

What's in a Perspective?

It is interesting to notice the change in the terminology used in the professional early childhood literature over the years.

When I first began my adventure in the early childhood field over 20 years ago the terms '*multicultural curriculum*', '*multicultural education*' and '*multicultural environment*' were commonplace. Often our well-intentioned attempts at providing a 'multicultural curriculum' amounted to little more than a few carefully selected materials in the home corner or a welcome poster in different languages hung on the wall.

Today we are more likely to read and talk about a ***multicultural perspective***. It appears that along with the change in terminology there has been a growth in understanding. A multicultural approach is inclusive by nature and no longer considered as an add-on or a separate set of goals but rather an outlook, viewpoint or attitude that influences the overall programme. Reflecting cultural diversity in the materials and resources selected still remains an important part of a multicultural perspective and provides an excellent starting point. So here are a few ideas to adding a multicultural perspective to the book or library area of the service environment:

In the book or library area create a comfortable attractive environment in which to sit and read

- Choose rugs and cushions that have designs that reflect different cultures.
- Create a canopy over the book area – use fabric, large palm branches, market umbrellas.
- Display pictures at child height of families reading together or telling stories.
- Include a book area outside, perhaps under a tree on a woven mat.
- Cater for adults in the book area – an inviting couch may provide a spot for parents to sit and read with a child before leaving.

Select Books Carefully

- Choose books that positively reflect different cultures. Beware of stereotypes and tokenism.
- Check out the story line – include stories that give positive messages about difference.
- Include books that have illustrations that reflect the artwork of different cultures.
- Make some books with the children using photographs or children's illustrations and share these with families.

It is interesting to notice the change in the terminology used in the professional early childhood literature over the years.

When I first began my adventure in the early childhood field over 20 years ago the terms '*multicultural curriculum*', '*multicultural education*' and '*multicultural environment*' were commonplace. Often our well-intentioned attempts at providing a 'multicultural curriculum' amounted to little more than a few carefully selected materials in the home corner or a welcome poster in different languages hung on the wall.

Today we are more likely to read and talk about a ***multicultural perspective***. It appears that along with the change in terminology there has been a growth in understanding. A multicultural approach is inclusive by nature and no longer considered as an add-on or a separate set of goals but rather an outlook, viewpoint or attitude that influences the overall programme. Reflecting cultural diversity in the materials and resources selected still remains an important part of a multicultural perspective and provides an excellent starting point. So here are a few ideas to adding a multicultural perspective to the book or library area of the service environment:

In the book or library area create a comfortable attractive environment in which to sit and read

- Choose rugs and cushions that have designs that reflect different cultures.
- Create a canopy over the book area – use fabric, large palm branches, market umbrellas.
- Display pictures at child height of families reading together or telling stories.
- Include a book area outside, perhaps under a tree on a woven mat.
- Cater for adults in the book area – an inviting couch may provide a spot for parents to sit and read with a child before leaving.

Select Books Carefully

- Choose books that positively reflect different cultures. Beware of stereotypes and tokenism.
- Check out the story line – include stories that give positive messages about difference.
- Include books that have illustrations that reflect the artwork of different cultures.
- Make some books with the children using photographs or children's illustrations and share these with families.

Language

- Include books in languages other than English – pre readers may show an interest in the different types of print.
- Encourage parents to read to children in their first language.
- Provide some taped cassettes of favourite stories in languages other than English. Parents or grandparents may be able to help.

Keeping an open mind helps you to be creative in your use of materials. Remember, the environment is just a starting point!