

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that we introduce the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Early Years Insights* (JoEYI), a peer-reviewed, open-access platform committed to advancing knowledge, critical dialogue, and innovation in the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). The launch of JoEYI marks an exciting milestone for the early childhood education community in Australia and globally, bringing together diverse voices and perspectives that illuminate the complexities, challenges, and possibilities shaping the ECE sector today. Grounded in the principles of inclusivity, equity, and quality, JoEYI seeks to foster a space where researchers, educators, policymakers, and practitioners engage in meaningful conversations about the learning, development, care, and wellbeing of young children across contexts. The journal encourages scholarship that not only informs pedagogical practice but also interrogates the socio-cultural, political, and ethical dimensions of early childhood education, particularly as they relate to access, diversity, inclusion, and the changing landscape of global early childhood education systems. This inaugural issue features three thought-provoking papers that exemplify the journal's commitment to critical reflection, innovative practice, and the integration of care, inquiry, and inclusion in early learning.

The opening article, “(Re)framing Early Childhood Education: A Critical Reflection Through Macrocosmic and Inclusive Lenses,” offers a timely and compelling conceptual exploration of multiculturalism and its implications for early childhood pedagogy. By unpacking how diverse cultural understandings of childhood and education intersect in Australia's multicultural ECEC landscape, the authors invite readers to embrace intercultural collaboration and open dialogue. Their reflections underscore the importance of curiosity and inclusivity in reimagining what early childhood education is and what it can become in an increasingly interconnected world.

The second article, “Why STEM Inquiry Programs Must Begin in Early Childhood Education,” provides empirical insights from a large-scale study conducted in Hong Kong kindergartens. The findings affirm that introducing STEM inquiry early through professional development, relational pedagogy, and child agency cultivates curiosity, confidence, and problem-solving skills among young learners. This research reinforces the growing consensus that inquiry-based STEM learning, when implemented thoughtfully and inclusively, is foundational to nurturing scientific thinking and creativity from the earliest years.

The issue concludes with the article, “Care as Curriculum for 3-Year-Old Children: A Victorian Case Study,” a deeply reflective exploration of how care operates as an essential pedagogical dimension within early learning environments. Drawing on a phenomenological approach, the author reveals how curriculum design, play, and the physical environment can embody and express care for young children. In re-centering care within the curriculum, this paper challenges the persistent care and education dichotomy and reminds us that nurturing relationships remain at the heart of all high-quality early childhood experiences. Collectively, these contributions speak to the evolving identity of early childhood education, one that values both care and inquiry, both global perspectives and local contexts, and both critical reflection and practical innovation. They invite us to consider how educators and researchers can work together to shape inclusive, responsive, and transformative learning environments for all children.

As we celebrate the launch of JoEYI, we extend our sincere gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and advisory editors whose expertise and dedication have made this first issue possible. We also recognise the VU Digital Services team for their hard work in establishing this journal. We invite scholars and practitioners to contribute to future issues by sharing empirical research, conceptual analyses, and critical reflections that advance the vision of inclusive, equitable, and high-quality early education.

With this inaugural issue, JoEYI takes its first steps like a young joey, curious, bold, and ready to explore new horizons in early childhood education, nurturing ideas that will grow into meaningful impacts for children, educators, and communities alike.

Dr. Masud Ahmmed

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