

The opportunity provided by LEYMN to attend this conference was gratefully received by World Beaters. The theme of BECERA's conference is totally relevant to our current Sharing Newroz programme; working with Early Years music practitioners, Turkish, Kurdish and Iranian musicians and families from TKC and Farsi speaking communities in four London Boroughs.

"I was able to consider our projects from a social science perspective, understanding more about how policy makers and practitioners are addressing current issues in diversity and parental participation in the early years." - **Sophie Mathias**

What was discussed?

Inspirational keynote speeches raised challenging questions and positive affirmations on celebrating diversity and engaging parents on a profound level in early years learning. Michel Vandenbroeck spoke on 'Building reciprocity in unequal relations', referring to a five year study of newcomers in 89 day care centres in Brussels as well as his study of immigrant mothers crossing borders. His observations of government early years curriculum guidance of Australia, Netherlands, Denmark and the UK were insightful, addressing how guidelines can provide the model for passing on democratic values and how the private domain can inform policy-making decisions.

Margy Walley's speech on Contesting the Concept of 'Hard to Reach Families – Enhancing the Accessibility of Public Services for all' demonstrated how power dynamics and the role of the professional and the LEY person profoundly affect success in partnerships between parents and EY organisations and practitioners provided practical insight into providing truly reciprocal ways of working. Written, verbal and non-verbal contact from the first moment needs careful consideration empowering to active participation and celebration rather than passive engagement.

How were participants able to voice their opinions?

Breakout group discussion on **Ethical Code for Early Childhood Researchers** being produced by EECERA proved a valuable exercise in examining the language we use in discussing diversity. It seeks to establish a way of being and a way of talking and considering power relationships in research with parents. It seemed clear to most involved that this was a useful document not just for researchers but for practitioners.

I chose to attend the symposium on working with parents to support young children's learning and development, with talks by Chandrika Devarakonda (University of Chester) on 'Changing Landscape of Diversity – issues around parent participation' as it seemed most likely to inform my current work. This highlighted shifts in the make up of the UK's diverse communities. As with the keynote speakers, Chandrika referred to the negative language used in addressing diversity – 'Hard to reach' as an inconsistent and inappropriate umbrella term from a problematic and unequal relationship. I also attended a talk by Karen Davies on 'Parents and speech and language therapist's roles in intervention for pre-school children.' This proved informative in understanding the ways in which Speech and Language Therapists view their roles working with parents and children. The emphasis was placed on how the professional informs the parent's engagement with their children on issues of speech and language in this research.



How did the conference benefit you?

Time allocated for networking was generous so there was plenty of opportunity to discuss the importance and challenges of early years music work in celebrating diversity with fellow conference attendees (several of whom were practitioners in Children's Centres participating in the inspirational Pen Green programme) aside from promoting LEYMN and Sound Connections.

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