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SP - (16384) - INTRODUCING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES INTO PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Joe Ferguson (Australia)[1]; Coral Campbell (Australia)[1]; Chris Speldewinde (Australia)[1]; George Aranda (Australia)[1]

1 - Deakin University

Short Abstract

The digital technologies curriculum has been taken up by early childhood (EC) centres worldwide with various levels of educator experience and confidence. Our research includes: exploring digital pedagogical practice development and EC educator strategies; tracking educator growth in expertise; and the impact on children's digital technology play and practice in their preschools. Working with three early childhood centres, we provided professional learning to educators in the use of tangible coding technologies (TCTs) that emphasised the physicality of robots used in play, supporting educators to construct a sequence of experiences that introduced 'Beebots' to their children. This paper reports on preliminary findings, based on educator interviews and researcher observations of children's play. We identified the growing confidence of educators as they introduced these TCTs to their children; their observations of how students incorporated TCTs into their play; and the enablers and blockers when incorporating TCTs into play-based learning of STEM. We argue that the experience and confidence of EC educators can be developed and consideration needs to be given to their ability to connect digital technologies to curriculum, existing practices, their role in children's learning and their own understanding of STEM concepts.