Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The Quality of Work Environments for Early Childhood Educators’ Well-being from an Interdisciplinary Approach

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• University or Company Affiliation:
University of Oklahoma

• Presentation Method. I would like to:
present via pre-recorded film (with a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):

  Approximately two million adults care for about 10 million children aged birth to five in the United States (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). To address this high demand and to provide high-quality learning experiences for children, teachers must be physically and psychologically healthy (Jeon, Buettner, & Snyder, 2014; Kwon, Jeon, Jeon, & Castle, 2019). An area which receives little attention is the physical well-
being and physical environmental quality which these educators work. This interdisciplinary research takes a holistic approach to understanding and addressing this gap by integrating data, techniques, tools, perspectives, and concepts of well-being from the specialized professions of early childhood education, physical therapy, interior design, and public health. Thus, this mixed method study provides in-depth understanding of early childhood (EC) teachers’ physical and psychological well-being and seeks ways to support their well-being.

Data was obtained through surveys and health assessments of 262 teachers in 38 centers on their background, well-being, and work environment. From this group, 40 teachers from 10 centers were randomly selected to be observed for various aspects of environmental quality, including teacher-child interaction quality, physical routine tasks, air quality, noise level, temperature, and overall quality of physical environment. The data revealed numerous concerns related to teachers’ physical and psychological well-being (e.g., 66% reporting job-related ergonomic pains; 24% depressed) and work environmental factors (e.g., 34% reporting no place for relaxation, all classroom observed with high noise levels) that may attribute to less optimal well-being of the teachers. The presentation will provide valuable outcomes and insights from the study which propose to facilitate the support of ECE teachers’ well-being and to improve the quality of their work environment which may lead to improved health and happiness of teachers.

References


• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Mia Kile, ASID, IIDA, IDEC, LEED Green Associate is an Associate Professor of Interior Design in the Gibbs College of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman, Oklahoma. As a Registered Interior Designer, she has over twenty years of professional design experience with an emphasis in healthcare design, assisted living, and designing for special populations. She has conducted and presented research with collaborative teams in early childhood education environments and education environments for juvenile detention centers. Her extensive research and practical experiences with environmental impacts and contributions to health and well-being contributes to the team by observing and assessing the physical environment and providing insights on impacts of the work environment on teachers’ well-being and practice in ECE settings.

Natalie Ellis, PhD, IIDA, LEED AP BD+C, is an assistant professor of Interior Design in the Gibbs College of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman, Oklahoma. She brings to this project’s research team a background of higher and elementary education along with over 30 years of interior design practice. As the developer of the Environmental Preference Index (EPI), Natalie has created a means to study the preferences of organizational members and apply unique solutions that enhance and maximize the user’s direct environment experience. She has made individual and team contributions in the interior design practice field ranging from a few thousand to 4.5 million square foot targets, interior design education and research, organizational analysis for the University of Missouri’s Extension Institution, and researched early childhood education settings and the setting’s effects upon the people using the spaces. The skill framework of interior design practice, research and education in interior design and elementary education with an emphasis in early childhood development makes a direct contribution toward intentional environments that enhance user productivity and well-being.

Kyong-Ah Kwon, PhD (PI), is an Associate Professor in the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum at OU-Tulsa. She has extensive teaching experiences as a teacher of young children in Korea and the U.S. She received a Ph.D in Developmental Studies at Purdue University and worked as an Associate Professor at Georgia State University before moving to the University of Oklahoma. She has
established a record of scholarly work regarding parenting, classroom quality, and teachers’ well-being and their impact on children’s development and published numerous papers in prestigious journals such as Teaching and Teacher Education, Journal of Child and Family Studies, Learning and Individual Differences, and Early Education and Development. She also led several external grants that contribute to supporting teachers and improving classroom quality. She is recently awarded the Research Scholarship Award (highest distinction in the college) from the Jeanine Rainbolt College of Education at the University of Oklahoma.

Ken Randall, PhD is co-director of the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) at the University of Oklahoma (OU)-Tulsa as well as associate dean of the College of Allied Health and a professor in the department of rehabilitation sciences at the OU Health Sciences Center. He received his doctorate in educational psychology at Oklahoma State University in 2009. Randall has taught in the academic environment for 27 years and been in physical therapy field for 33 years. Moreover, he has been involved in interprofessional education for 20 years. He has published numerous articles in international journals as well as in both Allied Health Education and Physical Therapy, the flagship journals of his profession. In addition, he has presented internationally on four continents. Randall’s publications and presentations address topics that range from academic integrity to novel educational strategies to fostering student success in the practice environment and to individual and community-centered practice. He has received over fifteen teaching and service awards over the years, including the OU-Tulsa President’s Award for leadership in community service in 2009, the Oklahoma Physical Therapy Association Kennett Ball Service Award in 2014, and the inaugural Provost’s Teaching Award at the OU Health Sciences Center in 2017.

Timothy G. Ford, PhD, is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and Senior Research Scientist for the Oklahoma Center for Education Policy at the University of Oklahoma. He received his degree in curriculum, teaching, and educational policy from Michigan State University in 2010. His research agenda is focused on improving working conditions for school professionals, which constitute a significant barrier to the effective functioning of schools as social organizations and contribute substantially to employee dissatisfaction, burnout, and turnover. His work has been published in prominent journals in leadership and educational policy such as: Education Policy, Educational Administration Quarterly, Journal of Educational Administration, and Leadership and Policy in Schools.

Adrien Malek is a doctoral candidate and Graduate Research Assistant in the Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum program in the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education at OU-Tulsa. Prior to her time at OU-Tulsa, she worked as a Child Development Specialist for SoonerStart providing early intervention services for children age birth through three and their families. She earned her master’s degree in Family and
Child Studies at the University of Central Oklahoma and has since had several years' experience teaching in infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms in the Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Norman, and Edmond area. Adrien is also a Registered and Licensed Dietitian, receiving her bachelor's degree in Nutritional Sciences from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. She worked primarily as a clinical dietitian in Norman, Oklahoma. Currently beginning her dissertation process, she plans to combine both her nutrition and early care and education interests by examining healthy eating practices in the preschool classroom.