

International Perspectives on  
Early Childhood Education and Development

Valerie Margrain  
Annica Löfdahl Hultman *Editors*

# Challenging Democracy in Early Childhood Education

Engagement in Changing Global  
Contexts

 Springer

**Chapter 11**  
**Establishing a Learner Identity: Young**  
**Digital Citizens and the Pursuit**  
**of a Democratic and Empowering Early**  
**Childhood Education**

Simon Archard and Sara Archard

**Abstract** As the twenty-first century progresses, there is an ever-growing population of digital technology users. For many, this use begins in their early childhood years with opportunities to access and experience digital technologies in their home and wider world. These experiences are the foundations for children's socially and culturally mediated digital funds of knowledge. Digital funds of knowledge can include dispositions, skills and experiences in the use of digital technologies in meaningful, valued and responsible ways that reflect a digital citizenship. For these digital funds of knowledge to be useful, others in the young child's world need to be aware of and validate the children through a democratic lens. This includes seeing and treating the child as a valued and capable learner who is able, and should be entitled, to direct and participate with others in their learning encounters. In the context of early childhood education (ECE), it requires teachers and the learning environment to be democratic by being receptive and responsive to young children's learning capability and that can include their digital funds of knowledge. In this chapter, the teacher's ability to be receptive and responsive to children's digital funds of knowledge is regarded as a digital pedagogy that invites and supports children's growth as digital citizens by promoting principles of digital fluency. This chapter draws on case studies undertaken with young children, their families and teachers in their ECE settings in Aotearoa (New Zealand). The findings demonstrate the importance of a digital pedagogy and its implications for democratic teaching and learning.

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