

Preface to the Second Edition

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Since publication of the first edition of *Play is the Way* on October 31st, 2020, the book has sold thousands of copies, received glowing reviews and – thanks to a crowd-funded campaign by Upstart supporters – was sent as a Christmas present to every MSP and Director of Education in Scotland. It also received considerable press coverage and was named as a ‘Book of the Year’ in *Scottish Review*.

As its editor, I hadn’t expected a book about early childhood education to go to reprint twice and into a second edition within the first three months. . . but *Play is the Way*’s success has allowed me to rectify a serious omission. When I explained my dilemma to Carol Craig, series editor, stocks of the second reprint were fast running out so she agreed that we should go ahead and add an extra chapter.

Back in the summer of 2020, while putting the first edition together, I heard daily on the radio about the Black Lives Matter movement. I was greatly cheered by this news but I’m afraid I didn’t for a moment think it had any relevance for a book about child development in Scotland. Then, soon after publication, someone asked why *Play is the Way* doesn’t cover diversity.

My first reaction was ‘Hang on, we have a wonderful chapter on inclusion – isn’t that enough?’ Twitter responses showed clearly that it wasn’t. . . and I’m glad I was curious enough to enquire further. Through the resulting engagements with black early years professionals in England, I realised to my horror that – just like those Scottish policymakers whose assumptions about early years education *Play is the Way* hopes (politely) to challenge – I’d been stuck in a cultural paradigm.

How could I have thought that race and diversity aren’t relevant to early childhood education? Since much of my professional life has been spent working in multicultural communities, the assumption couldn’t be explained away as sheer ignorance. So was it that, having at last come home to Scotland, I’d immediately rehabilitated to a mainly white environment? Or was it that, as one correspondent put it, there’s a culture of ‘cosiness’ in early years circles that closes down discussion of ‘uncomfortable’ topics?

Whatever the reason, I’m extremely grateful to all the Twitter correspondents who took me to task, especially Jamel Campbell, a black early years educator in London who suggested I check out Shaddai Tembo’s website. When I did so it was clear he would be the perfect author. So my greatest thanks of all must go to Shaddai, who wrote his excellent analysis in record time. It has certainly challenged me and I hope it challenges many more people working in the field of early education and care. I’ve placed it at the end of Section Three because it clearly fits under the heading of ‘The wider context’.

There is an added bonus in issuing a second edition early in 2021. At around the time of first publication, Cathy McCulloch (see Chapter 4) had the idea of naming 2021 the ‘Year of Childhood’ to celebrate the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law. The Scottish government agreed and the Year of Childhood is now under way (see childrensparliament.org.uk). As the country – *Deo Volente* – emerges from the nightmare of COVID19, there couldn’t be a better time for a Year of Childhood and a national focus on *all* children’s rights.

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