

Report on EC-MENZ Summit held at Bethlehem Tertiary Institute Tauranga 8th and 9th April 2016

Friday saw the arrival of a number of attendees for the highlight of the weekend ...yep the EC-MENZ annual AGM. This was done and dusted in an unconfirmed record of 17 minutes....yep business was light and the majority of time was spent in encouraging(similar to a press gang) committee members. The night concluded with pizza's donated by NZEI (thank you so much for your ongoing support) a chat and more world problem solving at the local and the celebration that we are still solvent financially thanks to Stu.

The 2016 Executive is as follows President: Russell Ballantyne, Vice President/ International Liaison Officer/Social Club Guardian: Robin Christie, Treasurer /Off Shore funds Investor: Stu Millar, Secretary/Wordsmith: James Hamilton, Webmaster /Keeper of the History and Secrets : Cyrus Taraporvala. Committee press ganged were Lyle Champness, Nigel Benn, Phil Ozanne. There are still spaces for those interested - an ecmenz car, expense account and attire are all part of the deal We also developed new titles - one was EC-MENZ Australian Cultural Attaché which was filled with much enthusiasm by Martin Mills-Bayne.

Those not confirming their re-election are Toni Christie, Michael Inch and Albert Samuels. We thank them for their service to EC-MENZ

Saturday had 51 attend and a warm welcome was extended to us all by Phil and Degen who co-ordinated the summit.



We then presented the Adam Buckingham Award to Whanau Manaaki Kindergartens/Education and Care for their contribution in promoting men in Early Childhood Education through their Y-Men initiative. Some very humble men accepted this trophy from the late Adam's wife Joanne Buckingham and his son Clay. It was a privilege to have Joanne and Clay present to pass on this award.

Then it was down to the business of the day.

Our first speaker was Craig D'arcy from the Males in Early Childhood Network Group in Australia. Craig highlighted recent changes in Australia Government initiatives and funding models for ece and discussed how little had changed in terms of increasing male participation in the early childhood workforce. This was also despite a large number of policy statements coming from federal



Government stating that the profile of the early childhood workforce will reflect society. He outlined a number of similar statements which talked about Early Childhood sector attracting a diverse workforce but no policy specifically targeting more males. Those in power appeared to be not interested in the “good stuff” about the need for role models etc.- most government policy was focussed about helping workforce participation women in particular being helped back into the workforce. Thus the economic advantage of ece was valued far more than any perceived intangible social benefit. The good of ece (and targeted funding) appeared to be based more about increasing access to work rather than quality and perceived social advantages ece provide. Staff turnover was 15.75% and with this increasing demand and the governments focus on getting more women into the workforce there will be shortages of teachers and “hello” where do you think these could come from? The male 50% of the population that has yet to be recruited from. After touching briefly on ways of getting men into the sector through the targeted advertising that Kenny Spence in Scotland and Ron Blatz in Canada use and the Norwegian method of the outdoor forest adventure model which appears to encourage men, he expanded on how his network group delivered training to guys to help eliminate isolation. At the end of his presentation he shared his success of getting the word “males” written into policy through working within the planned government plan to see ece boom by pointing out the workforce in its present state will not be able to meet the projected demand. This is where the recruitment of males in ece would help the sector meet its demand targets and this was stated in policy documents. The lesson for us here in New Zealand/Aotearoa is perhaps to rethink how we interact within government policy.

Craig also sensing competition from the new Australian EC-MENZ Cultural Attaché, created another international position titled The EC-MENZ Oceania International Delegate to which he was currently appointed.



The second speaker was Maggie Lyall from Waikato University who was discussing her findings from her Masters research on Gender Equity and outlined her ideas and plans for her PHD research on the same topic. Maggie discussed how the topic of gender equity had slipped from the radar of teachers with the belief “It’s all sorted now” What she found in her Masters research with preservice teachers was that their views of gender equity were both confused, uncontested and conflicting. From this she has her new PHD question on “How is Gender Equity understood and enacted in an NZ Early Childhood

Education Teacher - led context?” Even though we know the ideas based on gender are both fluid and contextual, having a view of the need for a “male teacher” could be problematic. Maggie warned that pushing for more male teachers may well add to the problem of stereotypical gender behaviours as the male may well be expected to fulfil the “hypermasculine” expectations that staff have of them and thus reinforce traditional roles. This generated a lot of discussion and examples were given of men being asked to fulfil such roles as the “fixer”, the “repair man” or the “carpentry expert”. This was a timely warning

for men and women and certainly supports Cameron's statement in the book *Men in the Nursery* that we need to have much more discussion on gender within our sector.

We then had a presentation on "Virtues" from the staff at Kiwi Centre who are part of Bay of Plenty Polytech, who shared their 10 year journey on using Virtues which they define as "the Gifts of Character". Children have these virtues all within them but some are stronger than others. The presenters explained that while they build on these strength virtues they will also look to help balance the child by growing other virtues to support their strengths. Virtues they believe equip the child with the skills they need to form positive relationships and to resolve conflict in a peaceful and respectful manner. The virtues which Kiwi Centre believes reflects their ethos are Respect, Responsibility, Friendliness, Patience, Perseverance and purposefulness. These virtues are integrated into the daily curriculum and taught to children within the context of their daily experiences and interactions. They highlighted the use of the following strategies to implement Virtues :- Language of virtues is spoken - they are used to guide, acknowledge and correct ;Teachable moments are recognised -they provided opportunities to practice their virtues; Clear boundaries were set - this provides safety and atmosphere of unity for the children; Internal spirit is honoured - keeps dignity and all are accepted for who they are; Companionship is offered - to help conflict resolution and the use of virtues with empathy to solve problems.



The after lunch session began with a panel discussion around whether there was a male/female communication style and discussion on sleep room monitoring and other situations that could be classed as potential supervision problems.



The second last session was on the international happenings with Craig who sits on the Men in Early Childhood Education on the World Forum and our global troubadour Robin Christie. They described the growing emphasis on Nature schools which Craig had outlined in his visit to Norway and also the growing awareness of the need to add risk to play. There was a debate about litigation and the growing rules and compliance, but also the need for teachers to be able to justify what they do and articulate of how we operate under the regulations. There was also a discussion from Robin on whether such standards like our Playground Standards (NZ5828) were in fact enforceable? Robin then highlighted trends and innovations he had seen such as a centre built beside an old people's home with a permission system for the residents of the home to visit and interact with the children. A really interesting phenomena was also discussed about problems in some cultural groups for example white women in some states worried about having negro men teaching with them and in the gulf states where ece was one of the few places women held power and there was a reluctance to give that up by allowing men in the sector.

The final session was led by Martyn-Mills Bayne to discuss his MENTOR group he set up in South Australia. This was established in 2011 to support male students studying in early childhood and to do this he set up this Male Mentor group. They have an established Facebook group and use it to raise the media profile of men in ECE. They also highlight student initiatives and use social media for dissemination of information and dialogue.

This was a very informative and interesting day and was a great occasion to exchange ideas and meet with other men and women who share a passion for early childhood education. We take this time to thank all the employers who supported their staff to attend this Summit. This is a real commitment by them to support and encourage their workers.

We also thank the sponsors of the EC-MENz summit - NZEI, Childspace, Bethlehem Tertiary Institute.

