-verbal communication. As an adult researcher, I was aware of my power and how children are constructed in Indonesia as fragile individuals, and so I tried my best not to exert my power. Although I did not interview the children directly in my research, the observation involved the children, so I tried to ensure my presence did not cause any inconvenience to the children. I also attempted to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality by not revealing their real names, the names of the kindergartens or the names of the towns and villages where the research was conducted. All the participant names in this paper are pseudonyms.

Findings and Discussion

The Rainbow Kindergarten: Social aspiration and human capital discourse

The Rainbow Kindergarten is situated in a small village, on a hill in South Sulawesi. To reach the kindergarten, one must first take a two hour flight from Jakarta to Makasar, followed by an eight hour drive to the village. The village is up a hill. There is no public transportation to it. People usually walk or take an *ojek* (motorcycle transportation). The people who live there tend to be farmers as the village grows a lot of crops such as coffee and pepper.

ECE is considered to be a new phenomenon in the village. According to the kindergarten's principal, the kindergarten was established six years ago. One of the drivers behind the setting up of the kindergarten was, as mentioned before, the government's policy of one village, one ECE centre. The

system has encouraged volunteerism in the community; it is mainly women who set up kindergartens in villages in Indonesia (Newberry & Marpinjun, 2018). The kindergarten tuition fee is Rp 5,000.00 (EUR 0.31), but many parents have difficulty affording it.

To reach Rainbow Kindergarten, one must take a footpath. When I entered the kindergarten, I was greeted with a picture of a boy and a girl displayed on the wall. The kindergarten has only one room, of approximately 20 square meters. A closet separates the room, and one section is used as the classroom, and the other part as the teachers' office. By office, I mean a section containing a single table and chair for the teacher. The table was covered in all the children's work, such as their drawings and art. Some pictures were hanging on the wall. There was also an alphabet poster on the wall.

The kindergarten is run by only two teachers. One acts as both a teacher and the principal, and the other, who is the principal's daughter, is the class teacher. The kindergarten takes children aged three to six years old. There were 20 children altogether in the kindergarten. Due to the lack of classrooms, the kindergarten has a schedule for each class. The three to four year olds attend the school on Friday only, while the four to five year olds go to school every Tuesday and Thursday, and the five to six year olds go to school every Monday and Wednesday. Each session lasts around two hours. The class usually began with circle time, where the children sit in a circle on the floor, and the teachers explain the activities for that day. Then they moved on to the main activity and the teachers assign one activity to the children. After the main activity, the children had their snack and play time, and the whole session was concluded with them singing together.

There were no chairs and tables in the classroom, presumably because the kindergarten was not spacious enough to accommodate them. All the children were seated on the floor. The principal said that was "a blessing in disguise" because:

> No, we don't have chairs and tables in our classroom, but I think this makes our school more child-centred. Just like the school supervisor said that in the kindergarten all the activities should be done in a circle and the children should move around freely, with no chairs or table to restrict their movement. So, ya…even though the reason for not having the chairs is because we don't have money (laugh), but then it makes our school more child-friendly.

The teachers in the kindergarten strongly believe that ECE is vital to improving living conditions, particularly the economic development of the village. This understanding seems to be derived from a human capital approach that sees education as a vehicle to improving the country's economy (Formen, 2017; Lee, Tseng & Jun 2015; Peach & Lightfoot, 2015). As the principal asserts: "Maybe one day, one of our pupils will get a PhD or become a company manager. They don't have to become a farmer like their parents again".

During my observation in the school, I noticed there was an emphasis on academic activities such as reading and writing, especially for the children aged five to six years old. Although the seating arrangement was a circle, all the activities were quite teacher-centred, with the teachers in charge of decision-making. Most of the time, the children were seated, with little room for physical activities. Almost all the activities were pencil and paper based. However, my observation also showed that despite the activities in the school being entirely academic, the children seemed to enjoy it. They sat and did everything with great enthusiasm. As Gupta (2006) and Jahng (2013) suggest that there is an emphasis on physical activities in the Global North, while in the Global South, academic activities seem to be preferred.

The kindergarten's emphasis on academic activities seems to derive from their desire to achieve economic success in the future. As the principal said:

> I understand that the directorate [of early childhood education] does not encourage kindergarten children to read and write. They said the activities are developmentally inappropriate. But at the same time, the parents demand it, because they want the children to be successful in the primary school later on. If we do not teach them how to read and write, then they will be left behind later. I think the most important thing is we don't force them, and they are still happy to do the activities.

The principal's statement illuminates what Naafs (2018, p. 2) labels "ways of imagining their futures". ECE is seen as a social mobility tool where professions other than farmer are seen as possessing more social capital and privilege. At the same time, this also highlights the neoliberal values that construct children as "potential adult and earner" in the future (Kaščák & Pupala, 2011, p. 55).

However, neoliberalism does not seem to be the only factor that leads to the kindergarten's emphasis on academic activities. As the principal men-

tioned, the activities were stipulated by the parents, reflecting the parents' personal desire for their children to be successful in the future (Philipson & Sujudin, 2019). The fact that most parents in the village came from low socio-economics status might demonstrate the inequality between the different social classes in the country (Naafs, 2018). Parents' aspirations should therefore be seen in terms of a desire to improve their socio-economic status.

The fact that the activities in the kindergarten are teacher-centred may also suggest that what happens in the classroom is an extension of the social construction of children and childhood in Indonesia. Children in Indonesia are still constructed as subordinates in relationships with adults. Even though the Indonesian government has attempted to implement child-centredness through the kindergarten curriculum, the societal values regarding children and childhood remain the same. The constant negotiation between child-centredness and teacher-centredness sheds light on the complex relations between the local and global construction of childhood and adulthood in Indonesia. They also reveal the complex associations between the local and parents' aspirations regarding social mobility and neoliberal values relating to human capitalism.

The Colourful Kindergarten: Local character and the World Bank's view on children

The Colourful Kindergarten is located in a small town, around a three to four hour drive from Bengkulu, the capital city of Bengkulu province. Bengkulu province is situated on Sumatra Island. To get there, one must take a two hour flight from Jakarta, followed by a three hour drive.

The Colourful Kindergarten takes children aged two to six years old. There are 50 children in the school. The kindergarten is quite big. It has a spacious yard where children can play on the swing, slide and so on. The kindergarten consists of three classrooms. One class is for children aged two to three years old; the other two classes are for children aged four to five and five to six respectively.

The Colourful kindergarten is bigger in term of the size of the building as well as the number of the pupils than the Rainbow kindergarten. Parents pay a small tuition fee of around Rp. 20,000.00 (EUR 1.25) per month. However, just like in the village the Rainbow Kindergarten is located in, most people in this city are farmers. The kindergarten was established in 2013. Like the previous one, it is based around the government policy of one vil-

lage, one ECE centre. However, there was also a concern to correct views of childhood and parenting in the village. As Rita, the school's principal states:

> Before the kindergarten was established, the parents did not know what to do with their children. They often took their children farming with them. Sometimes, they had to travel very far to do that. The children went for months, without education or play.

She continues: "The children in our village used to rant and use swear words a lot…it really breaks my heart to see it".

Rita's mission to correct the parents and the children seems to be the reason she decided to establish the Colourful Kindergarten, and it became the kindergarten's mission: "to develop the children's character". She says this is central to the school's philosophy, helping the children develop their character fully. This strong passion is also rooted in religious practices. The kindergarten places great emphasis on the religious tuition. Every day before the activities start, the children recite some verses from the Quran (Islamic holy book) and stories about good character are read out.

Interestingly the idea of constructing a correct version of childhood and parenting is also similar to the idea disseminated by the global agencies such as the World Bank and UNICEF (Penn, 2002, 2011). In many of the World Bank's ECE programmes in Global North countries, and in Indonesia, ECE centres are always established in conjunction with the parenting programme (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015). A report prepared by the World Bank clearly states that the aim of the parenting programme is to improve the parenting styles in rural areas (Hasan, Hyson, & Chang, 2013; Tomlinson & Andina, 2015; World Bank, 2006, n. d.). This approach is also followed in the kindergarten which runs a weekly parenting programme. The emphasis is placed on the importance of play and the benefit of reading books, as the school's principal suggests that "the parents here do not know how to raise their children." Here, again the school's emphasis on correcting both the children and the parents intersects with the World Bank's view on children and parents in the South (Adriany & Saefullah, 2015; Penn, 2002, 2011). This shows how power travels and is celebrated (Penn, 2002). However, as I have mentioned before, the determination to build the children's character also seems to be derived from the teachers' religious beliefs. My observations in the Colourful Kindergarten suggest that the kindergarten becomes a space in which seemingly contradictory local and global values continue to be negotiated.

The Flower Kindergarten: Between Islam and the West.

The last kindergarten in this research is the Flower Kindergarten. It is located in a town, around 4 hours' drive from Bandung, the capital city of West Java. The kindergarten is quite high profile and considered to be one of the most popular kindergartens in the town. It is a two storey building set in a very spacious area with a huge front yard. There are 48 teachers in total, and the kindergarten accommodates 279 children. The kindergarten is divided into several classes, starting from daycare for babies and toddlers up to two years old, pre-school 1 for children ages two to three years old, pre-school 2 for children between three and four years old, kindergarten A for children from four to five years old and kindergarten B for children aged five to six years old. The tuition fee is Rp. 750,000.00 (EUR 47) per month.

The Flower Kindergarten is an Islamic kindergarten. In Indonesia there are various interpretations of Islam, varying from a more liberal approach to a more traditional and conservative approach. This kindergarten has a strong affiliation with the Salafi movement, a branch of the Islamic movement that is associated with a literal, strict and puritanical approach to Islam (N. Hasan, 2007). All the teachers wear a niqab, which is not part of the Islamic tradition in Indonesia (Hefner, 2007).

Interestingly, despite the school's rather rigorous approach to Islam, it also adopts a very American approach regarding the curriculum and teaching practices. The kindergarten follows the Beyond Centres and Circle Times approach (BCCT), which is child-centred. The BCCT was initially developed by Dr Pamela C. Phleps from the Creative Preschool, Florida, United States (DEPDIKNAS, 2006). It is an approach to early childhood associated with the Creative Center for Childhood Research and Training (CCCRT) in Tallahassee, Florida, described as the "Home of the Creative Preschool Model Program Curriculum: Beyond Centers & Circle Time" (CCCRT, 2011). This copyrighted programme is available for purchase, and the CCCRT conducts training and workshops for interested teachers. According to their website, "CCCRT offers educational resources, professional services, scholarly publications and state-of-the-art training to adults working within the field of early childhood education and care". The programme was brought to Indonesia in 2006 by a local private kindergarten and was then implemented in all early childhood education in Indonesia with the government's endorsement (Newberry, 2010). The fact that an NGO introduced BCCT to Indonesia may exemplify the making of a liberal and global child that is part of the neoliberal state. The government halted the programme in 2010 because the

contract with the CCCRT was not extended. However, some kindergarten continue to practice BCCT such as the Flower Kindergarten.

The ideal subject in BCCT is a self-directed, self-disciplining child whose education is driven by play-based approaches (Newberry, 2010). As the BCCT's website states, "*Beyond Centers & Circle Time* focuses on creating intentional, developmentally appropriate experiences for children ages three through kindergarten" (The Beyond Centers & Circle Time Curriculum Series, n.a.).

Within the BCCT approach, the focus is on the centre. Here centre means an area for children to play and do activities. The kindergarten has seven centres. They are the pre-academic centre where the activities are mostly related to pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-maths; the art centre where the children do art and craft; the socio-drama area where the children can engage in pretend play and role-plays; the block centre, where the children play with blocks; the physical education centre; the nature centre, where the children play with natural resources from the environment; and the last centre is the religious centre, where the children are taught religion and the emphasis is on memorising the Quran.

School begins at 8 AM. School activities commence with free play. The reason for this is that the kindergarten believes that it allows the children to release energy and so when they enter the classroom, they are ready to learn. After playing, the children recite some prayers, and then proceed to the dining room to have their snack. Once they finish their meal, they go to the classroom where the activities are held. This session begins with circle time with the teacher and children sitting in a circle, and the teacher prompting discussion by explaining the activities for that day. The children then go to one of the centres. At the centre, several activities will have been prepared by the teacher. When I did my observation in the kindergarten, there were 11 activities in the pre-academic centre—each child selected the activities they wanted to do. There is a strong emphasis on the concepts of "choice" and "freedom". Once the activities in one centre are completed, the children move to another centre and do another activity. In one day, the children usually do activities in three or four of the centres. All the activities are finished by around 2 PM with a break for prayer around 12 PM.

Because BCCT is no longer endorsed by the government, a private kindergarten like the Flower Kindergarten need an exclusive license to use BCCR. According to the principal, this license is obtained by attending

a training course on how to run the BCCT programme conducted by Dr Pamela C. Phleps. The training course is held once a year in Jakarta. Participants have to pay approximately Rp. 50 million (USD 3580) for one-week of training. Running the BCCT programme is costly and demonstrates the extent to which the programme attracts middle and upper class children. Most of the children in the kindergarten come from an upper-class background. This also signifies the fact that the notion of excellent quality ECE often does not take into account the idea of equity (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007)

Another central feature of BCCT is the idea of a rational and unified self. The school principal explained that any disputes and fighting among the children are always resolved through discussion. During my observation of circle time, there was an emphasis on getting the children to talk about how they feel and why they feel that way. I have also mentioned how the school focuses on building the children‘s ability to make choices. The discourse resonates with the neoliberal enlightenment though; in the broader society individuals are celebrated as single, coherent and rational subjects who are able to make decisions for themselves (Newberry, 2010).

What happens in the Rainbow Kindergarten demonstrates the convenient marriage between religion and neoliberalism. As Aksoy and Eren Deniz (2018) and (Atasoy, 2009) argue neoliberalism is often celebrated by people as long as it does not directly challenge their imagined religious identity. The social justice issues remain overlooked, evident in the fact that the kindergarten is aimed at upper-class children and hence access may be limited for children from a lower socio-economic background.

Conclusion

The findings of this paper reveal the extent to which ECE in Indonesia is becoming a hybrid space for the constant negotiation between the local and global discourses. This paper highlight the fact that the neoliberal discourses are among the most pervasive global discourses found in ECE in Indonesia. The findings demonstrate how the kindergartens surveyed continue to adapt and negotiate, but also resist the dominant discourse. As presented in this paper, neoliberalism is adapted and negotiated within three main discourses. In the Rainbow Kindergarten, the human capital discourse is mediated through aspirations for social mobility. ECE is becoming an economic imaginary for the people in the village. Understanding the people’s desire for future success allows us to appreciate the kindergarten’s emphasis on teacher-centredness approach. In the second kindergarten, the Colorful

Kindergarten, negotiation occurs between neoliberalism and the character building discourse. By focusing on developing children's character, the teachers translate the World Bank's view of children and parents into the local language. Finally, in the last kindergarten, the Colorful Kindergarten, neoliberalism negotiates with the Islamic imaginary.

The findings demonstrate the complexity of the negotiation between the local and global discourses. On one hand, these different forms of negotiation illuminate the acts of resistance whereby they try to challenge the hegemonic discourse using the dominant language itself, but on the other hand, these may yield to the pervasiveness of the global discourses. The link between neoliberalism and colonisation is so powerful that Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015, p. 5) asserts how this may show the extent to which

> the recent predominance of neoliberal discourses can make it difficult to ascertain how old forms of colonisation are being sedimented, even as new forms of colonial relations or neocolonialism are being mobilised.

Despite the power of both the neoliberal and colonial discourses in ECE in Indonesia, the findings show how ECE is becoming a space in which juxtaposing ideas continue to interact with one another. Hence, the implication of this paper is that we should rethink the complexity and multifaceted nature of ECE in Indonesia rather than imagining it as a coherent, fix and "othered" practice of ECE compared to those in the North. This paper, therefore, should be seen as an invitation to discuss how to ECE could be decolonised in Indonesia.

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