<Front cover> # Planning with and for children

< tag line> Practical guide to inquiry-based learning though Floorbooks

< author> Dr Claire Warden
already provided

<Text Inside Front cover>

<dedication and thanks >

Thank you to all those educators who chose to stand beside me all those years ago and stand up for the right of all children to be heard.

A specific thank you to the centres below for their enthusiasm and support:

Woodleigh School, Victoria, Australia

Nurture through Nature, W.A., Australia

XXXXXNature Kindergarten, NSW, Australia

The Nature School, XXXX

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten, Scotland, UK

Whitefield Nursery and Infant School, England, UK

Boldon Nursery School, England, UK

Ferntop Pre-school, Tennessee, USA

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<Contents>

< insert title> Introduction

Welcome to the world of inquiry-based practice through Floorbooks. In this book I seek to explore the practical elements of Floorbooks and share strategies that you can easily use to create an approach to documentation and planning that is both with and for children. The overall aim of this book, and my work more generally, is to bring back joy to the planning process so that we engage with it with a pedagogically driven desire to understand more about what and how children think. When we understand even a small part of what children think then we can create environments, spaces and interactions that are relevant and rich.

The book itself is in four main sections -

1. Pedagogical thinking behind Floorbooks

2. Features of a Floorbook

3. Key strategies that relate to the adult role, such as Talking Tubs

4. Breadth, balance, and accountability

Each of these shares research and case studies to position this work in an international context.

A key aspect of international writing is to find inspiration from practice in other countries but to also acknowledge that it is place-based and affected by culture, climate and curriculum, especially when you explore nature-based learning as an integral aspect of your inquiries. In a paper written around pedagogical practice, Livingston et al (2017) suggest that we look at the following aspects throughout education when evaluating our practice. These aspects are all central to planning with and for children through Floorbooks: -

- learner engagement

- mutual respect between educators and learners

- building on prior learning

- meaningful interactions

- relevance of curriculum

- developing skills and attitudes as well as knowledge

- alignment of planning and assessment with the learner's needs

< Insert Image> Floorbooks

In addition to these, Floorbooks go further to be a vehicle to explore and make visible some

of the implicit and subtle aspects of both our personal and group pedagogies, such as -

- Social justice

- Cultural capital

- Inclusivity

- Agency and empowerment

- Perception of the natural world

Floorbooks are a hub for many forms of documentation and if a setting embraces the

philosophy of consultation there will be four core strategies that will work collectively to

ensure that children, families and educators are involved in the planning and

documentation. These and many more are explored in this book.

<Insert the four images in the folder with this text beneath them>

Floorbooks - used as a central location for the documentation of the process of play and the accountability to curriculum.

Talking Tub - A collection of fascinating, real materials to support dialogue and consultation.

Communication book - A shared space for the documentation of events, ideas, and comments from the community.

Portfolios or Family books - Individual learning stories in a real book.

An assessment of the children is gathered through the many perspectives noted and used to complete a Floorbooks Planning diary which is where the operational thoughts of the team are noted.

As we start this journey together it is important to note that care, respect and wonderment are central traits to the role of being an adult who works with children in inquiry-based approaches. To co-construct new thinking, children and adults need to be open to creating an environment that embraces individuality within a community of practice, to be responsive and dynamic, whilst keeping an eye on the balance and breadth of experience.

< insert image and title >
SECTION 1. Pedagogical thinking behind Floorbooks.

Inquiry-based learning itself has been part of an educational offering for hundreds of years as people questioned and researched the world around them. Sadly, in many countries, learning inside through direct instruction overtook a more balanced approach of teaching core skills inside and the application of those in real-world learning. Play moved from having freedom and autonomy to being over-controlled, as practice sought to minimise its role in education. There is currently a drive to seek that sense of balance again and to start any learning journey through consulting children to explore their fascinations, theories and plans.

These ideas become part of the planning cycle so that the decision-making power moves from being adult-only to a shared construction between children and adults. Social pedagogies tend to focus on the relationships between aspects of learning and are affected by the status each aspect is given. In any social situation there are hierarchies, and these have led to an increased focus on adult-created plans for evidence and a lack of power and agency given to children. The location and use of power are at the centre of reflexive practice which is intertwined with the reflective thinking used throughout this approach.

There are many approaches to how to teach, for me it has been about embracing divergent thinking that supports the individual within a group-learning community. The focus for me,

in all aspects of my teaching working with people from birth to 18, is to foster understanding.

Teaching for understanding

An inductive approach to how we work blends the mind and heart when exploring any curriculum. This allows us to transfer concepts to a range of new situations. This style of work takes facts or theories, looks for patterns and similarities, and then forms a generalisation with a clear indication where it came from. An example would be to notice how a beetle sheds its case, that our hair grows, that a plant buds, so that we come to understand the concept of growth.

The second type of thinking is deductive reasoning, which looks at generalised truths first, then explores factual examples to validate the generalisations. An example based on the above would be to start from a statement that all things grow and then to grow sunflowers.

Both these types of teaching, which are either divergent or convergent, require us to be aware of synergistic thinking, which is the interaction between factual and conceptual levels of thinking (Erickson & Lanning 2014:10).

The use of inductive or open-ended teaching runs underneath many models of early education, such as those influenced by Pestalozzi, and later Malaguzzi, that appear in Reggio Emelia or those within the child-led inquiries in Nature Pedagogy (Warden 2018). There are two main aspects of this pedagogy that are of note.

The first is that inductive teaching, or some might suggest interaction, provides the space children need to think first and then create a learning pathway that could take them inside, outside into the nature-based space and beyond the gate into the wilder spaces.

The second is that when we provide the generalisation at the start of an inquiry it affects the empowerment of children to drive it forward. If you know exactly where a journey will end would you really be as motivated to engage in it?

Attitudes to learning - capacities of learners (make ref to Australian curriculum)

Open-mindedness. Supporting children to be open-minded in their work, to develop a growth mindset that what you think maybe new and different takes time. Everyone can engage in concept-based inquiries as they focus on the relationship between the thinker and the concept itself. Where knowledge can often be portrayed as defined, concepts are wider and free-ranging. The culture of acceptance and social justice requires children to be non-judgemental and open to their bias.

Persistent-mindedness — to think that you can, to believe in your internal self that you can achieve. This requires determination to persevere, to delve into the detail of a problem to find a hook that will give you a new insight. Floorbooks make this process more visible as the failures and challenges of learning are given equal status to the solutions.

Evidence-mindedness - that explores examples, facts and evidence before making generalised assertions or truths. Through using Floorbooks as a holder of memories, truths can be explored through experience rather than through a screen. Floorbooks often share the research alongside the children's original ideas so that both are valued.

Brain research

The field of neuroscience provides research into how the brain works that was not available at the time of many theorists such as Vygotsky or Piaget. Here are some points to consider from the research that support child-led, inquiry-based practice shared within the pages of a Floorbook.

- **Engagement -** The presence of brain research has had an impact on the commitment to active, engaging methods that foster positive dispositions to lifelong learning (Hart 1983, Howard 2006, Sylwester 1995 and 2004, and Zull 2002).

  There is a strong suggestion that learning dispositions are affected by emotionally led learning (Howard 2006, Wolfe 2001).

  Children's feelings about an experience affect how successful the child is in learning a skill (Sylwester 1995).

- **Interconnected thinking -** Learning is easier when experiences are interconnected rather than in isolated, subject areas (Howard 2006).

- **Challenging environments -** The brain adapts and develops through continuously changing and challenging environments (Kotulak 1993).

<insert side heading>History of Floorbooks

The use of Floorbooks started in my practice in the early 1990s and now, after 30 years, have stood the test of time and have international appeal across all age-groups of children. My exploration of this way of working started through a post-grad qualification in science all those years ago, where the desire to hear, to truly listen to children's ideas about the world around them drove innovation. I selected electricity as being something that I assumed young children wouldn't know very much about. How wrong I was. In the pages below we can see the opposite; given the materials to handle they were able to verbalise and demonstrate their thinking which had passed unnoticed before. There are rifts in our thinking (Caputo) that create significant shifts in our practice - this was such a time for me and pushed me to consider aspects of empowerment, inclusivity and engagement whilst still being accountable to an unyielding National Curriculum mandated by law.

< insert 5 Images of First Floorbook>

In the days before digital photography images were taken infrequently and only arrived at the setting after waiting for them to be printed, so the constant fear of missing a moment was secondary to effective, caring interactions. This aspect of documentation is explored later in the third section.

A larger strategic vision is rooted in the United Nations Rights of a Child (UNRC) where articles 31 and 12 are the rights to play and be heard. When these rights are embedded at the heart of educational pedagogy through the actual act of planning then the values of participation, respect, empowerment and agency can flourish.

Exactly how a setting or school uses the Floorbook approach is affected by their culture of empowerment and consultation, pedagogical principles and the impact of curriculum. The strength of a Floorbook itself lies in its flexibility, whilst having core features that elevate them from being scrapbooks to being Floorbooks. Here are 5 key things that act as a foundation to start our journey into this work

1. A Floorbook can document learning within inquiry-based projects or single aspects of learning. They provide an evidence-based log to inform tracking and demonstrate coverage of the curriculum as it documents inquiry-based learning through a lens. The adult can widen the lens to be everything children encounter, down to exploring a fragment such as the pattern of rain on a puddle.

2. Floorbooks are used to track learning, enhance language skills and develop children's vocabulary as they use the process of recording and then sharing those opportunities, thoughts and theories back to the child in a process of metacognition.

3. They encourage a wider range of vocabulary to enrich children's language and communication skills in the broadest sense. The Talking Tub introduces objects linked to the wider project. Children ask questions about them and if they show a particular interest in an object the centre can note it so that it can respond through further conversation or objects to extend the idea. Floorbooks can be used to plan and record this experience.

4. Floorbooks themselves hold so many memories of rich process-based learning that they warrant being valued and making accessible to children through the book corner. The learning journey held within them can be displayed on a wall so that parents are aware of the learning. Floorbooks can be used during parents' evenings to showcase each child's learning and encourage other adults to see the process of play through the documentation.

5. The exact type of book used as a Floorbook is secondary to their role. There are benefits of having an A2 book as children can all access and see the pages, but the smaller A3 size is easier to move and store.

< insert image: Thinking Tree is available at all times>

Creating the environment

To develop capacities in children, we need to create an environment that 'allows' autonomy and divergent thinking rather than a space that implicitly suggests compliance and convergent thinking.

Four types of learning environment that are defined by Claxton and Carr (2004), which are useful to explore as they have an impact on the quality and use of the Floorbook.

The first is a **prohibitive or discouraging environment** – where some activities prevent collaboration. Children follow a set, tightly packed schedule which encourages them to see learning in little boxes. In these environments, the Floorbook becomes an evidence folder with a very high level of adult control over what is included and what is not.

The second is **permissive and affording -** where resources are not easily accessible for children, value is placed on some activities but not others and teachers apply their own values to the environment rather than those of the children. In these environments, Floorbooks are well presented but only selected pieces of evidence are included.

The third is **inviting and encouraging -** where working with others is actively encouraged and value is placed on the questions that children ask, activities are available but there is still and limited choice. Here we can see that children's voices are valued and included through the child writing and drawing, and the process of play is valued and shared through film and audio.

< Insert Image: Place of Oracy in Education>

< insert image: Access the Floorbook in a central area>

< Insert image: Create environments that value dialogue for everyone in the community>

The fourth is where the experiences that emerge from the planning in Floorbooks are elevated and engaged with every day. It is referred to as **expansive, powerful and potentiating** - In this type of environment teachers supply the tools and resources but allow the children to make the decisions about what and how they learn. Children frequently participate in shared activities where they can develop their learning dispositions. In these environments the Floorbook runs alongside the inquiry, holding memories and ideas of a community of play within the setting.

< insert Image: Making portfolios accessible to children and families>

< BOX>

< insert 1> EYLF for Australia

Or/ and

< insert 1> Te Whāriki for NZ

Concept-led and inquiry-based play and learning

Anybody who is fascinated by the questions of Who? What? Why? When? How? is an inquirer. The desire to widen your horizon for no other reason than a desire has a growth mind-set to uncover new thinking and perspectives. Inquiry-based learning has been used as a term since the 1960s and was often linked to science-based learning, however, the pedagogy is transferable across all areas of learning.

There are 4 types of inquiry-based learning -

There are different kinds of inquiry-based learning, which become decreasingly structured and suit different classrooms:

- **Confirmation inquiry** - You give children a question, its answer and the method of reaching this answer. Their goal is to build investigation and critical-thinking skills, learning how the specific method works.

- **Structured inquiry** - You give children an open question and an investigation method. They must use the method to craft an evidence-backed conclusion.

- **Guided inquiry** - You give children an open question. Typically in groups, they then design investigation methods to reach a conclusion.

- **Open inquiry** - You give children time and support. They pose original questions that they investigate through their own methods and eventually present their results to discuss and expand.

Inquiry base pedagogies support all aspects of the curriculum in an holistic way. These inquiries include traditionally separate currcilum areas , attitudes or dispositions and akills. If we take the example of language skills there are five aspects that we explore when we use a Floorbook and a Talking Tub. Given that language moves across curricular divisions, it has a holistic impact on a young child's growth and development.

< insert image; Gathering information from experiences>

Information processing skills -

- Gathering information from people and through texts and images in the Talking Tub.

- Analysing and comparing 2D and 3D objects.

- Sequencing of memory, objects and images.

- Classifying and sorting of found materials and focussed objects in the Talking Tub.

< insert image: Discussion for a staff review>

Evaluation skills -

- Evaluating options through discussion.

- Monitoring progress through a Learning Journey mind-map either in the Floorbook or on a wall-based version.

- Reflecting on one's own and others' progress through revisiting Floorbooks and Family Books.

< insert image: Documentation of decision making>

Reasoning Skills -

- Making informed decisions when exploring the complexity of the Talking Tub.

- Arriving at group-reasons for choices, with these recorded as voting or meeting notes.

- Making inferences and connections as they revisit moments through the Floorbook.

- Making deductions as they consider the process, complete with failures and successes.

< insert Image: Mathematical problem solving between home and setting>

Inquiry Skills -

- Planning what, where, when and how.

- Testing ideas and exploring why things happen as they do.

- Predicting experiences and understanding cause and effect.

- Problem-solving through real-world experiences that are then documented to aid recall.

< insert Image> Sharing process in displays >

Creative skills -

- Applying imagination through divergent thinking.

- Looking for alternatives and options.

- Generating ideas through dialogue with others.

- Vocalising possibilities for learning in partnership with adults.

Some children appear to complete tasks to gain positive feedback from an adult or the avoidance of failure. As a result, Bruner (1961) suggested that they may not appreciate the inherent benefits of the place of failure in the learning process. When the inquiry-approach is linked to using Floorbooks as a planning tool, children develop a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset. This happens because it shares the process of discovery and failure and makes it visible that there are multiple ways of responding to one idea. Because of this,

children grow to enjoy the learning process itself, not parent or teacher approval. This means that children learn to love the learning process, not just the praise of an adult.

If we view it from two perspectives, those of the child and the adult, we can usefully consider the point of difference it has to other more directional approaches to how to educate children.

From a child's point of view, inquiry-based play is offered in an open but well thought through environment that allows them to test, explore and investigate how the world works. They feel that they have the power to make decisions and choices.

From an educator's perspective, inquiry-based play supports children's curiosity as this stimulates increased activity in the hippocampus, the region of the brain responsible or memory creation (Stumm et al 2011). This moves children's thinking into the realms of deeper understanding through slowing down the content *you think you should cover* to focussing on learning skills, forming attitudes and developing capacity through the contexts that fascinate them.

Concept-led inquiries are inquiries that are broader than a defined subject, with the latter possibly being something such as 'animals'. Concept-led inquiries consider relational concepts, such as growth, change, and transformation, and how those concepts are present in a wide range of real-world contexts. So, we could look at the growth of a dog, but we could also look at it in a human or indeed a salt crystal or a plant. This focus on the underlying relationships supports children to see patterns and connections in learning that

are not always obvious in other approaches. Everywhere in the world there are people who think deeply about how we are educating our children. As an educational innovator, my work sometimes resides on the periphery of a standardised educational system, as it promotes a divergent way of thinking and that can be at odds with systems designed to define and measure children.

There are of course bridges and connections in this work and a measure of flexibility. A little consultation is better than none and small steps in this work can build to create social change, as we have seen in the growth of nature-based pedagogies, where documentation has allowed the incredible complexity of thinking to be accessed by the decision-makers.

I seek to move beyond memorising facts, to seeing concepts, patterns and relationships in the world. The status and balance given to knowledge, skills and concepts come through in the formation of curriculum, the delivery of it through models of education and their associated pedagogy of the what, where and how of teaching and learning.

We know that the idea of children exploring their own questions and theories is present in varying degrees around the world. It may be useful to consider the phases of concept-based inquiry, such as those presented by French and Marschall (2016:29). These are further developed in the Planning Diary in Section 4.

Engage -

Purpose:

- To engage children emotionally and intellectually in the inquiry.

- To activate and assess children's prior knowledge.

- To invite initial questions.

Focus -

Purpose:

- To introduce relevant factual examples that may be explored further in the 'investigate' phase of an inquiry.

- To consider all forms of language skills and which may be more relevant to this particular inquiry.

Investigate -

Purpose:

- To explore factual examples, or case studies, and connect these to unit concepts.

- To expand student understanding of unit concepts by providing case studies that introduce complexity and/or raise additional questions.

- To acquire disciplinary and interdisciplinary skills.

Organise -

Purpose:

- To organise thinking at both the factual and conceptual level.

- To represent concepts and ideas using different materials, media, and/or subject areas for older children.

- To recognize and analyse skills in context.

Generalise -

Purpose:

- To form connections and locate patterns across factual examples.

- To articulate, justify and communicate generalisations.

Transfer (beyond the duration of the inquiry) -

Purpose:

- To test and justify the validity of generalisations.

- To apply generalisations to new events and situations.

- To use experiences and understandings to form predictions and hypotheses.

Reflect (through all phases of the inquiry) -

Purpose:

- To build students' sense of personal agency.

- To enable students to plan and monitor their learning process.

- To individually and collectively evaluate learning progress during and at the end of an inquiry.

These stages are not viewed as linear, but cyclical. We know that inquiries are complex and random for a reason, as they allow lines of inquiry to overlap and move around to follow a range of learning pathways. In section 2 of this book, we present strategies used in the Floorbooks as a toolkit, so that people have the freedom to use them when they feel they are most appropriate. The flow of the Floorbook runs over many weeks or months, being

revisited several times a week to maintain the connection with children. The use of the analogy of a river in this approach allows us to visualise what is happening over the lifetime of a Floorbook and is more fully developed in section 4. If we superimpose the cyclical nature of playful inquiries on the surface of the river, they would appear like spirals of current rising through the river as moments emerge, are experienced and let go as the larger journey of inquiry keeps moving forward.

Project-based learning approach

This is an in-depth study, over an extended period, of a topic that is of high interest to an individual, a small group, or a whole class (Helm & Katz 2001). Skills and concepts are learned by children through their inquiries that are co-created with adults. It has a similarity to thematic investigations but differs in its emphasis on a child-driven focus to the inquiry. Popular in the USA, this approach enabled settings to meet the demands of set curricula whilst also embracing children's fascinations. Documentation is shared in a variety of ways, such as a Learning Wall that develops over time.

< Insert Image: Children as researchers>

Pedagogical documentation and inspiration from the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia.

Documentation in these schools has several functions. Gandini (1993:8) suggests that it is -

- To make parents aware of their children's experiences and maintain parental involvement.

- To allow teachers to understand children better and to evaluate the teachers' own work, thus promoting their professional growth.

- To facilitate communication and exchange of ideas among educators.

- To make children aware that their effort is valued.

- To create an archive that traces the history of the school and of the pleasure and process of learning by many children and their teachers.

These points are similar to the wider work on project-based or inquiry-based learning. However, Loris Malaguzzi acknowledged that the schools of Reggio Emelia -

> 'have no planned curriculum with units and sub-units… instead every year each school delineates a series of related projects, some short-range and some long. These themes serve as the main structural supports but then it is up to the children.' (1998:87)

<insert image: Real world and core skills come together in a construction inquiry>

It is in this area that we can observe the greatest tension for teachers in the early years and primary sectors. There are several aspects of education that vary across age groups and between countries, such as -

- demand for accountability to a defined, standardised curriculum.

- the high mobility of staff, especially in the early years, that has an adverse impact on consistent pedagogy.

- the diversity and number of languages spoken in settings offer code-switching challenges for in-depth dialogue.

- the impact of the increase in poverty on engagement (Helm& Beneke 2003).

The point of difference between both of the approaches above and the use of Floorbooks is the ability of the latter to bridge practice from early years through into primary schools. They support high levels of pedagogical understanding, with clear meaningful contexts and are therefore used very successfully in areas of significant deprivation due to the combination of the Talking Tub to support oracy, code-switching and increased cultural capital.

< Insert CASE STUDY- Mathematical thinking>

Floorbooks can act as a hub for many forms of documentation when in the hands of children and adults as a working document and can include a range of responses. Floorbooks can represent all stages of the planning cycle, from initial ideas, to observation and analysis, to intentional action, and then to the accountability to a curriculum to monitor breadth and balance.

There are common characteristics across all these playful, inquiry-based approaches that in turn deliver similar benefits.

Characteristics -

- Learning is essentially child-centred, with an emphasis on the co-construction of new knowledge and concepts.

- Adults become facilitators, providing encouragement and support to enable the students to take responsibility for what and how they learn.

- Children reach a point where they are not simply investigating questions posed by others but can formulate their own research ideas and convert that research into knowledge that they recall more effectively and consistently.

- Children gain not only a deeper understanding of the subject matter, but also the knowledge development and leadership skills required for tackling complex problems that occur in the real world.

Benefits -

- Fundamentally, children are more engaged with the subject. Learning is perceived as being more relevant to their own needs, thus they are enthusiastic and ready to learn.

- Children can expand on what they have learned by following their own research interests.

- Inquiry-based learning allows children to develop a more flexible approach to their studies, giving them the freedom and the responsibility to organize their own pattern of work within the time constraints of the task.

The research behind Floorbooks

As they have benefits for many aspects of child development, there are many potential fields of research that the Floorbooks can draw on, from the benefits of agency and empowerment to the development of language. There have been many pieces of practitioner research where the evaluation asked practitioners what difference they felt Floorbooks had made to their practice. These are some of their responses:

- 'Increased time listening to what children think.'

- 'When inspectors (*of education*) came in and loved it, I knew it was a way to be accountable but still be child-led in what we plan to do and what we document.'

- 'More enjoyment of the planning process.'

- 'An exciting way to deliver a rather dry curriculum.'

- 'Greater democratic decision making, both in early years and primary school.'

- 'Increased engagement of adults and children in not only language but all areas of learning.'

- ' Parents love them; when they look at them they say..'look that's Jonah and yes he would say that. That is so what he does.''

- 'Joyful times to re-read the Floorbooks with children, where they laughed at what they were doing when they were *young.*'

- 'I am an ESL teacher and the Floorbooks have revolutionised how we work. Rather than games, we use the Talking Tub for language development as it is so inclusive for my children and they feel part of the community of the setting.'

< insert Image: Sharing images of display in the Floorbooks >

To be transparent in this research we need to embrace the reality of there being some challenges associated with using Floorbooks -

- 'It was tricky to balance the needs of external demands for dry, very specific reporting and the joy of the Floorbook.'

- 'The cost of printing photos has been a barrier.'

- 'I struggled to fit time into a busy day to *do* the Floorbook and then I realised that the Floorbook is all about the day!'

< Insert Image> Mathematical Thinking

This educator research is powerful, especially when it is combined with the body of peer-reviewed research that aligns with this work, such as *Habits of Mind* (Costa and Kallick 2000), *Learning Power* (Claxton 2002), and *Learning Orientation* (Dweck 2006), which have all influenced my recent work to theorise and explain the effectiveness of the Floorbooks approach.

< insert image>Sharing maths as an individual

Wagner (   ) writes about the idea of the transfer of pieces in his work on mathematics. If children can join the dots to see the evolution of an idea, and adults are encouraged to notice how the bits all fit together, then we can document individual progression of the same big ideas or lines of inquiry as they emerge and submerge in the learning journey. Floorbooks document all the pieces of the journey to allow children, family and educators to see the patterns in the learning journey.

< insert Image: Sharing computation in a learning Journal>

The concept of thinking and researching across scales of time (Lenke 2000) encourages us to consider the length of time we document. Is the experience we focus on long enough to show progression in a learning disposition or is it just a spot in time? Lenke suggests that we use representative time scales in education for lengths of engagement, such as an utterance (1 ten-second period), an exchange (seconds to minutes), an episode (about fifteen minutes), a lesson (an hour), a school day, a term, a year, and up to a planetary change of 3.2 billion years, and in doing so we can begin to understand that learning is not a spot in time but the celebration of a journey. Floorbooks act as a holder of memories and as such can be used to recall information after a day, week, several months or even a year. When the Floorbooks are centrally held in a library area, they allow years of reference and reflection for groups of children.

< insert Image: Accountability to children's thinking and to learning outcomes>

The joint attention of an adult and child working together is 'an encounter between two individuals in which participants pay joint attention to, and jointly act on some external topic' (Schaffer 1992:101). Joint attention has been well researched as being key in early learning contexts and experiences during early childhood (Bruner 1995; Schaffer1992; White, Kahan and Attamucci 1979) and was included in the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study in England (Sylvia, Sammons, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart 1999). This led to sustained, shared thinking with subcategories of adult-initiated and child-initiated experiences (Siraj-Btachford and Manni 2008:7). In that particular research, sustained, shared thinking 'came to be defined as an effective pedagogic interaction, where two or more individuals work together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative.'

In our nature-based provision at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten in Scotland, we also see this engagement with natural materials, especially when we are in the wilder spaces around the site. If some element of these can be captured in imagery or materially, we observe a difference in the children's engagement and desire to communicate their stories and theories.

Some traces of these adventures are shared in the Floorbook and incorporated into the Talking Tubs that are then used at a gathering or Talk-around time. This engagement encourages sustained, shared thinking through framing the conversation to focus on contextual concepts, skills, attitudes and knowledge using real objects and imagery. This open-ended nature of engagement cannot be scheduled but operates as a collection of diverse experiences that all connect and mesh together through childhood.

< insert Image: Material traces of adventure>

The rejection of stages of development as a normative pathway of learning is in part due to reflective practice but also due to the research that suggests that rather than a hierarchical list we should look at alternatives (Morss 1996) or a dictionary of experiences (Rinaldi 2006:76) which help children to reflect, infer, hypothesise and understand. Papert goes further to assert that society 'has a perverse commitment to moving as quickly as possible from the concrete to the abstract' (1993:151). As such, we push children to move away from relational real-world learning to learning that is reduced to segments and outcomes.

Relational and social theory of learning situates the learning in a context. The learning 'is not separated from the world of action but exists in robust, complex, social environments made up of actors, actions and situations' Pitri (2004:6). The relationships that we create together are created in the dialogic space between the learner and the context, we ' live in the middle' (Wertsch 1998). This space allows us to focus on the actions mediated by people, places and things that are around us that make relationships. This middle space is well represented in Floorbooks as they hold the traces of many relationships, the sun and the shadow, the sand and the foot, as well as the relationships between humans. 'The middle is the relating; the recognising, adapting, editing, recontextualising, improvising, constructing, enjoying, puzzling about, and taking up of (or ignoring of) opportunities in the environment.' (Carr 2000:7).

Modes of representation are explored later in this book as we explore the idea of the 'middle space of thinking', but at this point let us consider what Bruner (1986:155) said when he revised his 1971 work on three stages of representation -

'You represent the world in action routines, in pictures or in symbols and the more mature you became, the more likely you were to favour the end of the progression than the start. At the time we thought that the course from enactive through icons to symbolic representation was a progression, although I no longer think so. But I do find it useful to make a three-fold distinction in modes of representation, although not on developmental grounds.'

Floorbooks contain evidence of social change in action and are supported by both published research on language acquisition, motivation, engagement and learning theories through inquiry but they also support practitioner research, as we explore in the following chapters.

<Insert side head > ## Slow learning through Floorbooks

When I started to use Floorbooks in 1986, I was fascinated by the lack of real-world contexts for spoken and written language in education. Floorbooks arose from a real desire to support children to engage in the classroom, but also to share their ideas and the physicality of their inquiries through talking, listening, reading and writing. The broad scope of the words embraces many ways of knowing, as you will see from the section on representation, and yet the focus then, as it is now, appears to be to reduce the wonderful process of uncovering and inquiry to simple tasks and to consider that all you need to do to write is to do handwriting practice. Surely there needs to be a drive and passion to want to connect, to share thinking and ideas, to collaborate and learn from and with each other.

< insert Image: Journeys are documented into Floorbooks>

<side heading> **Oracy**

Oracy can be seen as an outcome, whereby children learn to talk confidently, appropriately and sensitively. Floorbooks are built on the approach that oracy can be a process, whereby children learn through talk, deepening their understanding through dialogue with their teachers and peers (Alexander, 2012). Oracy involves adults and children thinking carefully and deliberately about the sorts of spoken language they are using, and this will vary across subjects and with different age groups. Different types of talk will be appropriate at different points in the learning cycle, and Robin Alexander outlines five key types of 'teaching talk' (Alexander, 2008):

1. Rote: imparting knowledge by getting children to repeat key pieces of information to impart facts, ideas and routines, such as 'rhymes and songs'.

2. Recitation: using questions to test children's knowledge and understanding, to check children's progress, and stimulate recall.

3. Instruction: telling children what to do and explaining key facts, principles or processes in order to transmit information, such as 'put your hat on because it's sunny'.

4. Discussion: encouraging the exchange of ideas within a class, to share information.

5. Dialogue: using structured questions and discussion, helping students deepen understanding of key knowledge, principles and processes.

< insert Image> Looking back at Floorbooks>

The development and use of oracy and communication in its wider definition is at the core of being heard and developing a sense of agency. Too often children are pushed through the development of oracy and into writing as a form of communication, and even then, writing can be seen as an outcome or a process.

<Insert 2 in BOX > stored in sep folders

Australian ref to language

And Or

NZ ref to language

< side heading>**Write to learn and Learn to write**

It seems obvious to say, but the Floorbooks are books! Giant floor-based books that invite children to be the co-authors throughout the Learning Journey. My pedagogy embraces the emergence of skill, and that extends to writing. Floorbooks are not purely about the secretarial skills of handwriting and spelling, they embrace emergent writing. This phrase is also synonymous with have-a-go writing, developmental writing, and reflects the sequence of awareness of shape and form in scripts. It enables children to *write and be writers* as soon as they make marks on the page. The level of clarity and shared understanding of their marks develops over time.

< insert 4 pictures> Stages of writing through the creation of borders. (selection of the writing borders)

With an increasing emphasis on the core skill of writing in the early stages, I have taken the opportunity to focus on this one aspect of Floorbooks to demonstrate the tension between more formalised expectations of core skills and the home experience of writing and mark making in general.

<Insert image: Children writing in a Floorbook>

Let us consider a few of the ways in which we used writing at home in my childhood. This handwritten experience has been superseded by typing on a screen or taking an image. So where has the purpose of learning to write by hand gone and what is the impact of that?

Every day we can use it to -

- Remember things

- Organise ourselves

- Reconstruct information

- Reflect on experience

- Communicate with others

- Clarify ideas

- Report on events

- Share opinions

- Entertain

- Persuade

< insert image: Children re-reading their own words>

< insert Image: Using Floorbooks to show language use>

When asked why they write, a child may frequently reply, 'because the *teacher* said so' but, as educators, we can embrace real-life opportunities, so that writing in a Floorbook can be enjoyed and used with purpose. Children experiment with their realities, so, as adults need to model writing by hand, we also need to explore the rich ways we can use writing in our environments. The reality of the loss of handwritten text is the loss of the art of writing itself, along with letter formation and spelling, rather than the construction which can indeed be done on a screen.

< insert Image: writing in context>

Writing can be -

- a way of working through lists, jotters, diagrams, drafts and doodles.

- a means of reflection through journals, logs, notes, poems.

- preparation for non-written opportunities, such as making a film or writing a shopping list for cooking.

- communication about something that matters, such as letters, pamphlets, stories or messages.

- a way of remembering minutes of meetings, recording ideas or plans.

- An enjoyable, thought-provoking process and one of beauty.

A Floorbook engages children in the process of writing because it has meaning and relevance to them. The abstraction of writing onto screens has removed many of the more

traditional ways and purposes of writing by hand. However, the sense of audience remains the same. We write for -

- ourselves

- family and people we care about

- friends

- other people who *we want* to communicate with

It is this sense of audience that is important in having the book openly accessible in the book corner or on a table when children come into a session. Children come to rely on it as a place for communication generally and when the foundation is laid and the opportunity openly accepted by the adult, they use it to send messages, save copies of rough plans and connect with each other when working on joint projects. It is in that sense a working document, a place for making the thinking process more visible between children and adults and across time.

<side heading>**Writing as a holder of memory**

I believe it was Thoedor Seuss Geisel who said that you don't how important a moment is until it becomes a memory. So much of a child's learning process is about moments and they go by at an astounding rate. In day-to-day experiences, children see us make notes and throw them into the recycling but also observe us save a note from a friend and put it on the wall. Consider how the children in your environment see writing being used by the adults and what that communicates to them about its worth.

< insert Image: Exploring Line 2 images>

Writing can be -

- thrown away when it has done its job.

- replied to and sent back.

- published for others to read.

- kept and valued.

- used as a basis for a discussion.

All these points relate to our perception of writing. Writing to learn or indeed learning to write is not only about letter formation or learning phonics. In a co-constructive environment for play and learning, writing can be -

- displayed in a draft and in a finished form to share the perseverance and effort involved in writing.

- collected and shared in anthologies, story-books or magazines.

- used for planning next steps that are meaningful and connected.

- taken home to share or develop ideas with family and friends.

- put in libraries so that the knowledge and thinking can be shared over time and across age groups.

- kept as a record of progress for the child and external agencies.

The relevance for me, in the contexts of digital documentation and hard copy, is related to the purpose. I support the ease of connection between electronic learning stories and the parents and family who surround the child, but for me, documentation is so much more than just communication of a moment that has occurred. When a Floorbook is co-created

and placed into the hands of the child, or children, it becomes an integral part of a learning strategy, not only for writing but for all domains of learning and indeed of the child's perception of themselves as a confident individual and a motivated learner. It is important to remember that Floorbooks are about writing and are therefore really effective at engaging children in the communication of writing and reading which embraces speaking and listening.

We develop our capability to communicate, and specifically write, when -

- there is a chance to experiment with mark-making.
- we talk about the process of writing and can ask questions about it.
- we can share the process and write collaboratively with our friends.
- we can read back our own writing and that of our friends.
- we can look at our writing over a long period of time and see how we develop the look of our work.
- we feel we are in a place where people want to communicate with us.
- our language and way of communicating is valued and respected.
- we can write alongside an adult who can model how to write.

These aspects and all those above are all contained within a Floorbook. We write alongside children with intent, and value what they say, make, do and write in a way that the Floorbook itself operates as a hub for the learning journey of a group of children. The features and strategies in sections 2 and 3 are designed to build on these foundations of communication. Floorbooks align with inquiry-based learning because they are open and responsive, adapting as the journey evolves. Through holding on to the features of a

Floorbook we ensure that we centralise co-construction in our pedagogy, and do not just recall separate experiences and opportunities but instead make the relationship and connections between it all more visible. This case-study in an infant school started with a group of children in a school exploring a line and it shifted and changed in response to the children to become an inquiry into identity.

< Insert case study> Case Study : From a Line to a Family

In the next section, we will explore how to create a rich environment that supports all children to communicate and share their theories and experiences of the world around them in the Floorbooks so that they become reflective of the social justice we support.

< side heading> **Inclusive practice**

 All children have the right to be heard and communicate. The concept of inclusivity is, for me, about the desire to adapt the methods you use to ensure that a diverse group of children can share what they know in a way that works for them. It may be a child who only attends one day a week or a child who has English as a second language, but to be truly inclusive we need to be responsive, and that includes the planning process. There are a number of aspects to this approach that can be defined so that the reader understands the incredible value the Floorbooks have as a means of encouraging social justice -

< insert Image: Valuing diverse scripts and languages>

- Children are fully accepted as they are at the moment you meet them and not for their potential for attainment in the future.

  <insert image: sharing individual moments>

- Make adaptations to the way you work with a Floorbook. Always begin with their own knowledge, accommodate to help them share and then acknowledge how their contribution is valued and unique.

  <insert image: individual pages within the group Floorbook>

- Solid and consistent inclusion means that no-one is left behind and that everyone is part of the group. Separating a child indicates that they are different. However, whatever a child communicates goes into the same Floorbook, so, for example, sign language, multiple languages, eye movement or even body posture are all included, equal and visible.

- Positioning yourself as the adult needs to avoid a deficit model, but rather adopt a rights-based perspective that everyone is valued. The implicit message you send is often non-verbal. The adult adapts their interaction during a session with the Talking Tub or Floorbook by making fine adjustments, such as *holding the space* for the child to think, to reframe language, to make eye contact or not.

- The feedback for children in a Floorbook is clear and concise; to focus on the effort and thinking, not on attainment or results.

  < insert Image: Child created games included in the main Floorbook>

- When an adult rereads the Floorbook with an individual or a group they can then give clear, positive and productive feedback - 'I saw the way you shared with John to make your den. I wonder what you will do next?'

- The contextual nature of Floorbooks responds to those children who need opportunities through their learning journey to connect to real-world learning, responds to their interests and allows them to share what they know through active experiences.

- For many children with special rights, they benefit from revisiting learning over long blocks of time. A day becomes a week, and a week a month. Slowing down and revisiting your own thinking is referred to as metacognition and it is an integral part of Bruner's spiral of learning and Vygotskian thinking around the zone of proximal development.

- Social change can be achieved by a collective of individuals. The values you hold and practice as a team are visible in the practice shared through the Floorbook. Our work in nature pedagogy has been supported by the years of work collated and made accessible to a variety of audiences through Floorbooks.

Floorbooks are flexible to respond to the needs of any group whether that is children, parents or the staff team. This is because you can:

- Adapt the pace and content in inquiry-based play to suit the needs of children.

- Appeal to children who struggle to grasp concepts and knowledge through seat-based activities by using real-world learning and the Talking Tubs.

- Offer opportunities for children inside, outside and beyond the gate and value them all equally.

  < insert Image: Using Floorbooks outside>

- Use a Talking tub to engage children and provide an opportunity to listen to and observe children's thoughts.

- Include all contributions and value visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners equally.

- Children can contribute to the Floorbook at a range of times and in a variety of ways that respond to their confidence to communicate.

Studies (noted below) suggest that practice which fosters creativity can be seen as being 'learner inclusive', in taking children's ideas seriously. Learner inclusive practices involve children and teachers co-participating in the learning context.

Such close interplay between children and adults in relation to fostering creativity has been documented closely in research in a small number of classrooms in England with children aged three-to-seven years (Burnard et al. 2006; Cremin et al. 2006). The study involved working closely with staff in three separate settings to investigate both their pedagogic practices and the children's learning. The research team identify several distinct but interlinked core features of learners' and teachers' engagement which are valued and fostered in each setting -

• Posing questions – children's questions; both those posed aloud and others implied through actions, were closely documented by practitioners with a concerned, deep knowledge of each individual. Questions were treated with respect and interest, nurtured and celebrated. Question-posing often occurred in imaginative play.

• Play – children in these settings were offered opportunities to play over extended periods. Children were highly motivated and engaged, deeply interested and very serious in their playfulness, engaging closely with one another's ideas and experience, imagining all kinds of scenes, encountering and solving problems.

• Immersion – the children were deeply immersed in a caring, positive, loving environment in each setting. In each case, this was combined with overt cognitive challenge involved.

• Innovation – children in these three settings made strong and playful connections between ideas in their own ways, and were encouraged to do this. Practitioners sought to further the children's growing understandings, offering provocations to stimulate connection-making.

< insert Image: Talking and Thinking tree used as an active space for sharing ideas>

• Being imaginative – through imagining and being imaginative, children were able to be decision-makers about the quality of ideas, content of their learning tasks, and ways of conducting them.

• Self-determination and risk-taking – children were enabled in taking risks, working in safe, secure and supportive environments in which they were expected to exercise independence (agency) in making decisions and where their contributions were valued. Adults encouraged learning from experience as both empowering and generative. Each adult worked hard not to rush children.

The study highlighted the significance of the enabling context in supporting playfulness in teachers and children, encouraging self-confidence and self-esteem. Adults intentionally valued children's 'agency', that is, children's abilities to have ideas and see these through interactions. They assumed and encouraged children's motivation, which Laevers 1993, and later Pascal and Bertram 1997, demonstrated was vital to high engagement as an indicator of quality learning in early childhood education. The practitioners in the study offered children time and space to have ideas and see them through. They stepped back, enabling children's activity to lead their support of learning. Stepping back and empowering children for increasing blocks of time does not mean there was no adult intent. The reverse is true, in that they needed to think very deeply before they made the decision.

< Insert side heading>Thinking about practice

< insert side head>Purpose

Before embarking on the use of Floorbooks it is important to consider their purpose so that you can ensure that they support intentional teaching, and are relevant to children and high quality. Use the questions below to frame their purpose in your setting and be clear about how to make the whole approach sustainable.

< Insert Image: adults experiencing the process. 2 photos >

- How will all children be encouraged to contribute? If the books are used for planning as well as documentation, how will you show the link?

- How will consistency be maintained?

- Who will manage the process?

- How will the book become an integral part of your planning process?

- Will the Floorbook form part of an existing system for planning for learning? If so, how will planning be evidenced in the book?

- Will the Floorbooks be used to monitor coverage of experiences and outcomes in a more formal curriculum? If so, how?

- Will the Floorbooks be used to provide evidence of skills, knowledge and concepts across the areas of learning? If so, which areas show through most effectively? How will you draw attention to this?

<insert image: Understanding of practice>

< insert side heading >Form of Floorbook

The Floorbook is in essence a hub of many types of observation and documentation. It supports a social pedagogy that has identified strategies that work effectively to support children to share what they think -

- What format works for you, your team and the children in your setting?

- Where will the Floorbook/s be stored/displayed?

- If you are a nature preschool/kindergarten/forest school and spend the majority of time outdoors, how will the Floorbook be used/shared? What size is manageable if you are moving about a lot?

- When you have continuous provision that uses both the inside and the outside, where will the Floorbook be positioned to celebrate learning in each location? Are there ways that you can lift moments from the Floorbook to make learning visible outside?

< insert side heading > Management

As with any recording process, many people contribute to it. To make the use and high quality of Floorbooks sustainable it is useful to ask yourself -

- Who will be involved in the Floorbook? (practitioner, parent, child, siblings, community visitors, Elders, visiting specialists?)

- Who is responsible for managing the process? (lead practitioner? key group leader?)

< insert Image: Discussion as a staff team>

We all know how rapidly time seems to pass by - if the Floorbook is to value children's ideas and theories respectfully, it is worth spending a few moments looking at, thinking about and discussing how the team feel they will develop -

- When will the Floorbook be used? *Ongoing or for a defined block of time?*

- Over what block of time will the Floorbook develop? *All year? Two weeks? Termly?*

- Who will use the Floorbook and how often? *All children once a week? One hour every day for any children who wish to contribute. Each key group of children with their practitioner?*

- In infant-toddler rooms, how often will the adults create a page? Will it be on the floor in a large plastic pocket? Low down on a wall behind a plastic sheet?

< insert side heading > Training

To understand the Floorbooks we need to understand the development of language and its wide role in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The place of oracy and the desire to communicate motivates children and adults to share more as long as the relationship between practice and paperwork remain effective and sustainable.

 < insert image: Training to understand the Floorbook approach>

< insert Image: Using the strategies to work with adults>

When we give ourselves time to engage in training we can move from the completion of a Floorbook as a collection of moments to be able to see and guide the learning pathway that is held within it to support all children to flourish. Here are some thoughts about the place of practitioner research and review alongside published research:

- How will the process of consulting children be shared across the setting?

- How will all staff be trained to understand the philosophy of creating a Floorbook?

- What strategies are in place to support staff to provocate or question?

- How can the Floorbooks themselves be used to share the development of thinking and practice within the setting?

Having explored the thinking behind the Floorbooks and how to prepare to use them, let us move to the features within the books.

<insert> SECTION 2- Features

There are key features that make a Floorbook identifiable. They are of course place-based and responsive, which means that the exact way in which each one is represented is unique. Nobody can realistically undertake the same open-ended inquiry in exactly the same way as someone else, that is the joy of the approach. Through considering and being mindful of these features we can embrace philosophy, empowerment, agency, progression and accountability. The first thing to consider is the philosophy of the adults using them and how this aligns with the pedagogical principles in the setting and the purpose of using the whole Floorbook approach.

< insert Icon heart>

< insert image> Sharing philosophy through what you value

< Insert side heading> Philosophy.

Positioning a series of questions in section 1 was intentional in order to define the current philosophy and pedagogy within yourself as the reader but also within the wider context of the setting in which you work. Understanding your own standpoint is referred to as your

world view in research and it affects everything you do, from decisions about how to present a learning opportunity, to your focus on children's rights. Your world view has emerged through your lived experiences, your training and experiences, even down to the books you have chosen to read.

< insert image: Oracy embedded in the environment>

If we explore the image of the child and move away from single theorists such as Malaguzzi, Froebel or Montessori, we can explore the constructs of children (Sorin and Galloway 2006) through comparing the image of the child, the image of the adult and the balance of power in the relationship. As noted in the introduction, relationships with each other and those around you are central to a socially-based pedagogy.

So, let us explore just a selection of views of the image of the child and also what that means in terms of the adult role and the balance of power.

Image of the child	*Image of the adult*	*Power of the child*	*Power of the adult*
Child as innocent, carefree and uncomplicated, a blank slate.	**Adult as protector and leader** who makes decisions for the children.	Little power	A lot of power
The snowballing child seems to be in charge of the people around them.	**The deferring adult** Does not set limits and so cannot negotiate.	Child gains power and it snowballs.	Could have power, but hands it over to the child.
The miniature adult Children are the same as adults.	**The adult** Viewed as mature.	Power lies in the child's ability to learn in a world that the adult creates.	Power is seen in knowledge and can be used to guide or control.
Agentic Child Capable and confident. An optimistic view that	**Co-constructor** of being that benefits both adult and child.	Power is negotiated	The adult shares their power through consultation and dialogue rather than

the child is an active, social actor.			imposing ideas upon children.

Fig 2: 1 (Adapted from Sorin and Galloway 2006:21)

< insert image: Children's agency>

< insert Image: Accessibility to the Floorbook>

What do these images mean for the use of Floorbooks and Talking Tubs? If we view the table as a hierarchy of power then we can see that the Floorbook of an adult who feels protective of children will plan, design and create the Floorbook by themselves, taking away the need for children to be involved, apart from in the play.

< insert Image>: Children's many ways of knowing>

For the adult who believes in the empowerment of children, they will see negotiation and consultation not as a requirement, but something that sits within the children's rights. In this more balanced way of working, in Floorbooks that share adult-intent and child-created content, there will be evidence of collective decision making such as voting, meetings, and plans.

<insert Icon Starting Point>

< insert Image> Starting point

< insert Title> The Starting Point

There are many reasons to start a Learning Journey in a Floorbook. It is usually in response to an opportunity that has emerged from an adult's thinking or the children's, or preferably both.

When an adult creates an invitation to engage in an inquiry, it is in response to there being a need to explore an area of the curriculum or an area of learning, such as risk management, that they believe to be absent. Given that some children may not have been surrounded by rich, engaging opportunities from birth, they may not initially offer ideas to the planning. In these environments, the adult creates the Talking Tub in response to what they feel children are interested in and then use that as the platform to leap off into an inquiry. We will look at the place of Talking Tubs and how to create them inSection 4.

In environments where children feel more agentic and are aware of the possibilities in front of them, ideas and plans can emerge and be recorded easily in a Floorbook. Placing a note on the inside front cover detailing what circumstances led to the starting of the learning journey held within the Floorbook, positions the inquiry. Looking back over several Floorbooks allows the team to monitor the balance of child-led and adult-led provision.

< insert Icon Book>

<Insert Image> Sign in page

< insert side heading> Authorship and agency

The desire to write stems from so many facets and feeling valued and respected as a writer is one of them. Hence the ritual of asking children to sign-in on the first page before the learning journey starts. If children or any visiting adults join you through the inquiry, they are invited to go back to the sign-in page and add a note or picture that they are now part of the learning journey.

The second page in the Floorbook often has questions, ideas and comments about the inquiry that can be extended over time.

< insert Image: Children's fascination with Whale food 2 photos>

During these initial group sessions we talk about:

- What we already know – children come to any moment with life experiences. Through noticing, listening, valuing and documenting this embedded knowledge we can tune in to their knowledge are and avoid unnecessary duplication.

- Any questions that come to us - questioning is a higher-order thinking skill that may not emerge as formed questions until five or six years old. Children are however curious, and the adult may notice a facial gesture and more of a statement, such as 'dog has legs?' where the question comes through in the intonation of the voice. As noted in the section on questioning, we use the phrase 'I wonder' in these sessions so that children hear the opened-ended nature of inquiry.

- Our motivation and enthusiasm - inquiries should build on curiosity and a sense of adventure, both physically and metaphorically. Without motivation and a sense of joy, learning can become very dull. The real-world learning that is the foundation of this work gives children a link to step from the known into the unknown. Although we all have varying levels of enthusiasm for our work, these playful inquiries should be motivating.

  < insert Image: Front cover of Flooorbook>

- Our ideas and plans for the inquiry - agency is related to a sense of empowerment, as noted earlier in Fig. 2:1. Consulting children is more than documentation, as we established in Section 1. A Floorbook demonstrates that philosophy in practice every time it is used.

< insert image: Children share their thinking on the tree>

Whilst this process is happening, or shortly afterwards, the adult is stepping back mentally to observe the broader picture and to consider the engagement and response of the group of children and/or individual responses as part of a formative assessment process. This process allows the adult to adjust what they do or provide for the individual or group of children to meet their needs.

< Insert Image> Gathering for a Talkaround time Image from TASH

When we gather we have the ritual of putting out the round, black mat and singing a gathering song - 'Everybody, everybody, come this way; everybody, everybody, Talkaround time'. This ritual is only used for the group time for these sessions. Taking an image at the

start of the inquiry where the group are talking generally gives evidence of the process of consultation and that there is a focus on conversation and dialogue, where we view conversation as a more open exchange and dialogue as having a more defined purpose.

< Insert Image: Floorbooks support adults to have ownership and agency>

There are many features throughout a Floorbook that demonstrate their authorship and agency, such as children engaging in cutting out and sticking down the images, decorating the borders to go around a page, children as writers on the pages, the inclusion of little books they make, and links to mark-making made at any point during the day, whether at home or in the setting.

< insert image: Little books created by children>

The bringing together of an inquiry moves the Floorbook into its final stages and is the point where the front cover is completed, and the pages revisited to complete or indeed reflect upon the experiences documented.

< insert Image> Traces of play-based writing.

< insert Icon Paginate >

< insert Image> Page numbering and dated entries into the Floorbook

< insert side heading> Tracking flow and progression

Tracking children's learning allows us to monitor that there is progression in their thinking. As engaged adults, we can sense when learning is moving forward through recalled facts or the application of concepts but in some cases, we want to monitor our practice, the group and individuals in more detail.

Practice

 One of the criticisms often made of open-ended inquiry is that it does not have the rigour that traditional formal education has. The reality is that although evidence can be gathered from worksheets, some only reflect an ability to complete a form, not always an ability to apply the concept, use the skill or build on the knowledge. Playful inquiries that are co-constructed, as opposed to being fully child-led, provide opportunities to learn core skills and explore concepts and pieces of knowledge and ensure that children have long blocks of time to apply the new content.

The term schema describes both the mental and physical actions involved in understanding and knowing. Schemas are categories of knowledge that help us to interpret and understand the world and Floorbooks are full of them as they note what children think and do. In Piaget's view, a schema includes both a category of knowledge and the process of obtaining that knowledge. As experiences happen, this new information is used to modify, add to, or change previously existing schemas.

Piaget referred to the stage of exploring a new idea as *application*, the process of thinking differently because of new experience as *accommodation* and the final stage of internalising new learning as *assimilation* (Scott 2019). Piaget also referred to equilibration, which is where children seek a balance between the two. We can track the non-linear process of learning through creating a dated record. We can then use this in the Learning Journey mind-map at the back of the Floorbook to guide a new reader through the loops and changes of direction that learning follows in a playful inquiry.

Group

Every child is included in the book and in large early years environments it is the role of the key person to ensure that their group has rich, engaging opportunities around them, both co-constructed but also free from adult intent.

< Insert image: Group map making to show a sense of place>

A Floorbook is an effective tool in adult dialogue for exploring consistency and quality across a team. Looking at the images taken, the words noted and the flow of the book gives wonderful evidence to support practitioner reflection either by themselves, with a mentor or as a group.

Individual

In a busy setting it is important to ensure that every child is celebrated in the book as being part of a learning community but also as an individual. This will need to be tracked especially if children attend part-time, have complex rights or use multiple languages.

As noted at the start of the book, a large Floorbook is one of four key strategies that is used to share the learning. A Family Book is full of individual learning stories (Carr and Lee 2012) that emerge either from the Floorbook or the wider play opportunities. Using images and stories in two locations is more time effective, which gives more time for playful interactions.

< insert images> Individual responses to the group inquiry on mapping

As older children use the Floorbooks, the direct teaching of core skills often happens first and the evidence of the application of the concept/skill/knowledge is gathered from the Floorbook and put into Learning Journals.

< Insert Icon Eye>

< insert image>

< insert side heading > Noticing

Our ability to not only be with children but really notice them, what they say, feel and do is pivotal to a journey of inquiry. When a child drags a stick along the ground are we aware of what they are exploring as they do? In nature-based pedagogy, we need to look beyond the material, the moment and the resource to see, to really notice what is being explored, applied and learnt. The reality is that using simple materials can provide complex learning, however, the real benefit comes when children use what appear to be simple materials such as a leaf, a stick or a block and have an adult alongside them who can see it. In these

moments conversations and dialogue can take place that deepen thinking, but at the same moment, the educators are adopting a dual role as they also think about practice. When they notice children, they are -

- aware of inclusivity < insert image of same name>

- aware of ALL children < insert image of same name>

- considering the social connections to each other <insert image of same name>

- thinking about where children choose to be <insert image of same name>

- considering how children engage with invitations <insert image of same name>

- noticing engagement in an experience <insert image of same name>

- considering children's focus < insert image of same name>

- listening to children's theories and ideas < insert image of same name>

Any experience is full of this duality and when we can use a Floorbook with and for children, they can assist us in our documentation and planning and it makes the process so much easier.

< insert Icon> Digital documentation

< Insert image> QR code in the Floorbook

< insert side heading> Digital Technology

Floorbooks are physical books that are used with children, but they also function as a symbol for community-driven learning through playful inquiries. There is often the impression that technology has no place in a Floorbook approach and yet digital technology can increase a child's agency and voice, allowing them to become constructors of knowledge in the matters that are important to them (Fleet et al 2017). The use of a camera with audio and film opens up the sharing of the process of discovery, the macro lens allows us to see, select and document aspects of the natural world that would otherwise only be available on a television inside and controlled by someone else. Our very concept of knowledge has expanded to go beyond something in the minds of a few, to something that is globally accessible. There are however some points to consider in the use of technology in documentation as well as in documentation and planning generally. Some of these are explored more fully through the exploration of imagery later in the chapter -

- Why are you documenting?
- How will it make a difference to the child?
- Who is/are the audience?
- How will children engage in revisiting the documentation?
- To what extent do children feel any ownership of documentation if it is purely on screen?
- How does your documentation really link directly into your planning?

Kashmira Gander's (2019) project assessed whether there was a difference in interactions between parents and children when paper books or ebooks were used. Gander reported that:

'Parents and toddlers who read paper books together speak and interact more when compared with those who read e-books...

Researchers found parents and toddlers spoke more when interacting with a paper book rather than a story on an electronic tablet. What's more, parents used richer language when using print books compared with tablets, and collaborated more with their children.'

In planning with and for children, technology can help us; it can save time but our reason for using it needs to be to enhance practice, not drive it. In these images, they show how digital technology can enhance documentation but hold on to the children's need to be physically involved in a Floorbook.

< insert Images X 5 : Digital documentation used in the Floorbook>

It is not technology alone that supports the pedagogy, but as Blackwell et al (2014) suggest, it is also the practitioner's knowledge, understanding and interpretations of child development that allows for effective assessment for learning. Children's rights are central to this approach and the use of digital technologies needs to focus on active participation in their use, so as Eaude (2011) suggests, it becomes a tool that children can use to steer their own learning.

The use of QR codes has brought physical Floorbooks and the digital world closer together. The QR code is essentially a hyperlink to a specific location on a secure site where snippets of film and audio are stored. By printing out and putting the QR code in the book at the location where children have been sticking in photos, writing or drawing, the QR scanner can

enable the child or adult to watch the film or listen to the conversation all at the same time.

This allows even greater depth, accuracy, and authenticity to emerge from the pages of the

Floorbook.

< insert icon> Representation.

< insert image> Children select the images they like>

< insert side heading > Representation

One of the benefits of technology has been the ease of media to capture information, the

insidious nature of it is the fear of missing a moment (jovially called the beast of FOMAM by

our team).

Children need to be represented in a Floorbook in many ways. Many people have found

inspiration in the work of Loris Malaguzzi and his work around a Hundred Languages of

Children in Reggio Emelia, which explores ways children can share what they know through

talking, writing, modelling, making, singing, etc as shown later in Section 4. It is useful to

monitor what experiences and opportunities children have as shown later so that children in

settings have access to a broad, balanced provision. Some of the ways of knowing and sharing will be recorded through image and film rather than the item itself and in those moments, it is effective practice to share process and not just the final product.

< insert Image: Inclusion of objects and images>

Recording what young children say is becoming easier with digital technology, but there is still a place for representing what the child says in written rather than printed text. When you are writing down what children say, your adult brain will select phrases and process them very quickly. It is important to note that you are not trying to write everything down but to capture a few words or sentences that show what children are exploring in their thinking. For children who do not communicate through speech, we share their behaviour through a short descriptive passage.

< insert Image: Children take the photos>

There are several things to consider as you and the children select elements to put into the Floorbook -

- **Child rights -** how did you seek children's permissions to be photographed or filmed? To what extent were children involved in choosing the elements to put in the Floorbook?

- **Authenticity -** how effective was the adult at writing down what the child said? Are the elements in the Floorbook truly representative of what the child did?

- **Purpose -** is the purpose for including the image clear or does it need some explanation around it? Do the images selected tell the story? Do they show the process of play and inquiry?

- **Audience** - who are the images and film for? Are there too many that show similar moments? Is everyone in the setting represented in the Floorbook in some way, not necessarily through photographs?

- **Effectiveness -** are the images selected a good use of time and the cost of printing? Do the pages reflect care and attention to detail? Are there pages that are child-led and adult-led?

< insert image: Creating a diagram to communicate an idea>

Children and adults collaborate to complete a Floorbook. It is a working document rather than something that displays achievement and as such there will be pages where they work together to complete it and those where the adult takes the lead. I normally include pages that are created by children alone without adult involvement and they are often noted as such or described in a gently descriptive way in the corner to help the reader understand the agency children had to complete the page.

< insert image: Contributions from the Thinking Tree and the Mind Map sessions>

The ritual of and routine access to the Floorbook allows children to understand the skill and process of sharing what they know. Floorbooks are often laid out on the table in the morning as children come in, with the printed images, scissors, paper cutter and glue available to them. In these moments the adult can invite children or let them choose to engage to stick in their image. This type of talk around recall and memory is different to talking about what is happening in the present and shows the development of connection

and higher-order thinking. In some cases, the memory of the moment displayed in an image has gone and so the adult can come in as the holder of memories and share the story around the moment with the child or group of children.

< insert Image: Children cut out and arrange their images>

< insert Icon people >

< insert image: Families and educators sharing moments>

<insert side heading> Community of the child, parents and practitioner

There are three main voices in a Floorbook. The most visible is the child's voice, shared through image and word, the second is that of the parent and carer who creates a bridge from home to the setting, making sense and links for the child to their wider social group and experience; the third is that of the practitioner, who notices, considers and analyses what ideas, plans and theories children have that they can take forward into creating a rich learning environment to extend their thinking.

< insert Image: Floorbooks are positioned for children and families to share>

<Insert image> Adult and child contributions>

Through the Floorbook there can also be a sprinkling of other voices from the visitors and support specialists that can add a new perspective to the learning journey, including -

- Home language

- Cultural connections

- Forms of communication, such as braille or sign language

- A sense of place

< insert image: children sharing a letter to friends far away>

< insert image : Include community events>

If you adhere to a pedagogy that is about social constructivism then that will also affect your engagement with parents, carers and the wider community. Although as individuals they may not complete a planning diary, the conversations and perceptions that the community around the child can offer make the content of the planning diary far more relevant for the children.

< insert image Child created displays>

In the Floorbook approach there are the four elements, as we discussed in the introduction; one of which is the Communication Book which collates cards, messages, thoughts and offers from the wider community (if you feel that they should not have access to children's images). Taking an image of this book and putting it into the larger Floorbook helps children see and feel the value placed on their friends, grandparents, and the wider community where they live. Consulting people gives value to their ideas and creates a more balanced relationship of power.

< insert Icon table >

< insert Image> Conversations about the Floorbooks >

< insert side heading> Sharing the process of playful inquiries.

Floorbooks make a real difference to team development, as the processes within playful inquiries are very accessible.

When a group of educators look at Floorbooks together, the conversations are relevant and rich as they look at images, hear and see film and read words that all provide a detailed picture to support their thinking.

< insert image: Sharing the Floorbooks with other educators>

The number of children who are linked to each book varies according to the setting and age of the children. Some are linked to a key worker who has a group book for about 13 children, whereas in other environments 30 children may contribute to one book at different times.

Where there is a real focus on the development of practice, in terms of consistency the Floorbooks provide a real window into what experiences children are having and how the staff are responding with intent.

< Insert Image: Exploring the positive effects of creative documentation >

< insert image: Sharing the small steps though an experience>

< insert Icon circle>

< insert image> Adult reflection

< insert side heading> Reflect – looking in, out, forward and back.

The process of thinking about what children say and do will occupy adults for millennia. It will never be perfect but the more that we listen and allow ourselves to step back to observe, the greater the chance that we will understand. Even then we need to ensure that in our documentation and planning we allow space for children's agency to develop. With agency, as we noted in Table 2:1 in Section 1, power and leadership are negotiated so that children are consulted.

< insert image: Using Floorbooks for adult reflection>

When we come to reflect upon the documentation in a Floorbook we need to allow ourselves the same joyful indulgence to step into the memories that they contain. As adults we work very quickly, fully engaged in the day-to-day business of a day with children, and looking at a Floorbook can give a real sense of affirmation to the staff team.

Looking in and out, back and then forward gives us an indication of how our reflection needs to spread out into considering the journey you have been on as the adult, what influences are around you, what has happened, and where you and the children want to go to next. Practically, we add a sticky rectangle onto a few pages that guide the practitioners to note down key points as the learning journey progresses rather than waiting until the end and trying to look back over too long a period of time. Placing this in the same area on each of the pages increases the readability and accessibility of the book.

< insert icon PLODS>

< insert image> PLOD written into the Floorbook

< insert side heading> Possible Lines of Development (P.L.O.D.S)

If people just stuck pictures in a book it would be a scrapbook, lovely, but different from a Floorbook. Holding memories for children has a benefit, but when you combine these moments inside buildings, outside in play areas, and beyond the gate into wilder spaces with an adult who is aware and intentional, the play and learning opportunities can expand exponentially. A possible line of development (P.L.O.D.) is written in a way that reflects its function to bring together a note of the experience/opportunity and its purpose. So, as shown earlier, we record what we plan to do and why we plan to do it.

When we look at images of Floorbook pages some people:

- note them in a different colour so they stand out on the page.

- place them in a defined space that is the same on each page so practitioners know where to look to find them.

- fill in stick-on labels so that their intent is clear and all staff are encouraged to complete them.

The concept of being a possible line of development is just that, a possibility, and, as such, the number of PLODs on a page may be far greater than achieved. The section below examines how you share the decision to follow one and not another.

< insert icon Tick >

< insert Image>Action

< insert side heading> Demonstrating action and response

When the process of play and children's ideas have been documented and the PLODs thought through, there should be many possibilities from a group of children. Deciding which one to start with is often the challenge. Consider the following points when you are deciding: -

- The broad interest of the wider group, gathered from observations from the wider team. The Floorbook as the hub sits within the context of your setting. The experiences you plan will be part of a larger, continuous provision so making

connections between rooms, across staff makes a more cohesive provision for children.

- The drive and motivation evident in the children which is documented in the Floorbook. Through listening to children, we come to know the style of inquiry they enjoy. Planning all seat-based activities for kinaesthetic children wouldn't be appropriate for them, so we consider the starting point and flow from there.

< insert Image> Noting starting point and the PLODs

- Potential for the PLOD to continue the learning journey along the line of inquiry. Some experiences sit as isolated moments and others link together. Consider if the planned experience really connects to the central concept, skill, knowledge or indeed capacity.

- Available resources - the experience may need something specific that needs to be collected together.

- Access to space - if the experience requires a lot of room, the environment may need to change to accommodate it.

- Knowledge and skill of the adults to engage in the experience. There are times when the opportunity that would extend children's thinking is just beyond the understanding of us as adults. As with Vygotskian thinking, we as adults can sit in the zone of proximal development so we sometimes need support from colleagues and further research.

The process of dating the PLOD when it has moved into a planning diary or onto a planning sheet has several benefits.

The first is that it provides evidence that listening to and consulting children has led to action; a change of some sort to meet their plans and needs.

Secondly, it demonstrates that there is potential for play from just one moment to spiral off along many tangents and that these have been thought about by the team of adults in the setting.

Thirdly, it shows that the adult has the intent not to always plan in the moment but to develop patience and honesty as they acknowledge that they cannot organise the experience tomorrow but that it will happen next week. The key thing is to be accountable to the children and to follow through. We can do that by going back to the page where the child's idea is recorded and then move forward.

Fourthly, it allows us to share the leap-frogging in children's learning, the tapestry of how all the apparently separate parts link together in the mind of a child. A date where an experience took place then leads to a moment several pages later and that links to a moment a week after that. By dating and page numbering the book, adults can follow a pathway and share that through the 2D mind-map at the back of the book.

< insert side heading >The Learning Pathway - Tracking learning inside, outside, and beyond.

< insert Icon Matrix>

< insert image> The Learning Pathway

We have established that learning is unpredictable and nonlinear. One of the challenges in education is to balance the holistic nature and needs of children's learning with the needs and requirements for wider care and education. The learning pathway is not straight or simple, and yet we need to evidence and plan in a way that can link to a curriculum or a set of norms.

As the learning journey builds up in the Floorbook, the 2D summary mind-map builds at the back of the book. Putting it and the curriculum at the back of the book keeps the adult reference material together.

On a particular page, the central title can be completed towards the end of the inquiry, but the lines of inquiry radiating out from it can be completed as the inquiry unfolds. By noting the PLODs and the date/page numbers at the end of the relevant line of inquiry it is possible to gather a strategic overview of where the inquiry has been and where it is moving to. This allows you as the adult to decide to go with the flow or to revisit the Talking Tub and create an adult invitation because you feel that there are areas of learning that the children are not experiencing.

< insert side heading> Accountability for breadth and balance

< insert Icon Accountability

< insert image> Accountability and the Learning Pathway combined

There are two main ways of using a curriculum defined here as a national set of standards rather than what children do each day. One is that the curriculum outcomes drive the content of your planning so that you cover them through planned activities, whilst a second is that you offer provocations for play and as the children engage with them you consider what they have been exploring through tracking back to the outcome statements.

As children get older, the balance between child-led and adult-led changes. The Floorbooks allow both to occur as there can be direct teaching of a skill or a piece of knowledge documented as well as the exploration of the skill in real-life situations.

Using the curriculum outcomes or quality standards to monitor breadth and balance as they are explored, allows the adult to monitor if they are providing a balanced series of experiences and opportunities for children in their setting. The forms at the back can be linked to any document that you feel resonates with you and your setting; it may be a set of skills linked to school readiness or specific mathematics detail not held in the main curriculum.

< insert image: Accountability to a specific curriculum focus such as maths>

In environments that look for evidence of experience, placing the page number alongside the outcome cannot guarantee or prove acquisition of the knowledge, skill or concept but it can indicate coverage through the planning process. The individual detail is held in our family books or learning journals, as noted earlier.

< insert break and title>

SECTION 3. Key Strategies

Learning environments that care for and educate children have four key influences in terms of how the experiences and opportunities for children will be structured; the time available, the space available, the resources available and of course the adult and the role they play. This section of the book explores three main strategies, as the research suggests that these make the most difference to the content of a Floorbook. The adult is pivotal in all of them and adopts slightly different roles, as you will note. Joint involvement episodes (Bruner 1961) engage the adult and child in a social experience that both can discuss and reflect on.

Where the adult is using the contents of a Talking Tub, they may be engaged in what Rogoff (2003) refers to as *guided participation with others*. If there is an intent to teach a core skill and a desire on the part of the child to achieve it, then the interaction aligns itself with mastery orientation (Sylva 2004) from the EPPE project. Collaboration and enrichment of a space to provocate thinking builds on the concept that children (and adults at times) are in what Lev Vygotsky referred to as the *zone of proximal development*; a transitional space between not knowing and knowing where working with others can help you to embed and apply the new skill or knowledge so that it is integrated into who you are. Talking Tubs encourage the celebration and sharing of collective knowledge, 3D mind-mapping provides a guided experience that can open up possibilities that may not be within the frame of experience of the child, and finally, questioning develops aspects of interaction.

< insert side head>Talking Tubs

< insert image > Question marks celebrate curiosity

I am often asked why the Talking Tub box is covered in question marks and the answer lies in their use. The focus is more about the skill of questioning and inquiry rather than the answers. Talking Tubs are in essence the central location for objects and images selected to stimulate thinking. Rather than being simply a display in a box, they are integral to many of the aspects of this social pedagogy as they can create a balance of opinion, offer opportunities for discussion and stimulate plans for play and learning.

< insert image> A Talking Tub is full of the things of life >TASH

The desire to communicate

The desire to communicate requires a setting to create the fundamental aspects of a dialogic space, where the spoken word or communication is valued. When communication in all of its forms is valued and considered significant, it is often recorded by adults through writing or digital systems.

Emotional literacy is rooted in supportive and caring relationships (Joseph & Strain 2002). In order to act upon a social environment, a child needs to be able to read the emotional and social cues of others and themselves. Being aware of emotional state and being able to

identify it as perhaps anger, frustration or happiness has become a part of the Floorbooks' approach. The ability to engage in the social construction of knowledge through engaging with others and listening to their ideas often reveals aspects of social and emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is commonly used to describe the ability to recognise, label, and understand feelings in one's self and others. It was suggested by Denham (1986) and Webster-Stratton (1999) that it is a prerequisite skill to emotional regulation, successful interpersonal interactions and problem-solving and is therefore one of the most important skills a child is taught in the early years.

If we are to consult children, we need to be able to understand their relationship with the world and therefore the vocabulary available to give opinions and emotional responses is valuable. There is now substantial research that suggests that children with special rights, such as physical disability (Feldman, McGee, Mann & Strain 1993), or low income (Eisenberg 1999), have more limited feeling vocabularies. Children's ability to code-switch their language was highlighted in a piece of research as being significant in the way that children understand what is expected of them. The use of context and objects is key to specifically supporting children in this situation.

It is the purpose of the Talking Tub to expand and stimulate talk for all the children in the setting. One aspect of effective communication is the understanding and development of emotional literacy.

The role of the adult in this work is to narrate their own behaviours, to model language and behaviours to young children (as we will see in a later chapter). When writing in a Floorbook,

an adult may say, "I am feeling a bit frustrated, as I cannot remember the name of the man who came to visit." When recalling an event through the pictures in a Floorbook, it allows us to use words to widen the emotional literacy through noting the child's behaviour in an image in the Floorbook For example, "It looks like you were really curious about that worm. Do you see how closely you were looking at it?" These moments of documentation support the development of emotional literacy in young children and give children both a space to discuss emotions in context but also affords the affirmation to show the progression and development of caring behaviours.

< insert Box> An emotional vocabulary

Annoyed	Disgusted	Ignored	Relaxed
Bored	Ecstatic	Impatient	Relieved
Brave	Embarrassed	Important	Safe
Calm	Enjoying	Interested	Sensitive
Caring	Excited	Jealous	Shy
Cheerful	Fearful	Joyful	Strong
Clumsy	Fed-up	Lonely	Stubborn
Confused	Free	Lost	Tense
Comfortable	Friendly	Loving	Thoughtful
Cooperative	Frustrated	Overwhelmed	Thrilled
Creative	Gentle	Peaceful	Troubled
Cruel	Generous	Pleasant	Uncomfortable
Curious	Gloomy	Proud	Weary
Disappointed	Guilty		Worried

Talking Tubs and the place of 'things'

When asked what to put into a Talking Tub, I often reply 'things - the stuff of life'. Let me explain my thinking around this rather non-descript word 'things'. As a child, I grew up being aware of the drawer where the random things go! It is the drawer in your house where you hide away the interesting stuff that has no real defined purpose or home. The language around this is important, as it needs to convey a deeper meaning. I could use the phrase *provocation* or I could have said *resource* but that suggests a purchased item. I could have used *artefact* but that ages the object as being something more culturally revered. *Tool* suggests that the items have a purpose and not all things in life really do. Or perhaps I could have said a range of objects, and yet that suggests a lack of relationship.

So, I have come to enjoy the '*things of life'* as a phrase. There are several reasons for this -

- *Things of life* have a story, a history of people and place that can emerge in conversations around the Talking Tub.

- *Things of life* celebrates the diversity of humans as we all live in place-based experiences affected by climate, culture, and community.

- *Things of life* can be wide and complex, from a piece of fabric, to a photograph of a place, an object, or a personality.

- *Things* of life can be one thing to one person and something different to another. Blue fabric can be the sky to a child, or a flower, or the colour of a pair of shoes.

- *Things of life* are commonplace and therefore accessible to everyone.

- *Things of life* are relational. They link together in a mesh-like way through a myriad of different concepts. An egg can be related to a hen, or an egg cup, or a chick. This

open nature is full of the infinite variety and affordance that encourages and supports divergent thinking.

Connections -

A Talking Tub operates as a link between the reality of children's experiences and the new content you may be exploring within the setting. The closer the contents of the Talking Tub to the child's experience, the shorter the bridge the child needs to make. An example would be a conversation about a bird they see in the back yard everyday, as opposed to an exotic bird they have never seen in their real world. Once these links start to form, the child builds up a framework of understanding in their mind that we as adults can then build on by increasing the concept of bird, feather, flight, etc.

< insert image: Lines of inquiry within a talking Tub on Birds>

Understanding -

Watching children handle objects and images from the Talking Tub is always enlightening and supports us as educators to understand the child, their motivation, and past experiences. A Talking Tub provides a transitional space where an object is explored in multiple ways. As adults, we may have included an object such as a feather to look at shades of colour. The child may respond to it through movement, or models using it as a quill, or through sorting several feathers by order of size. These moments are the point where the adult needs to be attentive and knowledgeable, so that they notice and understand the potential for inquiry.

< insert image: Handling the objects>

Preparation and organisation -

Talking Tubs are structured by the adult. They are used to support interaction between the adult and child through discussion and inquiry.

The provision of 2-dimensional images (photos and diagrams) and the selection of real 3-dimensional materials aims to stimulate the brain to recall memories and make connections to existing frameworks of understanding that exist in their thinking.

There are several options but fundamentally the sequence is normally either:

- to start from a child observation or fascination and then respond with the Talking Tub

  or

- to start from an adult need and to set up an invitation to explore an area of learning they feel needs to be explored.

We then consider what objects we could gather and collect that would be interesting for children -

- Don't make all the objects and images too obvious, as this will restrict thinking to only object naming, which although having a place in language acquisition, is only a small part of oracy.

- Include images of the process of making things that you think they may enjoy. This allows the adult to judge motivation at the same time as helping children see the possibilities. Accepting children's choices can be tricky when they cast aside an image

that you felt inspired by, but in a democratic space there is no place for false consultation.

< insert image: Children handling objects>

- Include images of previous groups of children in the same place. This is interesting to children as they may know older members of the families and it also presents a sense of gravitas and tradition. A child holding an image once said, "This is Gabby's boat, that is John's sister… look... she was by the stream. That is where I am going to take my boat as well."
- Objects need to have an invitation within them that draws children to handle them. Real materials, such as maps or a compass, will have more attraction than an image of them, for all the reasons noted earlier.

< insert Image: Writing down what children say when they open the Tub>

To make the thinking behind the objects visible to the rest of the current team or those that come after, a Talking Tub has a planning sheet that maps out the key Lines of Inquiry or main ideas that sit within the fascination. Let us look at an example around sustainability -

Sustainable practice in *taking care of our place* may include location and mapping, properties and durability of materials, erosion and compaction of land, recycling options, and use and sources of power. However, these lines of inquiry need to be explored through

experiences that connect to people and place, so we may look inside a lunchbox to start the inquiry or map their place to talk about an issue they feel is important.

The third column moves a Talking Tub from a simple provocation for Talking and Thinking to a more intentional approach, as it demonstrates the learning behind the line of inquiry to which the adults are held accountable, such as skills, knowledge, or curriculum outcomes. In some settings, they support interaction around the use of a Talking Tub by noting down some open questions or wondering questions, rather than curriculum outcomes.

The line of inquiry and the contents of the tub are set out in a grid such as the one shown and which is attached to the lid of the Talking Tub, so that all staff are aware of the possibilities for thinking and learning that have been thought through by the creator of the tub.

Line of Inquiry	Object or image in the Talking Tub	Links to curriculum, wonderings or knowledge, skill, or concept.
Location and mapping	Examples of different maps, old and new. A compass and an old phone (GPS location, Google maps, etc) Images of areas of the site (taken by children) to discuss.	I wonder how we know where we live? How did people know where they were before we had phones?
Properties of materials	Range of familiar materials, of paper and plastic, such as a crisp packet, an old shoe, an orange skin, or a yoghurt pot,	I wonder how we can test to see which one stays for the longest time?
Impact on the land/ in the water	Images of footpaths where no plants grow and areas where they flourish. Animals living in odd spaces, like a	Why do think no plants grow on the path anymore?

	shrimp in a bottle or a Bower bird with an all-blue plastic nest. (be sensitive to the level of detail in images).	I wonder why the shrimp lived in the bottle and not under the rock?
Litter Management	Images of the recycling bins and any problem areas in the setting, to offer the challenge of what do we do?	If we could design a new bin I wonder what It would look like?
Recycling	Images or examples of the object and what it has become. A nylon carpet into a tray, plastic bags into a fleece jacket, paper into new cardboard containers and plates.	I wonder how we could change something here, into something different?
Reuse/upcycling	Images or examples of how someone has reused an item. A gum-boot to grow flowers, a jam jar for a candle-light.	Looking at the images I wonder if any give you something you might like to explore?
Water use	Plastic bottles or jars of dirty and clean water and an empty one for no water.	I wonder how we could clean dirty water?
Transport	Bike, train, car, plane, can all be represented with a range of wheels. Placed alongside a range of images of local transport options.	If we had 4 wheels what would we make?
Energy	A range of lightbulbs, forms of torches. A real switch box and a short length of wire. Solar-powered toy, battery, windmill.	How does the bulb light up? I wonder how we could test these to see if they have any energy?
Food consumption	Small food examples in images and real state. Bag of soil. Images of organisms, such as worms.	I wonder how an apple changes into soil?

Once the tubs are created by the team, they can be stored in the setting in wallets or tubs as many fascinations re-emerge over a year, especially those linked to concepts.

The first sessions will use a Talking Tub with one or two items linked to the lines of inquiry. Then, as the educator notices where their interest lies, they take out the original objects and add more to expand the inquiry the children want to explore.

The contents of a Talking Tub therefore change throughout the inquiry. Through children adding more materials and adults taking out and replacing articles, a Talking Tub stays interesting and responsive.

If we take any one of the lines of inquiry above we can make a second Talking Tub just about that line of inquiry. Doing this allows the inquiry to go into depth, so the focus becomes slow, deep learning rather than touching on many things for a very short period of time. So, for a bird inquiry, we could just explore beaks or feet, or there may have been a fascination with feathers. The Talking tub allows us to reframe and deepen a sense of fascination and curiosity without the educator making decisions they shape and influence ideas through the context and objects presented in the Talking Tub.

< insert image: PLODS and Possibilities>

Not everything goes through a Talking Tub, but what they can do is to offer some of the possibilities to children in a well-framed way. In the image shown, the posters support educators in the setting to see the PLODs and possibilities that emerge from areas of play that could be the focus at a group time with a Talking Tub.

< Insert side head > 3D mind-mapping

Mind-mapping was made popular by Tony Buzan and his work on creating concept maps. Sometimes referred to as a brainstorm or spider diagram, a mind-map is a visual thinking tool used to capture information and ideas. A mind-map begins with a central idea (the topic to be explored) and branches out into key themes and the further development of ideas that radiate from the centre out.

< insert 3 images: Noting down the children s mind mapping through the Talkaround session>

Three-dimensional mind-mapping is much more fluid, responsive and engaging for children. The key themes are the lines of inquiry that either the adult or the child identifies.

The use of Talking Tubs has been described above and one effective way to use the items is to create a Talkaround time with children and discuss the links and connections that exist between the objects. In the example around sustainability, the children may place the crisp packet next to the gum-boots. The adult's interaction is to support them to talk about the link. It may have been that they put their boos on to go to the recycling centre, or that they love cheesy crisps. The important part is to celebrate the relationship between the child and the things of life. This supports oracy and as a skill will develop divergent thinking and concept-based problem-solving. A Talking Tub is framed around adult lines of inquiry but

there are children's ideas and lines of inquiry that can come emerge from the mind-mapping session.

< insert image: Lines of inquiry from children>

The adult may write a word on the yellow strip to denote a line of inquiry and narrow the focus or may open up the conversation to listen to what the children will bring up.

The strips of yellow paper used for mind-mapping are designed to:

- make them visually bold for those children who need visual support.

- be flexible, in that the ideas can be moved around, and new mind-maps created.

  < insert image: Digging down into one aspect of the inquiry>

- be shared in a Floorbook, as they will hold the lines of inquiry that have originated with the children. (These can then have specific PLODs written beside them)

  < insert image: Mind mapping >

- make photographs of the mind-mapping session effective. Combined with a clearly visible, black pen, this helps document the session. This image is then added to the Floorbook to share the process.

< insert image:3D mind mapping TASH>

3D mind-mapping is an effective way of working with children on any subject, as it allows them to clearly see the objects and images and how they connect to create meaning.

<Side heading> Questioning

<insert image: adult interaction in dialogue and conversation>

When we consult children about what they know, we need to embrace that their life experiences and their forms of communication are diverse. Further to that as we work with numbers of children, we have to accept that we respond to the broad fascinations of the group, whilst monitoring that dominant children do not always drive our planning. All children need to have an adult to listen to them and a time to speak/communicate their thoughts, but often, as adults, we fill the space. For every one question, we should make seven affirmations, eye-contact, a nod or a smile - whatever you feel comfortable doing to offer space for children to think. Speech and language specialists recommend that we wait at least seven seconds for a response to a question.

We can use discussion *and* questioning to provocate thinking, however, discussion is often more effective in creating a deeper level of thinking.

< insert Image: Note questions into the Floorbooks>

Some questions will encourage children to think more deeply (Lipman 1988, Wilks 1995) -

- Adult interactions; closed and open questions.

- Meta-cognitive questions focus on the learners' awareness, evaluation, and regulation of their own thinking.

- Reflective questions engage the learner/thinker in deliberate, purposeful consideration of the effectiveness of actions and experiences.

As noted earlier, adults have an impact on the experiences of children through their interaction. One way to interact is to ask questions of each other.

The foundational understanding of what type of question are you asking needs to be clarified first. There are, in essence, two kinds of questions; closed and open. Closed questions can be answered with a *yes* or *no*, whereas open questions cannot. They encourage the person to expand on what they were thinking. An example would be -

Do you like flowers?

Verses

What do you think about flowers?

Or

What if the flower could talk, what would it say?

The first closed question can be answered with a *yes* or *no*, whilst the second requires a more complex answer, and the third moves into a more philosophical way of thinking.

< insert image : Noting down responses into the Floorbook>

< insert side heading> **Possibility thinking** (Craft 2004) -

Possibilities are generated by children (and adults) in all areas of learning, whether imaginative play, musical exploration and composition, cooking, mark-making or writing, outdoor physical play, mathematical development, or early scientific inquiry. Possibility-thinking is the means by which questions are posed or puzzles surfaced – through multiple ways of generating the question 'what if?' (Craft 2000; 2001; 2002). 'What if?' may be experienced unconsciously in the flow of engagement. For example, in a two-year-old realising that, in crawling through the long grass, it starts to make a 'track'; or in an eight-

year-old realising that a number pattern can be made by following the 9 times table; or in a pair of three-year-olds making 'soup' from daisy petals. Possibility-thinking essentially involves a transition in understanding; in other words, the shift from 'What is this?' to exploration e.g. 'What can I/we do with this?' Fostering possibility-thinking involves enabling children to find and refine problems, as well as to solve them. This distinction between finding and solving problems has been explored through studies in primary classrooms (Jeffrey 2004, 2005; Jeffrey and Craft 2004).

< insert image: Environments that invite curiosity>

< insert side heading> Creative thinking -

Bruce argues that without sensitive engagement with young children and with their families 'emergent possibilities for creativity that are in every child do not develop or can be quickly extinguished' (Bruce 2004:12). There is an equally compelling case for the way we work with older children. Adults in early years settings have opportunities to develop practice to foster children's creativity, focusing on each child's motivations and interests and, in valuing and appreciating these, encouraging exploration without 'invading the child's creative idea or taking it over' (Bruce 2004: 25). Floorbooks support and nourish creative thinking as an approach, embracing the individual within the group, celebrating the complexity and variability of the natural world as their context.

< insert side heading> The value of Floorbooks in higher-order thinking -

The Floorbook approach focuses on the learning dispositions to develop higher-order thinking in environments that give children 'space' in a metaphorical sense, to contribute their voice and their ideas to the learning environment -

- children being actively involved in their learning to increase motivation and empowerment.

- persisting when situations/activities are difficult or uncertain.

- children having the opportunity to communicate with others in complex ways.

- children taking responsibility for their own learning and how to share it.

< insert side heading > Higher-order thinking models -

There are several different ways of approaching the development of higher-order thinking, which is defined as pulling a concept apart and discussing its various aspects. Floorbooks make this process of thinking, with all of its inherent challenges, problems, and failures very clear. In this way, just like the first Floorbook on electrical understanding with 4-years-olds, we can embrace the vast range of ways that children think about the world. We can use these ideas around higher-order thinking to support progression in our work with young children. One that can be used at the front of a Floorbook to guide and serve as a reminder to support adults in the skill of interaction is called Bloom's Taxonomy.

It offers a hierarchy of thinking processes that we can use to consider our interactions. How often do we focus on memory recall rather than developing hypotheses through an application of a new aspect of knowledge or exploration of a concept? Blooms serves as a useful reminder of the complexity of thinking but has recently been challenged as being too hierarchical, in that children operate on a range of levels. The general understanding of the layers is of value when we link it to the understanding of the vocabulary we use in our interactions with children. Do we use questions that stem from knowledge, such as *What is that called?* or do we use questions from an evaluative stand-point, such as *How do you feel about that?* In the table below, I list both the Thinking skills but also the words we tend to use in our interactions with children that make a difference. The questions are noted here as they can trigger awareness in the reader of how they use questions in their practice.

Thinking skill (increasing from remembering to creativity)	Key words	Question stems
Remember Can the child remember information?	Name list, describe, relate, write, copy, search, recall, label, match	What happened after? How many? Who was that? Can you tell me why? What is…?
Understand Can they explain ideas or concepts?	Outline, compare, order, identify	Can you write that in your own words? What could happen next? Who do you think?
Apply Can they use the information in a new way?	Solve, show, report, develop, share	Do you have another example where? Could you make a model to show what you know?
Analyse Can the child see the differences?	Examine, compare, contrast, explain, analyse	How is ….similar to…? Why did that happen?
Evaluate Can the child talk about their decisions?	Choose, decide, justify, evaluate	How did you feel about that? What do you think?
Create	Create, design, construct, imagine, devise	Can you design a…? How could you….?

Can the child create new ideas and make items?		

Fig. 3:1 Adaptation of Bloom's Taxonomy .

< insert Section >

SECTION 4. Breadth, balance, and accountability

Each country has a different way of presenting the planning process, but in most it is a single cycle and yet it should perhaps be a series of loops going off in a range of directions (Leggo 2007). We know from research, that learning is not a standard, straight route from start to finish and in reality we would do well to consider it as a series of varying loops and then consider how we can create a planning and documentation process that can make that complexity visible. Floorbooks go a long way to achieving that.

Principles that underpin curricula -

The word curriculum has various interpretations around the world. Some describe what experiences children have every day, and others represent a set of norms, usually laid out in experiences and outcomes, and often associated with expected milestones in children's development. These are set out by a body of people, whether that is a Government or another group.

For example -

- In the New Zealand curriculum guidelines *Te Whãriki*, the term curriculum is used 'to describe the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.' (Ministry of Education 1996, p.10)

- In contrast, the New South Wales Early Childhood Curriculum Framework defines curriculum as 'the intentional provisions made by professionals to support children's learning and well being.' (Board of Studies, NSW 2005)

- Definitions also vary when children are in the more structured school system and the term curriculum tends to focus on learning areas or subjects, as evident in the Australian Curriculum.

You can tell a lot about a country and its view of education by going to the principles; the foundations on which the curriculum was created. Let us consider how we address the issues of curriculum accountability generally through Floorbooks.

Challenge and enjoyment -

Children and young people should find their learning challenging, engaging, and motivating, and, as such, Floorbooks elevate the child's voice so that it drives the learning pathway. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all and the open-ended nature of a Floorbook does not restrict or limit children's thinking to age categories but only to their own potential.

Breadth -

All children and young people should have the opportunity for a broad range of experiences that create a foundation for further learning. Their learning should be planned with intent and organised so that they will learn and develop through a variety of contexts within both the setting and other aspects of school life.

Progression -

Each stage of learning should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements, rather than being limiting by the age of a child. Floorbooks share progression as a group whilst providing individual evidence held in the family books or portfolios. Each child is encouraged to contribute in any way that they feel they can, so a 4-year-old may be exploring a similar concept to a 3-year-old.

Depth -

Floorbooks make the opportunities for children and young people to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning, exploring, and achieving more advanced levels of understanding very visible. The slowness of this work encourages depth of thinking and the evidence within the documentation is often used to justify that professional decision.

Personalisation & choice -

When a child is seen as agentic, the learning planned for children and young people can more readily respond to their individual needs and support aptitudes and talents. A divergent approach provides opportunities for exercising personal choice that can support empowerment in a wide range of areas of learning.

Coherence - 'links' -

Children and young people's experiences and opportunities should combine to form a coherent, holistic journey. In environments where discrete subjects are explored, there should be clear links to bring different strands between home and setting together.

Relevance -

When children see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, both present and future, it may feel more relevant. Imagine a child experiencing white paint to represent milk and actually drinking a glass of it, or looking at a cow. The latter is real-world and authentic and Floorbooks work very effectively to capture those experiences as they share imagery taken inside, outside, and beyond the gate into the local community.

<Insert 3 from folders>

Australian EYLF

And /Or

NZ Te Whāriki

< INSERT BOX>

The planning cycle -

To be intentional in the way that children encounter a curriculum we follow a planning cycle. In the EYLF it links from collecting information or observation, to the analysis of what you are seeing, to plan, through to taking an action or doing something and consideration of how well it went in the reflection. These are all held within the pages of a Floorbook and

supported by a planning diary for day-to-day notes. In Te Whariki its is suggested that assessment documentation differs from other foms of documentation in that it records evidence of individual children's learning progress in relation to the learning outcomes of Te Whāriki. It is used for curriculum planning, and for informing children, parents and whānau, other kaiako, and external support agencies about learning and progress over time. Kaiako use knowledge gained from assessment to make the teaching and learning more effective and these actions are noted through weekly planning.

<mark>< insert image> Floorbook and a EYLF planning diary TASH</mark>

One of the key aspects of this approach to planning with and for children is that it operates as both a documentation **and** a planning tool all in one place. This chapter explores each aspect of the inquiry process in turn and discusses why it is significant when planning with and for children. After each aspect, there are questions to help you reflect on your current practice. It is key to be as reflexive as possible and ask yourself where the power lies in your environment when it comes to taking the lead in planning.

The key to their use as a planning document lies within the planning cycle. When we plan, we enter a cycle that supports us to reflect on our practice so that our intentional actions meet the needs of children. The reflective practitioner enables children's ideas and plans to emerge in the process of taking action, rather than providing purely adult-led, closed, activity-based programming. A Floorbook contains the child-voice and behaviours, the staff interpretation and analysis of those actions and then a response to deepen learning.

Floorbooks, Talking Tubs and the planning cycle -

Collect information through noticing what children do, say, write, or make -

- Collect information from discussions around the Talking Tub, to build up an assessment of what children already know.

- Note down the observation that started the journey on the inside front cover to contextualise the planning.

- Transfer observation notes and the voices of the children from the staff notepads to the Floorbook.

- Film/audio record conversations and create a link through a QR code to a secure website.

- Create a QR code to link a blog site, digital film, or photo show to the physical point in the book that it links to.

- Collect photographs taken by children and staff. Cut these out and put them into the book with drawings and diagrams created at Talkaround time or within the main play session.

Analyse and reflect upon what has been collected -

- The adults bring their group Floorbooks to the planning meeting so that decisions are made on evidence, not memory.

- Look at the Floorbooks and question the experiences from many angles, noting on the pages the thoughts of the team.

- Some moments are expanded and written up in the individual profiles in a Learning Stories format (Carr and Lee 2017) or Family Books (Warden 2015).

- The things that children say, make, do, or write, are entered over time to demonstrate the reflection process of staff, children, and parents/carers. When we date all the comments as we enter them we can see how often we revisit ideas.

- Put the Floorbooks on display so that children and families can revisit and reflect.

- Children and adults can choose to take aspects and put into their personal Learning Journals for individual evidence.

Plan -

- Ask yourself if the experience you are considering is worth doing. How does it add value and depth to the Learning Journey?

- Research yourself if you feel that children are exploring a line of inquiry that you are uncertain of, such as the anatomy of a spider's mouth-parts!

- Write Possible Lines of Development (PLODs) with clear learning e.g. Do this… to learn/explore this, on the page in a defined area so it can be easily seen by colleagues.

- If required, select one of these PLODs and enter it in your planning diary so that everyone is aware of the line of inquiry and the experience you are offering.

- Ask children what they feel their next steps are and then note PLODs into the Floorbook with the child's name, so that you can remember when you revisit the Floorbook.

Act or do -

- Identify the PLODs that have actually taken place by ticking and dating on the Floorbook page.

- Create a cumulative mind-map of the Learning Journey at the back of the book with the lines of inquiry and the detailed PLODs that have been covered.

- Put a page number or a date by the PLODs on the mind-map to allow cross-reference back to the page of evidence in the Floorbook.

- Children/adults stick in photographs of the process of play, the thinking moments, and the challenges and failures to acknowledge the capacity of perseverance.

- Collate ideas from children collected through the consultation boards, Thinking Tree and Talking Tubs and write into the Floorbook as PLODs.

- Create the Floorbook with the children as an integral part of the action phase so that see the positive aspects of documentation and thinking about learning is part of an active learning/play space.

Planning Dairies and Floorbooks

< insert image Auchlone Planning diary>

< insert image Lines of inquiry>

As noted earlier, the specific content to share with the team can be collated into a planning diary, the principles, goals and outcomes are included for ease of reference. The icons below represent the sections used to guide the process of planning and include questions to support practitioners in their practice. There are two areas that directly link to the features of a Floorbook noted in Section 2, such as PLODs and lines of inquiry, to ensure that the whole approach links together to be holistic.

< side heading> **Active Observation**

<insert Icon in General folder> Observation

< insert Image>

The art of seeing 292 alma book

< BOX>

What do you notice about how the children are sharing what they know?

Are they revisiting an idea or demonstrating a fascination with something?

< insert Icon> Line of inquiry

< insert Image> Line of inquiry from diary…

<u>Analysing the central idea that drives an inquiry.</u>

The myriad of conversations that take place in a group of children all have value and purpose but sometimes as the educator we can identify an underlying line of inquiry. This is a fascination that persists over time and becomes a central idea that is explored in many ways through the duration of the inquiry.

The line of inquiry or central idea has some characteristics that support us to understand if we have reached it -

- The central idea is written in one sentence e.g. the movement of grass, feathers and leaves, change, linearity.

- It expresses concisely an enduring understanding e.g. the inquiry explored a link between mass and movement.

- It is substantial enough to generate in–depth inquiries e.g. movement and dimensions is broad enough for depth but not as wide as the whole of movement.

- An effective line of inquiry is often concept-driven.

- It promotes the ability to think critically.

- It challenges and extends children's prior knowledge by taking their thinking as the starting point.

- A line of inquiry is a means of extending children's understanding of relationships across areas of learning.

- It is transferable across all children.

- It is relevant, engaging, and significant.

- It allows for action to be taken in a way that makes sense to children.

< BOX>

What is the underlying concept, knowledge, or skill that the children are exploring?

How have you decided upon a main idea to explore?

Is it broad enough to support the many ideas and fascinations of your children?

< Side heading> **Possible lines of development**

< Insert Icon> Possible Line of Development (P.L.O.D)

< insert Image> PLOD Planning diary

A possible line of development is written following an observation, a little like a next-step, but is clearly linked to the larger lines on inquiry. These are taken directly from the Floorbook when they are going to be completed. The documentation of these would then go back into the Floorbook.

If we note a next-step to be 'put out crayons', it doesn't convey why the experience or opportunity is taking place. It could be that it links to an outcome in the curriculum or a broader concept. So it could be -

> *'Offer a range of materials to explore the difference between wax crayons and chalk.'*
>
> *or*
>
> *'Offer crayons to investigate properties of materials.'*

The examples above give a clear message to the adults of what may emerge when they engage in dialogue. The actual resources may be the same but the intent, and therefore the interaction by the adult, may be richer and more connected to the child's inquiry. In summary, a PLOD has two halves -

> *Offer this… in order to explore this…*

There are many ways to develop what children are exploring in play-based pedagogies; primarily through what children say, do, make, or write. In the early stages of primary education, as the process of inquiry is under pressure to move from something freer to

becoming more guided by invitations, we can use these columns to give children the choice

of how they share their ideas. This can be in either the group Floorbook or individual

Learning Journals over the year to ensure they have a wide range of opportunities. There are

blank sections at the end to allow space for children to add their ideas. They can be put into

the Floorbook or individual profiles to monitor that children are experiencing a range of

opportunities to share what they know.

< insert title> Fig. 4:1 Sharing multiple ways of knowing through say, do, make and write>

SAY	DO	MAKE	WRITE
Describe a model	Role play	Model	Leaflet
Explain a process	Explore materials	Pictures	Poem
Share ideas	Dance	Book	Letter
Talk to a friend	Sing	Map	Newspaper
Group discussion	Draw	Collage	Song
Questions	Play a game	A Game	Report
Agree targets	Design	Mask	List
Hot seating	Record a song	Song	Menu
Circle time	Experiment	Rhyme	Thinking bubble
Pretend TV	A puppet show	Puppet	Invitations
News reader	Go for walk	Diagram	2D Mind Map
Directions	Set up a display	Quiz	Mini Books
Instructions	Some research	Animation	Envelopes
Recall	Investigate	Cartoon	Postcards
Show and tell	Look outside	Storyboard	Signs
Talkaround time	Sit outside	Draw	Labels
Talking Tub	Walk and think	Recipe	Story
Song	Take photos	Advert	Play
Poem	Revisit the Floorbook	Food	Summary
Facts	Read personal profile	Structure	Email
Podcast	Share family book	Sculpture	Blog
Debate	3D Mind Map	Painting	Booklet
Story	Talk about a model	Create an image	Diary
Talk about the failures	Slideshow	With clay/dough	Thinking tree leaf
Describe	Puzzle/jigsaw	With/ in sand	A fact list
Discuss: Think, pair and share	Play with loose parts inside	With loose natural materials	A detailed diagram or drawing
	Play outside		Plan
			Draw a model
			Plan
			Recipe

< BOX>

How could we offer new opportunities that take forward an idea?

To what extent do the children in the early stages (3-7 years) engage in the opportunities in

Fig. 4:1?

How do we monitor that the ideas of children and the ideas of the adult were balanced?

< Side heading> **Form of documentation**

< Insert Icon>plan

< insert image> Form of documentation in planning diary

To document children's thinking is to capture the traces of play, the processes that are in

constant movement. It is therefore complex and the mere process of transferring what we

see children do into an understanding is going to be inaccurate. However, the closer we pay

attention, the more authentic the result. Allowing ourselves to document what we really

see, as opposed to what we want to see, is a real challenge. Carla Rinaldi suggests that

documentation is -

> 'visible listening, as the construction of traces (through notes, slides, videos and so
>
> on) that not only testify to the children's learning paths and processes, but also make

them possible because they are visible. For us, this means making visible, and thus possible, the relationships that are the building blocks of knowledge.' (2006:68)

In this complexity, we use the Floorbooks to hold the multiple perspectives of what we think we see as the adults so that each day we can gather more depth, accuracy, and deeper understanding of the children's thinking.

< BOX>

What aspects of what you see are significant?

How can you involve children in their documentation?

<Side heading > **Engaging Children**

<Insert Icon>Engage

< insert Image> Engaging in the Planning dairy

 The younger the child the more intuitive and responsive the adult needs to be as the child responds to the world around them. All children deserve to be with adults who consider how they will offer an experience or an opportunity. One of the reasons we use a Talking Tub was driven by a group of children many years ago who loved boxes and the thrill of opening them.

In this area of the planning diary, it is important that the adult considers what will frame the moment. Will it be inside or outside? Will the resources be put on display or will the children collect them? How long do you think children may be engaged for? Will there be a provocation or an invitation set up?

Provocations often -

- Are based on children's own wonderings.

- Expand or extend children's own ideas, interest and theories.

- Deepen children's unique thinking.

- Provide new experiences and outcomes within their own sphere of interest and are related to their existing thinking.

Invitations often -

- Are based on teacher wonderings and thoughts.

- Give an idea or a reason for doing something.

- Spark children's motivation and interest when well-framed.

- Offer new possibilities and wider awareness for children.

< BOX>

How will you offer an invitation to engage in your intentional experience?

How do you empower children to take the lead?

Are the provocations you use beautiful? Challenging? Relevant?

< insert heading> **Focus to be Intentional**

< Insert Icon> Focus

< insert Image> Focus from planning diary

The main focus of your planning should be improving the quality of provision for the child.
To do this we need to be aware of the small things that make a difference. In any
intentional experience, there will be many possibilities and interpretations. The focus of the
planning diary here is to pick up on whether your practice is actually looking in detail to
notice a skill that needs to be developed, a piece of knowledge that a child wants to share,
or indeed for the adult to highlight a concept or introduce some vocabulary. Having a focus
or clear intent to your planning, based on your knowledge of the children you work with, is
effective in supporting progression.

By looking through the Floorbook to assess engagement and understanding, it is possible to
understand how the dynamic of your group of children responds to your intentional
planning and what kind of experience they enjoy and seem to respond to.

< BOX>

When you plan for an experience what is its underlying focus?

How do you leave enough space in these invitations for children to lead the direction of their
own learning?

< Insert heading> **Investigations and inquiries**

< insert icon> Investigate

<Insert image> Investigations from Planning Diary

As we have noted in the first part of this book, inquiry never stops, and the learning journey could weave itself together over years. However, we traditionally view experiences in blocks and here it is valuable to note questions that arose that were not necessarily part of the main inquiry but which would have real value if picked up in the future. This can be done with an individual fascination, such as looking up the answer to why beetles have wings, or indeed the larger group might explore flight and wings more widely. Going back through the planning diary at the end of term allows the educator to note down what fascinations children have to inform future planning.

< BOX>

What kinds of things seem to fascinate your children?

Is there value in exploring it now? Could it be revisited later?

< Insert side heading> **Connections and Links**

<Insert Icon>Link

< insert Image>Links from the Planning Diary

Children are part of a physical and cultural community, so it supports them when the educator can make links clear. It could be that the children are exploring bees and someone mentions that their uncle has some. This link to relationships, inviting those people in to share in the learning journey can make it richer and more meaningful.

Children are competent and capable and hold memories that can be easily triggered through an image or a conversation. The link may seem abstract at first but as the conversation develops it may become clear that there is a connection from the child's lived experience to the dialogue. For example, a child was engaged in a conversation about a dog and in response he talked about a car. The connection turned out to be that the family dog was taken to the vet in a car. Noting down the links to follow up or conversations that came out of the Floorbook, allows the whole team to be aware of things to follow.

< BOX>

How does the experience link to the real world to offer a tangible understanding of the world around them?

Are there links you could make in your interaction to previous experiences or events in the community?

< Insert side heading> **Reflection**

<Insert Icon>Reflect

< insert Image> Reflection from Planning Diary

The symbol chosen for this indicates the question of self-reflection and to do this effectively requires us to be professionally honest and brave as it centres why do we do what we do? Where there are guiding principles or pedagogical values that we support, these are the backbone of our reflection. In the case of Australia, do you have a copy of the foundations of the EYLF within the diary to refer to easily and not just the outcomes but the principles?

The reflections are in the planning cycle to support educators to embrace any changes to the things that they do, say, or believe to improve the outcomes for children and families.

< BOX>

How did you feel your interaction supported children?

Was the experience meaningful, joyful, without bias?

How could you have used the space/time/resources more effectively?

Were there key things that you notice to take forward?

< Insert side heading> **The Learning Journey**

<Insert Icon>Learning Journey

< insert Image> Learning Journey written in Planning diary

Floorbooks are a motivational way to document children's theories and ideas. These ideas can then be used as the basis for planning authentic and engaging experiences for children in a variety of settings. We need to be accountable. The key questions for me, are to whom and why. As a practitioner, I hold myself accountable to children, then parents and families. Sometimes we can feel that we are accountable to outside agencies more than we are to the young families in our settings and schools. As professionals, we strive for quality and the accountability to larger agendas presented through care standards, or balanced curriculum experiences and outcomes, should be seen in a positive way when that process of accountability keeps children at the heart. Curricula sit around the world to monitor the breadth and balance of experiences. They evolve and respond to the social setting in which they exist and the time period in which they are set. The elements that change are within the content of the curriculum and the methodology of delivery.

The pedagogy (study of how to teach) of environments that use Floorbooks embrace the child as competent and skilled, follows a listening pedagogy that includes and respects all

voices and ensures that learning journeys flow and move across time and space boundaries to make connections and links for children.

<BOX>

How long has the learning journey taken?

How did you show the links and connections to the evidence? Page numbers?

Conclusion

Children have a constant, high-speed exposure to experiences and an associated high rate at which we expect them to retain and recall knowledge. It is not sustainable as a pedagogy, and some would argue that creating a method of working with children that is not relationship focussed will be one of the greatest errors in education in our time.

At the time of writing, we are experiencing a global pandemic that has allowed people to revisit what really matters in the lives of children. The need to be loved, active, enthused, heard, involved, and supported to learn. These aspects are all covered by the inquiry-based approach central to the Floorbook approach with the strategies of using Talking Tubs , Talking and Thinking Trees, and Talkaround times to explore ideas as a learning community of adults and children co-constructing a learning pathway that will hopefully last a lifetime. When we use these strategies and take them forward into a diary, the planning cycle is complete. Planning with and for children achieves the goal of being child-led in our practice whilst maintaining accountability to documents such as curriculum.

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For ease of access a PDF version of this EYLF planning diary is available through

www.inspiredEC.com Or www.mindstretchers.academy

< side head> Glossary

Communication Book:

The Communication Book is a centralized record of the many and varied ways that we communicate with the setting's wider community such as visitors, parents, local members of the community. The Communication Book helps to link families into the Floorbook Approach. They are a great informal way to support parental engagement at your setting as visitors and parents write messages, thoughts, and feedback into it.

Family Book:

Family Books are part of the Floorbook Approach. They are A4 size, and used to create interesting, relevant, accessible, and individual profiles for your children that are built on stories and experiences with the family and in the setting. They support child-led documentation and give children a voice that can then be easily shared with their families.

Floorbook:

 The central hub of documentation that connects many forms of observation and assessment of children's thinking. Usually shared in an A2 book to give groups of children space to work together. The Floorbook shares the many forms of communication that arise from inquiry-based learning to support child-led planning and documentation. Floorbooks share ideas, reflections, challenges, solutions and failures, thoughts, actions, observations,

plans and desires. They also allow children to revisit their learning as often as they wish, meaning that they can also reflect on earlier learning with what they have learnt since.

Floorbook Approach:

Dr Claire Warden created the Floorbook Approach in 1986 publishing her first book about it in 19……to give the practitioner strategies to truly consult with children during the planning and documentation process. The approach supports inquiry-based learning, developing higher order thinking skills and helps children influence their own learning pathway. The Floorbook Approach is an innovative child-led approach to observation, documentation and planning which is now implemented in settings around the world. By listening to children and identifying their interests we can create a unique learning opportunity which excites and interests them.

Inquiry-based learning:

Inquiry-based learning is integral to the Floorbook Approach. It goes further than asking a child what he or she wants to know to trigger curiosity and fascination. Inquiry-based learning is a form of active learning that starts by posing open-ended questions or provocations. The response to these provocations takes the group on a Learning journey over many weeks and months. There are many types of inquiry based approaches.

Mind map:

Originally promoted by Tony Buzan, mind mapping uses graphics to help children see the relationship between their ideas. They can be 2D and written on paper or in the Floorbooks approach we use 3D using objects and images, main ideas are written on yellow strips of paper and individual contributions on thinking bubbles.

Talkaround Time:

The time when children and practitioners gather in a group on the Talkaround Mat to explore a Talking Tub or look at a Floorbook together. It's a time when all children are encouraged to contribute their thoughts and feelings in a positive and supportive environment.

Talkaround Mat:

The ritual of putting out the Talkaround Mat invites children to come together to share their thoughts and ideas. The mat is large (2metre diameter) and plain black to support children to visually engage with the objects or experience taking place. It provides a portable area for an educator to easily organize and encourage child-led discussions which will create possible lines of development to include in the Floorbook and planning diary

Talking Tub:

Talking Tubs support you to engage children in conversation and dialogue which in turn will create Possible Lines of Development for planning. Designed to support adult organization, they hold a variety of real 2D and 3D objects that will promote oracy and richer thinking.

Talking and Thinking Tree:

One of the elements of the Floorbook Approach, Talking and Thinking Trees are a fun way to engage children. The tree is used in conjunction with paper leaves to allow children to share their ideas, thoughts and learning and document the planning cycle in your setting.

Thinking Bubbles:

These are paper shapes cut to suggest thinking. They can support children who are concerned about writing as they are often of recycled paper and represent freedom from the secretarial skills of writing. Children draw or write their ideas and thoughts on them and then use them to sort ideas or to create mind maps. They can later be stored in an envelope the Floorbook to document learning.

Implicit Curriculum:

The core curriculum can be made visible through experiences or outcomes. The implicit curriculum is the aspect that is not obvious. It focusses on the aspects of the curriculum about values and beliefs.

Child-led planning and documentation:

A form of planning that shares the responsibility of decision making between the child and the adult. The adult observes and listens to children's ideas, analyses them, considers the connections, and then offers an opportunity to extend the learning.

Line of inquiry:

The main idea or concept that lies beneath an experience or opportunity. Using lines of inquiry to plan experiences supports children to make links in their play.

Formative and Summative assessment:

Formative assessment is a form of assessment that is continual and therefore informs day to day practice. Summative assessments occur at the end of a piece of work as a summary.

Co-constructivist approach:

An approach that views knowledge as constructed between two people. It suggests that learning is primarily a social activity.

P.L.O.D- abbreviation of Possible Line of Development or Direction. A two-part objective that states what you are going to offer and what you hope children will explore. E.g., Provide a variety of containers in the water tray…. to explore capacity.

Talkaround Time-time in the day when children gather to talk around and about something

the child or the adult have been thinking about such as an issue, fascination or thought.