

u!magine

Child Protection Education without Borders

Dr Angela Fenton, Kathryn Dalton
Charles Sturt University, School of Education

Background

Child abuse and neglect is a complex 21st Century societal issue that crosses many physical and moral borders. Abuse detrimentally affects children and families, locally, nationally and internationally (AIHW, 2015). Teachers face many competing responsibilities and barriers in their objective to protect children, which consequently presents many challenges for pre-service teacher education. Both pre-service and practicing teachers report that child protection is an area of practice in which they feel least prepared (McCallum, 2003).

The project draws on current research (Fenton, 2013) confirming strengths approaches (McCashen, 2005) contribute to increased awareness and confidence in child protection education.

Project:

The u!magine grant will enable a repository to be developed as an Interact2 site containing digital media training resources such as:

- videos, recorded workshops & learning simulations
- links to practitioner resources, mandatory reporting guidelines and organisation websites
- authentic child protection scenarios & child safety games
- Scaffolded discussions to support students with complex & sensitive questions of child protection

Aim: This u!magine grant project is designed to “foster innovative practice and scholarship in online learning” (CSU, 2015, para. 2) for strengths-based child protection preparation in teacher education.

Method:

Methods for evaluating the project are anticipated to be through mixed method study. Qualitative strengths-based research techniques (Fenton, 2013) such as electronic interviews (EViews) of students and Reference Group members' responses will be used. Additionally, quantitative *Learning Analytics* tools will generate statistical usage measurements through the Interact2 site (Blackboard platform) to record and help evaluate engagement with resources.

Early Responses:

Early responses to this project (from initial Reference Group feedback) confirm the significant practical and moral demands of child protection for teachers. Importantly, there is strong interdisciplinary support and willingness to be involved in solutions-based practice in this area



The Strengths Approach:

“Enables people to identify, value and mobilise their strengths as opposed to compensating for their deficits” (McCashen, 2005, p. v).



References

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- Charles Sturt University. (2015). *U!magine*. Retrieved from <https://www.csu.edu.au/uimagine/home>
- Fenton, A. (2013). *A strengths approach to child protection education*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, James Cook University, Queensland.
- McCashen, W. (2005). *The strengths approach*. Bendigo: St. Lukes.

Angela Fenton

Phone: + 61 2 6051 9148

Email: afenton@csu.edu.au

Kathryn Dalton

Phone: + 2 6051 9445

Email: kdalton@csu.edu.au





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Charles Sturt University, School of Education

Background

Child abuse and neglect is a complex 21st Century societal issue that crosses physical and moral borders. Abuse detrimentally affects children, families, locally, nationally and internationally (Abuse of Children, 2015; AIHW, 2015).

Teachers have many competing responsibilities and barriers in their objective to protect children, which consequently presents many challenges for pre-service teacher education. Both pre-service and practicing teachers report that child protection is an area of practice in which they feel least prepared (Fenton, 2013; McCallum, 2003).

Aim: This U!magine grant project is designed to “foster innovative practice and scholarship in online learning” (CSU, 2015, para. 2) for enhanced child protection preparation in teacher education.

Method:

Qualitative responses of 19 early childhood pre-service teachers to a strengths-based child protection module integrated into a semester-long subject and data collected in 3 phases, 1) during the module, 2) during professional experience, and 3) 12 months post module. Data collection included focus groups, face-to-face interviews and electronic strengths-based interviews named EViews (Fenton, 2013).

Findings:

Findings confirmed significant practical and moral demands of child protection for teachers. The participants expressed that using a strengths approach contributed to increased awareness and confidence in child protection education both during and after the module. The research findings suggest that an extended strengths approach could provide a positive alternative, or addition, to the single, adjunct child protection workshop currently offered by most teacher education courses.

Conclusion:

Key conclusions were that the solutions-based, strengths approach helped participants to understand, develop strategies and connect with child protection issues early in their careers and relieved the reported anxiety in dealing with child protection issues.

References:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW]. (2015). *Child protection Australia 2013-2014*. Canberra: AIHW.

Fenton, A. (2013). *A strengths approach to child protection education*.

Unpublished doctoral dissertation, James Cook University, Cairns, Australia.

Recent publication:

Fenton, A., Walsh, K., Wong, S., & Cumming, T. (2014). Using strengths-based approaches in early years practice and research. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 47(1), 27-52.

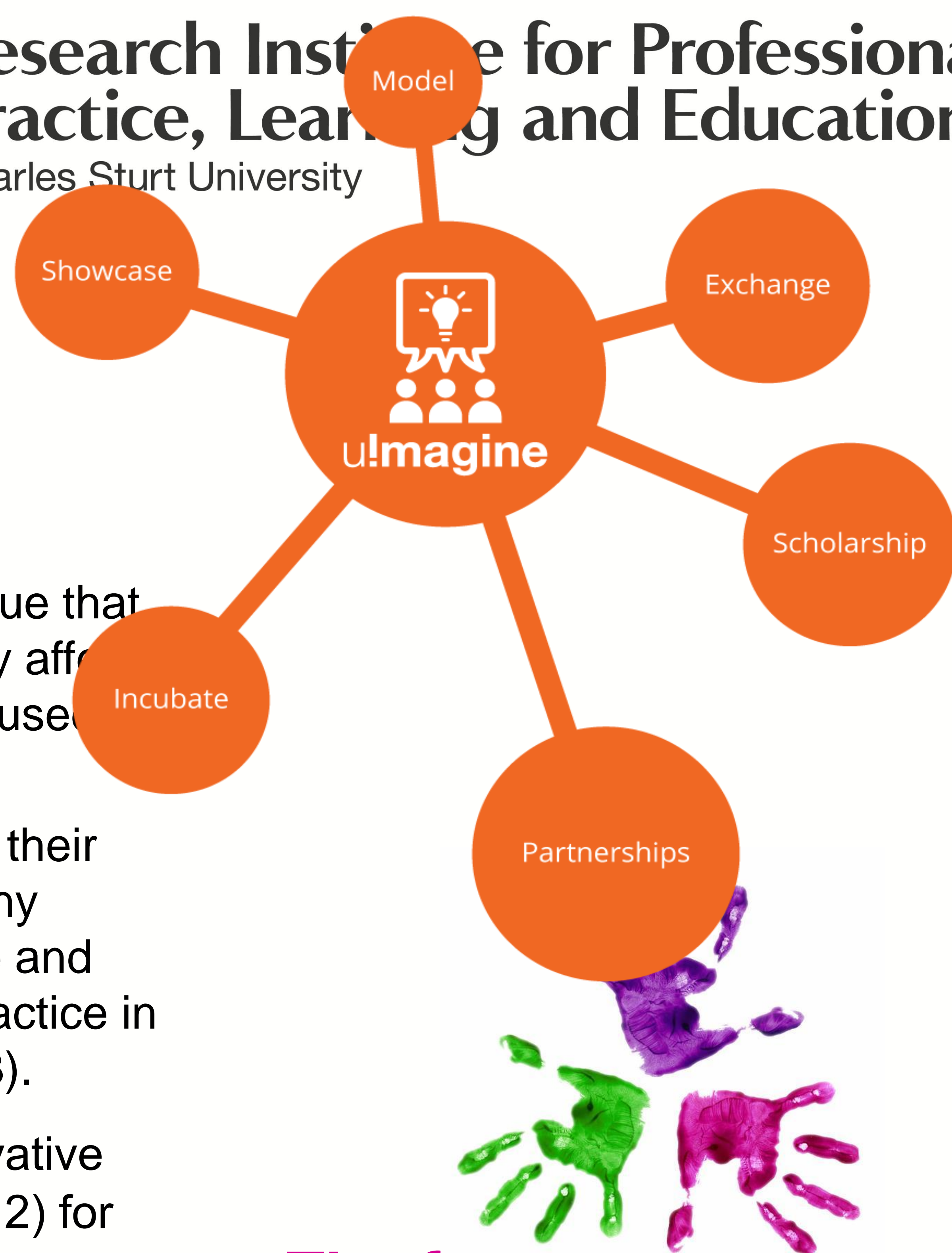


Dr Angela Fenton

Phone: + 61 2 6051 9148

Email:

afenton@csu.edu.au



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