

## Book review

Dezuanni, M., Dooley, K., Gattenhof, S., & Knight, L. (2015). *iPads in the early years: Developing literacy and creativity*. New York: Routledge.

The book '*iPads in the early years: Developing literacy and creativity*' comprises eight chapters, an introduction and a conclusion, describing results from a project with three preschools ("community kindergartens") in Brisbane, Australia. Funded through the philanthropic foundation Ian Potter, the project aimed to promote digital inclusion for disadvantaged families, focusing on 3-4-year-old children using iPads over a year.

The authors point to the popularity of the device among young Australians, and draw on the increasing and widespread availability and accessibility of iPads in establishing the rationale for the project. Their individual chapters are situated within social and material "specificity" which influences how tools such as iPads are used. This focus implies a detailed examination of the material ways in which iPads influence children's creativity and in which their literacy skills are enacted in everyday experiences.

All eight chapters provide several qualitative findings that relate to the multimodal and creative ways in which iPads can be used in preschools. The authors were particularly interested in how children's use of iPads supports their development of literacy and artistic creativity. Collectively, the authors navigate the tensions between the mono-modal and linear literacies encountered in schools and the rich, multimodal, practices enabled by the iPads. Although some instructive features are included (e.g., p.27 includes a box 'iPad-embedded literacy education time allocation tool' with questions that seem to be directed at pedagogues and professionals), the overall style is more suitable for researchers and graduate students.

Each chapter is written by two authors, providing an insight into arts as well as literacy. Chapter1 by Dooley and Dezuanni explores the ways in which traditional (print) literacies change with the use of iPads, with vignettes and photographs illustrating children's story re-tellings, text innovations and poster-making with iPad apps, such as Comic Life for example. The authors specify what a literacy event and literate practice mean for the iPad platform and present analyses of literacy activities that provide a fresh alternative to "normative conversations" about iPads' use in preschools. In this way, the authors 'inform this normative decision-making by describing and explaining the way contending paradigms are negotiated in the classroom as iPads are embedded in preschool literacy education' (p.13).

Chapter2 by Sandra Gattenhof and Michael Dezuanni locates the availability of iPads and increased use within broader literature and international data. It provides four vignettes illustrating creative and productive uses of the device. In chapter3, Knight and Dooley focus on the physicality of the object and describe how the materiality of the device influences children's writing and drawing. Excerpts from interviews with parents and teachers and photos of children's digital drawings illustrate iPads' creative possibilities. Chapter4 by Dezuanni and Gattenhof follows a similar structure to other chapters in that it offers a broader contextualisation of the iPad's potential for literacy and creativity, followed by some broader themes gleaned from observational data. It outlines how media production (rather than passive consumption of educational apps), supports children's creativity. Chapter5 by the same author pair looks at a selection of storytelling apps and how these 'can assist children in

collaborative storytelling, retelling and sequencing story moments' (p.86). The key themes resonate with the findings in chapter 1 and 4 where adult support facilitated children's creation of multimodal story representations for sharing with others, including their parents.

The themes in chapter 6 by Knight and Dooley argue against the tendency to 'classify and homogenise children's art' (p.105). The authors consider new forms of visual art created with iPads and emphasise the importance of children's independence in the creative process and impromptu opportunities to trial out ideas. Chapter 7 by Dooley and Gattenhof touches on the home-school relations that ensued from an iPad loan programme in the participating kindergartens. Low participation levels from ethnic minority families in the programme are noteworthy. Chapter 8 by Dezuanni and Knight looks at ways in which iPads can be "networked" into various spaces such as preschool classrooms but also virtual spaces such as wireless technology. This is the most theoretical chapter as it links to actor-network theory and critically examines the actor role facilitated by the iPads and the multimodal production that would otherwise be 'unavailable to the children' (p.159).

The Conclusion highlights five "digital basics" that can act as 'a map' to effectively implement iPads in settings. They include: 'authentic literacies and creativity', 'digital pedagogies', 'digital media literacies', 'converged play and learning' and 'networking digital technologies'.

Overall, the book extends to the Australian context similar empirical findings reported by US (e.g., Hutchison, Beschoner & Schmidt-Crawford, 2012) and UK (e.g., Flewitt, Messer & Kucirkova, 2014) researchers. The reliance on specific examples and qualitative methods complements current edited collections that cover a range of projects and methodologies in the international context (e.g., Kucirkova & Falloon, 2016). Considering the rich data authors would have collected in three settings over a year, there is a potential to build on these exploratory findings and probe them theoretically, building on, for example, Burnett & Daniels' (2015) or Sakr's (2016) research.

Future work might also subject the findings to a critical analysis that would make an acknowledgment of the entrepreneurial, individualized and neoliberal discourses (see Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016) accompanying the incorporation of iPads in schools. Further analysis of the data could extend the findings by zooming in on situations that highlight challenges and less homogenised experiences. Vignettes and snapshots, that inherently require subjective assessment and arbitrary choice, could be extended with a deep discussion of content and context influencing iPads' benefits (Barr & Linebarger, 2016). Here, the growing body of research indicating that iPads are not as intuitive to use as it is often portrayed in popular media (e.g. Merchant, 2015) could be accounted for, as well as an acknowledgment of the varied and diverse ways in which iPads are used across socio-economic groups (Guernsey & Levine, 2015).

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