The significance of inter-personal relationships for children is widely recognised as central to children’s learning and development. The foundational importance of early relationships is supported by evidence that relationships formed in infancy have pervasive and long-lasting effects on children’s social, emotional and intellectual development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Shonkoff, 2010). Consequently, many early childhood curriculum documents represent ‘relationships’ at the core of effective learning and teaching, reflecting an assumption that learning is socially situated and socially mediated through the interactions that children experience with others in their lives (e.g., Department for Education and Skills, 2014; Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009; Ministry of Education, 1996).

Infant-toddler research and professional literature has predominantly been framed around the formation of relationships, with a particular focus on those which provide infants and toddlers with stable and secure attachments to their caregivers (Degotardi & Pearson, 2009; Page, 2015; Slater, 2007; White, Peter, & Redder, 2015). While attachment concepts continue to have relevance, recent infant-toddler studies have begun to identify varied theoretical approaches to understanding inter-personal relatedness (Degotardi, 2014; Page & Elfer, 2013; White, Redder, & Peter, 2015). Other research suggests that the concept of a ‘desirable’ relationship is socially and culturally derived, reflecting within- and between-cultural variations in the kinds of relationships that are valued and promoted (Degotardi, Sweller, & Pearson, 2013; Elfer & Page, 2015; Hännikäinen & Rutanen, 2013). There is increasing recognition that infants and toddlers live and learn in a relationship-rich world, comprising relationships with and between each other, educators, parents and community (Dalli & White, 2015; Degotardi & Pearson, 2014; Lewis, 2005; Page, 2014). Accordingly, research has begun to direct attention to different types and functions of relationships and in doing so, is constructing a broader, more intricate view of the nature and pedagogical significance of relationships for these very young children. This emerging work is adding depth and richness to our understanding of the role played by relationships in the lives and learning of infant and toddlers. Yet it is the complexity of the multifaceted relationships experienced by infants and toddlers in their early years settings that continues to challenge and inform contemporary international debates (Degotardi & Pearson, 2014; Elfer & Page, 2015; Johansson & White, 2011).
In this special issue, we invite researchers to expand the theoretical base from which to understand infant-toddler pedagogy by proposing new ways in which the process of learning and teaching through relationships might be conceptualised. Questions to be tackled include:

‘What kinds of relationships are important to infants and toddlers in early years settings and what assurances and/or tensions are created when specific types of relationships are privileged over others?’; ‘Can relationships be measured, and what implications might such an assessment have for the conceptualisation and enactment of high quality in infant-toddler pedagogy?’; ‘What is understood by ‘relational pedagogy’ and how can this understanding inform intentional learning opportunities for infants and toddlers in early years settings?’; and ‘How do varying motivations, values and perspectives impact on international approaches to relationship-based teaching and learning in the lives of infants and toddlers?’

**Submissions**

We invite contributions to this special issue from a range of disciplines and theoretical perspectives that have the potential to inform infant-toddler relationship-based pedagogies. Submissions may take the form of research articles, critical literature reviews and commentaries, or theoretical debates. Submissions will be first selected on the basis of a 500 word abstract, and full manuscripts will be subject to peer review.

Please refer to the time-schedule below and email your abstract to Sheila Degotardi at sheila.degotardi@mq.edu.au

**Time-schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submissions of full abstract</td>
<td>31 August 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision notification from editors</td>
<td>7th October 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission deadline</td>
<td>15th February 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reviewer and editor feedback to authors</td>
<td>12th May 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final version submission to editors</td>
<td>18th August 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
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**References:**


Department for Education. (2014). Early years foundation stage: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. London: DfE


