

The impact of children's everyday learning on teaching and learning in classrooms and across schools

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This research (2015-2017) explored the informal and everyday learning of children in contexts outside school, in order to gain a deeper appreciation of children's learning and what it means 'to learn' in culturally and socio-economically diverse settings. Informal learning is typically non-didactic, highly socially collaborative, embedded in meaningful activity, initiated by learner's interest or choice and not externally assessed (Callanan, Cervantes & Loomis 2011).
Source: Callanan, M., Cervantes, C., & Loomis, M. (2011). Informal learning. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 2(6), 646-655.

About this project

We explored children's informal learning outside of school and then investigated how this knowledge can enhance teaching and learning practice in the classroom. We worked alongside children to develop a conceptual framework of the variations in how Year 5 students learn informally in their everyday lives outside school. Some children developed digital autobiographies of their informal learning. These autobiographies, together with the researchers' conceptual framework, and semi-structured classroom observations of teacher-student interactions contributed directly to a data-led Ako Manga professional learning process for the participating teachers across 3 schools. The Ako Manga focused on informing and supporting teachers' experiences of incorporating children's informal, everyday learning strengths (activities, pedagogies and assessments) into formal learning contexts with their students.

Our research questions

1. How can knowledge of students' informal learning outside of school enhance teaching and learning practice in the classroom?
2. How can children gain and use knowledge about their informal learning?
3. What can teachers learn from children's out-of-school informal learning to improve formal and non-formal learning at school?

How can knowledge of students' informal learning outside of school enhance teaching and learning practice in the classroom?

Ako Manga – Change Laboratory (Activity Theory)

- A teacher-student-researcher process
- Learning and teaching in the stream
- Research data presented to challenge and influence teacher practice
- A research-led PLD process

Phase One	Transition Phase	Phase Two
<p>Research Question: How can children gain and use knowledge about their informal learning?</p> <p>Data sources: Phenomenography • Individual student interviews • Student led collage</p> <p>Ethnography • Student documentaries • Stimulated recall interviews with students, families, whānau • Whānau meeting at school • Children's Research Advisory Group (CRAG)</p>	<p>Objective: Analysis of the children's every day learning and establishing relationships and ways of working with the teachers.</p> <p>Data sources: Ethnography • Structured and unstructured observations in classrooms • Informal discussions with teachers • Informal discussions with principals and senior management</p>	<p>Research Question: What can teachers learn from children's out-of-school informal learning to improve formal and non-formal learning at school?</p> <p>Data sources: Phenomenography • Student led collage • Student survey</p> <p>Ethnography • PLD sessions with one school • Structured and unstructured observations in classrooms • Semi-Structured and informal discussions with teachers • Informal discussions with principals and senior management</p>

What we found out with the children

Children experience informal and everyday learning in multiple, diverse ways but there are common dimensions threaded through all these experiences. These are: Cultural, Relationships, Identity, Strategy, Purpose and Affect/Emotion (CRISPA). Through an understanding of the dimensions of the CRISPA framework, children and teachers can talk about learning, and assess learning in broader, richer terms. Children's conceptions of informal and everyday learning ranged with some children having little appreciation or awareness of their learning or identity, while others intentionally drew on members of their wider whānau and social communities to learn, and also to teach.

What we found out with the teachers

Teachers became engaged when they realised that children's everyday learning autobiographies and the CRISPA framework gave them a richer and more systematic understanding of how children lived and learned outside school. They became able to use the variations in children's conceptions of learning, and in their own conceptions, to identify practical opportunities to try out new pedagogical strategies in the classroom, to discuss these with teaching team colleagues and to reflect collaboratively on how their assumptions about the nature and purposes of assessment could safely be unpacked and investigated further. They enjoyed working alongside researchers when the research agenda took into account the teachers' professional work and learning priorities and when the researchers were able to gather and help them analyse data about children's learning experiences that the teachers themselves decided were important. Through the research they came to know what they did not know about their students' everyday learning, and to be committed to finding out more.

Childrens' conceptions of informal learning from least sophisticated (A) to most sophisticated and inclusive (E)

Dimensions	Culture Who am I? Who are we? What is important?	Relationships How do I connect to others?	Identity Who am I becoming?	Strategies How am I learning this?	Purpose Why am I doing this?	Affect/Emotion How do I feel?
a Least sophisticated	The child has yet to understand the meaning of the activity.	The child knows s/he is a member of the family and friendship group.	The child has yet to understand who s/he is across multiple contexts.	The child watches or listens to what is happening.	The child does the activity because she/he has been told to (compliance).	The child has yet to see a relationship between activity and feelings.
b	The child sees the activity might have meaning for her/him.	The child knows how relationships work and her or his role in them.	The child recognises there are diverse ways of being in different contexts.	The child copies and repeats the activity s/he are learning to do without reflection.	The child engages in the activity to fill in time or avoid being bored.	The child recognises the activity produces a range of feelings.
c	The child understands that the activity has meaning for herself or himself, and others.	The child knows that she or he needs others to learn.	The child orientates to what s/he want to learn. S/he knows where s/he is headed.	The child intentionally thinks about how s/he practices in order to learn.	The child is doing the activity in order to be with valued others.	The child regulates his/her emotions during an activity to move from one state to another. S/he is beginning to understand her or his own emotions and others.
d	The child can see his/her role in helping to (make meaning) (create knowledge) with others.	The child knows who to go to for particular learning.	The child is beginning to see him/herself as a successful learner.	The child is prepared to take risks and give a new activity a go in order to learn something new.	The child knows the learning will be useful for him/her in other settings.	The child understands others' emotions as a result of undertaking an activity.
e Most sophisticated	The child intentionally creates meaning for and with others (teaching).	The child can choose the relationships that are best for his/her/others' learning.	The child embodies him/herself as a learner across multiple contexts	The child improvises and is creative in her or his approach to learning.	The child appreciates the world as a complex place.	The child creates emotions in others (e.g. can set up others for anger, happiness). S/he has a sense of being able to control her or his own and others' emotions.

Why is this research important?

We now know that children's everyday learning outside school is a legitimate, powerful form of learning that enhances their wellbeing, identity, relationships and emotions. This knowledge can open up ideas around learning and assessment at school, and help make productive links between the Learning Areas of the New Zealand Curricula and the Key Competencies. Learners who really appreciate that their culture, relationships, identity, strategies, purpose and affect are integral to their learning bring these learning strengths into the school context. Teachers can use these understandings of how children learn in the everyday to get to 'know' their learners in novel and richer ways. For example, the strategies a child might use to learn how to skateboard, might be strategies s/he can bring to mathematical reasoning. Understanding the purpose of a writing activity in class, might be likened to understanding the purpose of learning a skill in boxing. Calls for teachers and schools to adopt 'student partnership', and 'student voice' approaches can become more than a practical tool in the teachers' repertoire. These approaches can shape and become learning.

Implications for practice

- Teachers need to actively listen to children's views on learning in their everyday lives and consider the implications for classroom curricula, pedagogy and assessment
- Children can be enabled to see their everyday learning conceptions and strategies as transferable learning strengths
- Parents need support to appreciate the informal learning that happens at home and in community
- Teachers can enrich the possibilities of learning and assessment by incorporating the CRISPA framework into their planning, ako and evaluation
- Informal and everyday learning is a powerful context for children to understand themselves as learners, and develop identities as 'successful learners'
- Student voice and student-teacher partnership approaches encourage pedagogical change, and become the learning

Our partners

The research team worked in partnership at different phases of the project with students and teachers from Manawatū schools: Te Kura o Takaro, Central Normal School, Cloverlea School and Somerset Crescent School. Other members of our researchers rūpu included: Ella Bourke, Dave Cochrane, Maria Dacre, Dr Bevan Erueti, Andrew Jamieson, Nathan Mathews, Claire Rainier, Sarika Rona, Jami Wallace, Amy Young



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