

Exploring Ways Early Childhood Teachers Integrate Information and Communication Technologies into Children's Play: Two Case Studies from the Australian Context

Authors : Caroline Labib

Abstract : This paper reports on a qualitative study exploring the approaches teachers used to integrate computers or smart tablets into their program planning. Their aim was to integrate ICT into children's play, thereby supporting children's learning and development. Data was collected in preschool settings in Melbourne in 2016. Interviews with teachers, observations of teacher interactions with children and copies of teachers' planning and observation documents informed the study. The paper looks closely at findings from two early childhood settings and focuses on exploring the differing approaches two EC teachers have adopted when integrating iPad or computers into their settings. Data analysis revealed three key approaches which have been labelled: free digital play, guided digital play and teacher-led digital use. Importantly, teacher decisions were influenced by the interplay between the opportunities that the ICT tools offered, the teachers' prior knowledge and experience about ICT and children's learning needs and contexts. This paper is a snapshot of two early childhood settings, and further research will encompass data from six more early childhood settings in Victoria with the aim of exploring a wide range of motivating factors for early childhood teachers trying to integrate ICT into their programs.

Keywords : early childhood education (ECE), digital play, information and communication technologies (ICT), play, and teachers' interaction approaches

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