

6th BIENNIAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL FROEBEL SOCIETY



Play, Self-activity,
Representation and
Development

PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

26 - 28 June 2014



9.00 - 16.00	REGISTRATION AND REFRESHMENT - Old Sessions House	
10.30	CONFERENCE OPENING: Dr John Moss, Dean of the Faculty of Education, Canterbury Christ Church University (Old Sessions House, Lecture Theatre, Og46)	
10.45	Keynote Address: Dr David Whitebread, University of Cambridge Play, metacognition and self-regulation. (Michael Berry Lecture Theatre, Og46), Chair: Prof. a.D. Dr. Karl Neumann	
12.00	Lunch - Old Sessions House (Og12)	
13.00	<p>Session 1.1 Promoting the child's right to play (Of50), Chair: Dr Amy Palmer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Playing and learning – Froebel`s pedagogy of play in the context of today`s competence-oriented educational plans. Prof. Karl Neumann, Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig 2. 'O reason not the need!': Play for play's sake? Examining implications for the provision of pretend play arising from General Comment 17 on Article 31 of the UN Rights of the Child. Triona Stokes, Froebel Department, NUIM, Ireland 3. Is it appropriate for an early years programme to be offering a westernised approach to play, in a community where the majority of parents come from a different culture? Penny A Borkett, Sheffield Hallam University. 	<p>Session 1.2 Professional identity (Of42), Chair: Prof Matthias Urban</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Miss Fitch and Miss Maitland: two British kindergarten teachers who helped shape infant education in Wellington, New Zealand 1906 – 1925. Dr Kerry Bethell, Massey University, New Zealand 2. The articulation of Froebelian pedagogic principles by early childhood teacher trainees: Examining the use of photography, reflection, metaphor, and dialogue in pedagogic documentation. Dr Suzanne Flannery Quinn and Lucy Parker, University of Roehampton 3. Kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand: influence and issues shaping provision. Clare Wells, Chief Executive New Zealand Kindergartens, Te Putahi Kura Puhou o Aotearoa
14.30	Coffee Old Sessions House (Og12)	
15:00 – 16.30	<p>Session 1.3 Self-activity (Of50), Chair: Brian Tubbert</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literacy and drawing: communicational connections. Dr Emese Hall, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter 2. Children's perspectives on their thinking and learning. Sue Robson, University of Roehampton 3. Hush little baby. Mindfulness or mechanism in the practice of singing? Dr Sacha Powell & Dr Kathy Gooch, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK 	<p>Session 1.4 Play culture (Of42), Chair: Dr. Jane Reed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation of the 'Natural Health Service' - Forest Schools research. Clare Austin, The Mersey Forest 2. 'UNDOKAI': A Froebelian approach to outdoor play in Japan. Professor Fusa Abe, Shoei Junior College, and Dr Yukiyo Nishida, University of New England, Australia 3. Played out: US public school kindergartens, 1950-1980. Dr Kristen D. Nawrotzki, Heidelberg/ University of Roehampton
	<p>17.00 Social events: Guided tour: Cathedral/ River Trip (Refer to Canterbury visitors flyer), Visit to the Community Playthings 19.00 BBQ dinner at St Martin's Priory</p>	

8.00	REGISTRATION - Augustine House Foyer		
9.00	Keynote: Dr Nelleke Bakker University of Groningen, The Netherlands Play, self-activity and the origin of Froebel's kindergarten in the Netherlands (Augustine Hall), Chair: Dr Kristen Nawrotzki		
10.15	Coffee - Augustine House 2nd floor Terrace		
10.40	<p>Session 2.1 Professional identity Augustine House, (AH1.21), Chair: Dr Claire Tupling</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Telling Stories: reflecting on professional life history narratives of female early years teachers. Lucy Parker, University of Roehampton Education for survival. Current conundrums, contradictions and challenges for the early childhood profession. Prof Mathias Urban, University of Roehampton How do teacher educators enact a pedagogy of play within a higher education context? Karen Vincent, Canterbury Christ Church University 	<p>Session 2.2 Self-activity Augustine House,(AH3.31 3rd floor Terrace), Chair: Prof Helen May</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten teacher education at the Dewey and Horace Mann Schools. Prof Larry Prochner and Prof Anna Kirova, University of Alberta, Canada Aesthetic experience and transformation: the case of the experimental stations in Soviet Russia, 1917 – 1929. Yordanka Valkanova, Canterbury Christ Church University Freeing the child: from fixed desk to blank space. Froebelians and the transformation of learning through project work in the re-visioned junior school classroom. Dr Jane Read, University of Roehampton 	
12.15	Lunch - Augustine House, 2nd floor Terrace		
13.15	Keynote: Prof Lydia Plowman University of Edinburgh "Play and learning with digital technologies" (Augustine Hall), Chair: Dr Yukiyo Nishida		
14.15 – 15.45	<p>Session 2.3 Therapeutic play (AH1.21), Chair: Dr Peter Elfer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Educational psychotherapy: an approach to working with children whose learning is impeded by emotional problems. Prof Ron Best, University of Roehampton A child's play? The meanings attached to play as therapy. Dr Andressa Gadda, University of Strathclyde. A grounded theory investigation into the philosophical and pedagogical theories of play by blind and visually impaired children. Dr Simon Hayhoe, Canterbury Christ Church University 	<p>Session 2.4 Play culture (AH2.23), Chair: Dr Emese Hall</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Embedding play, child-centred and activity-based learning in HOPE Foundation Education Centres for street and slum children in Kolkata, India. Phase 2: 2013 – 2018. Triona Stokes, Laura Thornton and Brian Tubbert, Froebel Department, NUIM, Ireland Parent-child play interactions, Grace Choi, Rainbow Kids, China Exploratory play and its role in developing children's ecological intelligence. Assoc Prof Teresa Parczewska, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin 	<p>Session 2.5 Self-activity (AH3.31), Chair: Kate Smith</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The pen tells the story: Young children's playful writing 'encounters'. Kate Smith, Canterbury Christ Church University 'And Mona was a perfectly sweet little Cowslip' Playscripts for children 1892-1939 and their evaluation by Froebelian educators. Amy Palmer, University of Roehampton Observing children in the course of free play in Polish preschools. Assoc Prof Barbara Bilewicz-Kuznia, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
16.00	Coffee + cake - Augustine House, 2nd floor Terrace		
16:30 – 18.15	Kevin Brehony Memorial Lecture, Augustine House Hall 16.30 Introduction: Dr Peter Weston and Dr Kristen Nawrotzki 17.00 Lecture: Prof Helen May, University of Otago, New Zealand People, places and play in the 'child gardens' of Otepoti - Dunedin: The imagery of 125 years of relocation, continuity and change in kindergarten.		
19.30	Wine reception - Augustine House, 3rd floor Terrace		
20.00	Gala Dinner - Augustine Hall		

8.30	REGISTRATION AND COFFEE - Old Sessions House		
9.30	Keynote: Prof Tina Bruce , University of Roehampton "Learning through play: a Froebelian perspective" Old Sessions House (Michael Berry Lecture Theatre, Og46) , Chair: Brian Tubbert		
10.30	<p>Session 3.1 (Of42), Chair: Clare Wiseman</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Kolkata Froebel Project. Sara Holroyd and Jill Leyburg 2. The Froebel Trust's approach to early childhood education in Soweto, South Africa . Stella Louise, Southwark Council 	<p>Session 3.2 "A Child's Garden" (Of27), Chair: Dr Kerry Bethell</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I Like Baskets But, What Kind of Gardener am I? Lynda Bardai, Edinburgh Froebel Network 2. A Child's Garden - a Sense of Place. Teresa Bolger, Edinburgh Froebel Network 3. Seedlings: Transforming a Space for Young Children and Their Families. Sandra Brown, Edinburgh Froebel Network 	<p>Session 3.3 Block play (Of50) Chair: Helen Tovey</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis about the development of recognition of infants in brick play. Kyoko Mukugi, Miyazaki University (Japan) , Yumiko Taoka, Ryukoku University (Japan), Atsuko Morikawa, Hijiya University (Japan) 2. Block Play: How a Froebelian Approach Can Help in Practice. Deirdre Armstrong, Edinburgh Froebel Network 3. Block Play: Developing a Froebelian Approach. Jacqueline Matthew, Edinburgh Froebel Network
12.00	Lunch		
13.00	<p>Session 3.4 Workshop (Of42), Chair: Dr Catherine Meehan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elinor Goldschmied and the Treasure Basket. Jacqui Cousins, Old Sessions House 	<p>Session 3.5 Play and creativity (Of27) Chair: Prof Tina Bruce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Froebel's Mother Songs Today. Diane Janczyk, Edinburgh Froebel Network 2. Creative Expressive Dance. Julie Owenson, Edinburgh Froebel Network 3. 'Throwing Out The Plastic: Constructing an Environment which Supports the Development of High Quality Creative Play. Catriona Gill, Edinburgh Froebel Network 	<p>Session 3.6 Learning through play (Of50) Chair: Dr Simon Hayhoe</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning through Play in the Upper Stage of Primary School. Graeme Hawkins, Edinburgh Froebel Network 2. 'Heuristic Play and Froebelian Principles.' Sharon Imray, Edinburgh Froebel Network
14.00	<p>Session 3.6 (Of42) Chair: Shona Henderson</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cycle of Musical Discovery: Froebelian responses to children's innate music-making in early years. Marjorie Ouvry 	<p>Session 3.7 (Of37), Chair: Jennifer Clement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Consideration of the Contribution of Froebelian Principles and Approaches to Educational Philosophy and Practice in Three Settings. Jan Paterson, Edinburgh Froebel Network 2. 'Come, Let Us Live With Our Children: Homelore in a Nursery Setting. Lian Higgins, Edinburgh Froebel Network 3. Froebelian Roots, New Shoots. Alison Hawkins, Edinburgh Froebel Network 	
15.15 -15.40	Coffee Old Sessions House		
15:40 – 16.10	Closing Addresses by the President of the International Froebel Society and Prof Tina Bruce, the Froebel Trust (Michael Berry Lecture Theatre, Og46)		

Abstracts

Keynote

Play, metacognition and self-regulation

Dr David Whitebread

University of Cambridge

Recent research within developmental psychology has established the crucial significance of metacognitive and self-regulatory abilities for a range of outcomes related to educational success and emotional well-being. This talk reviews a range of research in this area, including some of my own, showing that these abilities begin to emerge in young children and are powerfully supported by playful experiences. The significant implications of this research for practice in early educational and play settings are also discussed.

SESSION 1.1

Promoting the child's right to play

Playing and learning – Froebel's pedagogy of play in the context of today's competence-oriented educational plans

Prof a.D. Dr Karl Neumann

Technische Universität
Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig

Throughout the last centuries "play" is applied as typical activity to describe or explain the fundamental structure of the child-world-relation. Especially in early childhood education, since Friedrich Froebel, play has been viewed as the clue for learning. For the last three decades, however, the traditional positions in the programmatic formula "playing and learning" seem to have been changed. The research outcomes in the new developmental-, neuro- and cognitive psychology, and, in particular, the actual trend in education policy to take early childhood for the foundation-stone in the perspective of life-long-learning, necessary for a successful existence in the modern knowledge-based societies, obviously led to a shifting of focal points in theoretical and curricular activities.

Learning, learning to learn, in the sense of acquiring the competence of methods and strategies of learning, and metacognitive competencies included as key-concepts, more and more dominate the international discourse of early childhood education. Somehow paradoxical, you can find a broad assent in the international discussion of experts that early childhood education should not anticipate the format of scholastic instruction, whilst play is continuously threatened to become a side issue. In this context play is mainly analyzed in his precursor-function for cognitive and metacognitive competencies.

Regarding this foil, it seems helpful to inform oneself about Froebel's systematical reasons for establishing a theory and practice of play ("Spielpflege"), which he conceived as a specific child-centred culture of learning. Froebel already outlined play as prototype of informal learning, resulting from a complex-holistic experience, including all senses and cognitive abilities. This concept of experience and learning is in sharp contrast to the concepts of fostering or training special competencies. In any case, play should not be neglected in comparison to instruction-oriented fostering of competencies, because - by the way not only with children - the particular complex and creative processes of human learning can result from forms of playing, what may be exemplarily proved by the activity of chess players or famous artists, e.g. Frank Lloyd Wright, who in his biography expressly recurred to the influence of Froebel's "gifts".

'O reason not the need!': play for play's sake? Examining implications for the provision of pretend play arising from General Comment 17 on Article 31 of the UN Rights of the Child

Triona Stokes

Froebel Department, NUIM and EDd candidate at Queen's University, Belfast

Play is promoted as a central methodology for enquiry-based learning in the publication of the recent Irish curricular framework for children 0-6, Aistear (2009). This paper attempts to analyse the impact of the current curricular policy thrust for early childhood education in the Republic of Ireland with regards to pretend play provision, in a bid to examine its capacity to realise a truly Froebelian education. For the purposes of this paper, play as the self-active representation of the inner life of the child is the key Froebelian principle on which this judgement is made (Froebel, 1898, in Hailmann, 2005). General Comment 17 (2013) on Article 31 of the UN Rights of the Child concerning the child's right to play provides a theoretical lens for this paper, through which to consider the key characteristics of play. The UNCRC's General Comment 17 (2013) also serves as a vehicle for broadening the discussion regarding the nature and purpose of play in early childhood education, within recent educational discourse about play (Wood, 2007; Tovey, 2013). General Comment 17 provides a platform for the identification of explicit challenges to the fulfilment of the child's right to play.

Those challenges concerning pretend play include the provision of appropriate opportunities and activities appropriate to the age of the child, and a lack of recognition of the importance of play and recreation. Pressure for educational achievement and overly structured and programmed schedules for children are also recognised as key challenges in fully realising the child's right to play. Furthermore, the growing role of electronic media and the marketing and commercialisation of play are considered in relation to provision for pretend play as part of the child's right to play. Adopting the principle of sufficiency, the paper questions whether current provision in school-like environments in the Republic of Ireland can be considered adequate in terms of respecting, protecting and fulfilling a child's right to play, with particular reference to pretend play.

Is it appropriate for an early years programme to be offering a westernised approach to play, in a community where the majority of parents come from a different culture?

Penny A. Borkett

Sheffield Hallam University, UK

This paper focuses on a small research project carried out in a multi-cultural area in the Midlands. It is centered on the dichotomy of presenting a play based curriculum as stipulated by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYF; 2008) to parents, whose views on early years education and play were very different to this policy. The paper discusses some of the literature and theory around the need to celebrate and embrace young children's culture whilst discussing the work of various socio-cultural theorists who, at differing levels espouse the need for play to be planned around children's interests and, more importantly, their past experiences of play. It also recognises work carried out by Lillian Ang around the EYF direction of accepting and embracing children's cultures.

This project was a piece of ethnographic practitioner research which related to the social constructivism paradigm, it discusses some of the origins of ethnographic research and how this can be used to illicit qualitative research. It also considers some of the ethical issues which were presented through the project. The analysis draws out some emerging themes which related to the place / role of toys in educational settings, differing cultural views of certain toys and the need to consider children's spiritual development in the early years. This follows some reflection and discussion of how the research has evolved over time.

Professional identity

Miss Fitch and Miss Maitland: two British kindergarten teachers who helped shape infant education in Wellington, New Zealand 1906 – 1925

Dr Kerry Bethell

Senior lecturer, Massey University, New Zealand

The early twentieth century demand for reform of the infant curriculum along Froebelian lines saw New Zealand's educational officials look 'Home' to Britain to recruit suitably qualified and experienced teachers to lead change in the colony's infant schools. Two such teachers were Miss Dorothy Fitch and Miss Winifred Maitland; appointed respectively as kindergarten mistress for Wellington's Teacher Training college in 1905 and 1912. Both also held the position of principal at Kelburn Normal Primary School with responsibility for the introduction of modern teaching methods into the curriculum. Holders of the higher certificate of the National Froebel Union and experienced infant teachers, they contributed skills, knowledge and experience deemed important to Wellington's plans for reform. In return, the positions offered the women professional status and opportunity for growth. The paper examines the work of the two women as they strove to become pedagogical leaders in kindergarten methods and the networks and relationships they used to establish modern professional identities within a gendered world still bound by traditional ideals.

This paper is drawn from a larger Froebel Trust funded project exploring early 20th century two-way migration of women teachers between New Zealand and Britain to gain kindergarten qualifications and/or teaching positions. Emphasis is given to the significance of social networks and exchanges that arose between kindergarten movements in Britain and New Zealand in shaping international transmission and adaptation of Froebel ideals into practice.

The articulation of Froebelian pedagogic principles by early childhood teacher trainees: examining the use of photography, reflection, metaphor, and dialogue in pedagogic documentation

Dr Suzanne Flannery Quinn

University of Roehampton, UK

Lucy Parker

University of Roehampton, UK

This research is part of a continuing inquiry that examines the development and articulation of the pedagogy of early childhood teacher trainees that draws on pedagogic documentation panels (as data sources) that were produced by 14 early childhood teacher trainees in the second year of study at the University of Roehampton, Froebel College, in London during the academic years of 2011-2013. The purpose of this research is to understand how early years teacher trainees develop and articulate Froebelian principles of pedagogy using pedagogic documentation techniques (specifically photography and reflective narrative writing), and to critically examine aspects of Froebelian principles that are included in the teacher trainees pedagogic documentation, using a Grounded Theory approach to analysis (drawing on Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). This research proposes and examines a grounded theory of the articulations of contemporary Froebelian pedagogy and practice.

This research draws on the concept of pedagogy as specific practices (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, and Bell, 2002), but also recognises that pedagogy involves 'discourses' or ways of talking and thinking about teaching and learning that are evident in broader society and culture (as noted by Alexander, 2004, cited in Stephen, 2010). Pedagogy is not only the how and why of what teachers 'do' in their professional roles, but it extends to how they engage with the expectations of the profession.

A teacher's pedagogy is built upon their beliefs in relation to theories and customs of their teacher training programmes and the schools that they work in, and reflects the values and discourses of teaching and learning from the broader culture. The pedagogies of the teacher trainees in the early years specialism of the BA Primary teacher education programme (leading to Qualified Teacher Status) at the University of Roehampton, Froebel College in London are influenced by teacher trainees' personal values and beliefs about education, the Froebelian ethos of the Early Years Specialism at Froebel College, and the Early Years Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum (which is statutory in England).

This research examines their pedagogic documentation work with the specific intent to understand how these teacher trainees articulate Froebelian principles. The paper will describe the process of teaching and learning pedagogic documentation techniques (using Froebelian principles), the details of the methodology and method of analysis of the pedagogic documentation, and the generation and justification of the grounded theory generated by the analysis. The grounded theory that arose from the teacher trainees pedagogic documentation (photographs, narrative writing, and the use of metaphor) has 3 components, each linked to corresponding research questions:

1- Early years teacher trainees in their second year of study at the University of Roehampton Froebel College (during the years of 2011-2013) are able to articulate their pedagogy through the reflective practice of photography and documentation, and consider photography as a method of observation and a different way of seeing, that is accompanied by specific challenges associated with the media.

2- These trainees articulate Froebelian pedagogy as a pedagogy of free-flow play in a natural environment that creates an atmosphere of belonging and is founded on the concept of unity and connectedness.

3- Metaphors can be used to express Froebelian principles, but that the use of metaphors are idiosyncratic, and warrant further theorising.

The theory is used to better understand how Froebelian principles are articulated in the current context, and this theory is used to think more broadly about early years trainees articulations of pedagogy within the wider context of pedagogic discourses.

We have proposed that for contemporary teacher trainees, the Froebel legacy rests on the principles of belonging, connectedness, and unity, and involves a valuing of free-flow play (as well as laments that most play is not free-flowing in schools), a yearning (similar to Froebel's) for time spent in nature (and a deep regret that the time and space seems increasingly threatened). Inspired by the past and being in the present, there are hopes for the future, as these teachers see themselves as courageous teachers who care about play, about nature, and about belonging. We will discuss examples of these specific articulations, in our presentation and invite open dialogue and questioning of the meanings of these ideas as possible 'discourses.'

One aspect of hope is that a strong identification with Froebel's legacy will help teacher trainees to stand strong as advocates, and continue to clearly examine and articulate their pedagogy, a pedagogy that is not taken for granted. Pedagogic documentation techniques, including the ethical use of photography and shared reflection that draws on metaphor to enhance critical thinking are possibilities of hope. What is distinctly Froebelian is a sense of connection, a sense of time. Through this theorising we hope to help teacher trainees and teacher educators to appreciate what is now, and make the most of it. We would like to invite others to join in this hope and in this conversation.

References

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Kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand: influence and issues shaping provision

Clare Wells

Chief Executive, New Zealand Kindergartens Te Putahi Kura Puhou o Aotearoa

In 2014, kindergarten in Aotearoa New Zealand celebrates its 125th year. This presentation outlines the current context of kindergarten and gives some insights into the changing politics, provision and place of kindergartens and their teachers, children and families in New Zealand. The idea of kindergartens reached New Zealand in the 1870s with the first kindergarten opening in 1889. The institution became an established part of the New Zealand education and early childhood education infrastructure. It was not until 1926 that a national umbrella organisation for kindergartens was formed, although the idea was seeded much earlier. This was the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union which today operates under the name New Zealand Kindergartens (NZK) of which I am the Chief Executive. NZK acts as a policy and advocacy organisation on behalf of 29 regional kindergarten associations which manage the operations of kindergartens across towns and cities throughout New Zealand. It connects the kindergarten national network and supports governance and management, and teaching and learning. Today NZK is one of a number of national early childhood organisations active in policy development and advocacy. NZK is an organisation that has reinvented itself many times over since its Froebelian origins, and continues to be a powerbroker in New Zealand's dynamic but often challenging early childhood scene.

Session 1.3

Self-activity

Literacy and drawing: communicational connections

Dr Emese Hall

Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, UK

As definitions of literacy vary widely (Grieshaber, 2008), we must question whether a “traditional” definition of literacy limits rather than liberates children’s learning in the 21st century. I will argue that literacy and drawing share common communicational features that need to be recognised more widely. I will examine the role and value of literacy and drawing in a range of international educational policies, highlighting the common assertion that being literate is essential to being a good learner and that being able to draw is less important (Hall, 2009). I will consider what recent research has to say about the relationship between literacy and drawing. In particular, I will focus on contemporary notions of multimodality and multiliteracy and suggest that drawing should be seen as an important aspect of these. In order to contextualise my arguments, I will cite evidence from an in-depth interpretive study (Hall, 2010) that demonstrates the complexity and richness of young children’s communication through drawing. I found that drawing offers children spaces for intellectual play and identity construction, where they can position themselves as competent and creative. My research also shows how children use drawing for different purposes, at different times, and in different contexts (Matthews, 2003). In considering curriculum aims for literacy I will show how children’s purposes for drawing can meet similar aims. In conclusion, I will recommend that it is essential that policymakers pay greater attention to the communicative potential of drawing in order to respect and empower learners; especially young children.

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Children's perspectives on their thinking and learning

Sue Robson

University of Roehampton, UK

This paper reports data drawn from a larger project, featuring 28 children aged 4-5 years in a reception class in England. Video stimulated reflective dialogues between a researcher and individual children were examined for evidence of children expressing their perspectives on their everyday activities in the class. Accordingly, their perceptions are personal, and their comments show them sometimes making sense of activities in ways different to those intended by adults. A particular focus was on children's reflections according to who had initiated the activity: for Froebel (1888), freely-chosen self-activity (equating to play) is the highest expression of human development in childhood. In this study children showed clear differences in their understandings about an activity dependent upon whether it had been self-initiated or initiated by an adult. Children generally inferred a sense of compulsion when talking about adult-initiated activities, ceding responsibility for learning to the adult and expressing more negative emotions about the activity. Child-initiated activities were talked about with reference to choice and volition, and a clearer sense of purpose. However, children's accounts of what they were doing in adult-initiated activities requiring procedural knowledge were often highly detailed, suggesting that adult-initiated activities may be valuable in this respect. By contrast, child-initiated activities may be especially beneficial in supporting children's expressions of ideas, coupled with a sense of personal autonomy.

Hush little baby. Mindfulness or mechanism in the practice of singing?

Dr Sacha Powell

Dr Kathy Goouch

Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

Formal provision for ECEC in England is overlaid by the Statutory Framework, The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2008, 2012, 2014). Findings from the Department for Education's commissioned survey of (190) early years practitioners suggested that they felt the Framework was a 'strong and positive influence on [their] daily lives' (Brooker et al 2010: 23). But Osgood (2012) has argued that the Framework promotes homogenised views and hegemonic discourses that diminish professional autonomy when coupled with Ofsted's 'regulatory gaze'.

Within this policy context, our pilot study explored practitioners' philosophies and theories underpinning their practice of singing to babies (up to c.18 months old). We offered Froebelian principles as prompts for reflection and discussion. To challenge hegemony and offer a space for greater acceptance of pluralism, we did not promote Froebel's principles as preferable. Rather, Froebel's views about the practice of singing and content of songs were offered as a pedagogic (and research) tool. We worked with 23 practitioners from 7 day nurseries in southeast England, using research conversations, filmed observations and group interviews. The latter employed video enhanced reflective practice (VERP), drawing on Trevarthen's work on intersubjectivity (Underdown, 2013). Mind-mindedness theories (Meins et al 2002) and their relevance to attuned practice in the care of babies and toddlers (Degotardi and Sweller 2012) influenced our questions. We remain challenged by competing discourses: the promotion of pedagogies that include singing with babies so they might flourish through such nurturance; and mechanistic approaches supporting the inclusion of singing if outcomes are synchronised with national assessments and policy agendas. While this project concerned the single pedagogic aspect of singing, it highlights broader issues: namely, dominant policy discourses and intuitive and reflective practices.

Keywords: England, babies, singing, Froebel, pedagogy, policy

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Play culture

Evaluation of the 'Natural Health Service' - Forest schools research

Clare Austin

The Mersey Forest Team, UK

As part of the wider evaluation of the Natural Health Service, this research is currently investigating the impact of Forest School sessions on children's physical activity levels. The study aims to investigate whether Forest School sessions make children more physically active by comparing these sessions to a regular school day and a school day with a PE lesson. Participants are aged 7-9 from 4 primary schools throughout Merseyside, each participating in 12 weeks of Forest School sessions. Measures are both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative measures included the Physical Activity Questionnaire for older Children (Kowalski, 1997) to measure physical activity pre-and post-intervention (12 weeks of Forest School sessions). Accelerometers measure physical activity objectively, which are worn mid-intervention (at week 6 of Forest School sessions) for 7 days. Qualitative measures include a write and draw technique and semi-structured focus groups to gain more in depth subjective information about the children's Forest School experience. Data collection is currently ongoing, and so results have yet to be analysed, therefore, preliminary findings shall therefore be discussed.

"UNDOKAI": a Froebelian approach to outdoor play in Japan

Prof Fusa Abe

Shoei Junior College, the head of Glory Kindergarten, Japan

Dr Yukiyo Nishida

School of Education, University of New England, Australia

The purpose of this study is to examine Froebelian theory and practice in relation to outdoor play through 'UNDOKAI' in a Froebelian kindergarten in Japan. 'UNDOKAI' is 'Sports Day Festival' or 'Sports Day', functioning as the display of athletic elements, as well as an opportunity for outdoor play. Although "UNDOKAI" in Japan was not developed from Froebelian concepts of play, Froebel wrote about Play-Festivals that are quite similar to the Japanese "Sports Day" of today. Historically, "UNDOKAI" was developed as a result of social, cultural, political, religious and educational factors in Japan in the late nineteenth century and has become a traditional school event from kindergarten to secondary education. 'UNDOKAI' in early childhood education is a unique style of outdoor play, which includes play, games, singing-dancing and sport activities. However, it has been criticised as a teacher-centred, rather than child-centred activity. 'UNDOKAI' in Japanese kindergartens is influenced by complex factors both complimentary and converse. The study also highlights the historical development of 'UNDOKAI' and its character within early childhood education in Japan.

Played out: US public school kindergartens, 1950-1980

Dr Kristen D. Nawrotzki

Pädagogische Hochschule Heidelberg, Germany

Historians of the American kindergarten have almost exclusively directed their attention to the years 1860-1920, from the introduction of the kindergarten to US shores to what is often referred to as the institutionalization of the kindergarten in state sector schools in the 1910s and 20s (Shapiro 1983; Beatty 1995; Lascarides & Hinitz 2000; Berg 2005). And yet, by 1920, only 1 in 7 US first-graders had attended a kindergarten (Goodykoontz et al 1931). In fact, the period of most significant expansion in US kindergarten provision and enrollments was 1950-1980, when attendance at kindergarten increased from approximately 50% to a steady 98% of US 5-year-olds.

This paper investigates how this rarely-mentioned phase of kindergarten expansion may best be understood. Does it deserve its treatment by historians as a postscript to the end of the "real" US kindergarten movement some years before? Was it a distinctive and indeed crucial phase of the century-old movement for public kindergartens?

To answer these questions, this paper outlines and analyzes the factors enabling the unparalleled expansion of kindergarten education in this period, including changes in early education professions and their organs, "competition" from Head Start and the private sector, and changes and challenges within state-sector education at large, including alterations in education funding and the impact of social science on thinking about early years. It concludes by assessing whether the US Kindergarten movement was 'played out' in two senses: outdated, on the one hand, and done with play as a pedagogical focus on the other.

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Keynotes

Play, self-activity and the origin of Froebel's kindergarten in the Netherlands

Dr Nelleke Bakker

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

This lecture will discuss the role play and self-activity have played as concepts in the early development of Froebel's kindergarten in the Netherlands. First, the outlines will be sketched of the introduction of the kindergarten in this country between 1860 and 1900 from a comparative perspective. As the early history of Dutch froebelianism is largely the story of a single woman's effort the intellectual background and development of pioneering Elise van Calcar (1822-1904) will be considered more particularly. Next, the focus will be pointed at her developing concept of the importance of play for a child's cognitive and moral development and at the role of the educator to stimulate the child to develop himself through self-activity. Finally, the lecture will address the differences between Van Calcar's ideal of early-childhood learning, play and development and the key features of the kind of Froebel didactics which, as a consequence of her failure to determine the direction of Dutch froebelianism in the long run, has come to dominate the Dutch kindergarten from the 1880s.

Play and learning with digital technologies

Prof Lydia Plowman

University of Edinburgh

Lydia has been conducting research that focuses on young children and technology for fifteen years or so. Although there have been many changes to the technological devices and toys that children encounter over this time, discussions about the perceived desirability of these encounters remain. Lydia considers some of the main issues that confront us now and provides an overview of her research in preschool settings. This is followed by summarizing a series of case studies that investigate the role of the family in supporting children's play and learning in the home with a diverse range of technologies. Based on these findings, she considers some of the ways in which educators can support children's play and learning with technologies.

People, places and play in the 'child gardens' of Otepoti - Dunedin: The imagery of 125 years of relocation, continuity and change in kindergarten

Prof Helen May

Professor of Education, University of Otago, New Zealand

Dunedin Kindergartens - Mana Manaaki Puawai O Otepoti is the oldest kindergarten association in Aotearoa New Zealand. Kindergartens have been a support for many families and a place of play and learning, and sometimes refuge, for hundreds of thousands of Dunedin's citizen children. This presentation showcases the 125-year Jubilee book (March 2014) written by Helen May. The images are culled, partly from the Association's archives, as well later photographs of the plays of Dunedin kindergarten children by teachers, parents, newspaper photographers and indeed the children themselves. The presentation illustrates some 'snapshots' of its people, places and programmes, beginning with the export of the idea to Dunedin via England and the US, already distant and different from its Germanic origins. Evident too is the shifting cultural infrastructure of the kindergarten as it journeyed in time across oceans, continents and cultures to the furthest outpost of kindergarten colonial endeavour. Some remarkable continuity in the philosophy and activities of kindergartens is illustrated, but also illustrated are shifts in the language and understandings of children's learning and the cultural artifacts of the kindergarten, the role and place of teachers and families in kindergarten settings, the purposes and technology of photography, as well as the political and social landscape of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Where Dunedin kindergarten children once sang Froebel's Mother Songs, and later danced the Highland fling in their city of Scottish origin, they now practice waiata and kapahaka for the annual Maori and Pacific Polyfestival for Schools and Early Childhood.

Professional identity

Telling stories: reflecting on professional life history narratives of female early years teachers

Lucy Parker

University of Roehampton, UK

This PhD research examines the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers. This research draws on the concept of pedagogy as multi faceted and made up of different related domains of ideas and values including – self, society, past, childhood, culture, community, curriculum and current work place (Alexander 2008; Siraj-Blatchford 1999). It also acknowledges that for some early years practitioners, articulating their pedagogy can be difficult (Moyle et al 2002; Stephen 2010). This research used the method of life history interviewing to engage early years teachers in conversations about their lives and experiences in order to elicit their beliefs and begin to explore where and how they were formed and what influenced their formation. Participants also engaged in a life history interview with accessories (Plummer 2001), bringing to the interview photographs and objects that represented their pedagogical beliefs. With a long tradition of objects in early years education (Jones et al. 2012), this method was chosen in order to explore the meanings that the participants attached to their choice of objects and what these objects may say about their beliefs and identity.

Education for survival. Current conundrums, contradictions and challenges for the early childhood profession

Prof Mathias Urban

Professor of Early Childhood, University of Roehampton, UK

In accordance with the topic of the conference this paper ‘plays’ with the notion of ‘survival’ as a fundamental and recurring theme for those working professionally with young children, families and communities in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. I draw on my own recent work, on inspirations from Peter Moss, and on collaborations with colleagues across Europe, Africa (Kenya) and Latin America (Colombia), using specific localised experiences and challenges for early childhood practitioners as a starting point for a preliminary exploration of global interconnectedness. The need to practice early childhood education for survival in the Turkana Region of north western Kenya or in Međimurje County, Croatia are only two examples, and they are seemingly unrelated to the current need to ensure the ‘survival’ of early childhood development, care and education on European and international policy agendas. They are, however, part of a larger picture of global challenges for young children, their families and communities, and for those working with them in professional and paraprofessional roles. As members of the early childhood profession, we can no longer afford to ignore these challenges. The need to re-think (-conceptualise, -theorise), re-do (-invent) and re-value(ate) early childhood professional practice requires us to take a position, ask critical questions, and to review the relationship between research, practice and policy.

How do teacher educators enact a pedagogy of play within a higher education context?

Karen Vincent

Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

My research seeks to uncover what effective teacher education of teachers preparing to teach children in the early years might look like. The conclusions are drawn from my reflections on my teaching along with a student questionnaire conducted at the end of the module. Harris' (2007) research concluded that a playful classroom atmosphere created through the use of metaphor where immediate realities and constraints may be suspended or transformed was important and that this was much more than the play activities alone. Much of the work around preparing student teachers to teach young children is rooted in an understanding of and a respect for the value of play as a vehicle for learning. Harris' work emphasizes the thorny dilemma of how to enable student teachers to understand and appreciate the value of the authentic experience in terms of play whilst in a higher education seminar. My reflections enabled me to consider how my values were threaded and embedded throughout the sessions. I became aware of the vocabulary that I repeatedly used in conveying an implicit message. Harris' research made me consider the extent to which play 'permeated the ideals, experiences and interactions in my pedagogy' (Harris, 2007:152). This self-study, albeit limited in scope, has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of my own teaching alongside developing my thinking in relation to pedagogical approaches involving play.

Self-activity

Kindergarten teacher education at the Dewey and Horace Mann Schools

Prof Larry Prochner

Prof Anna Kirova

University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA

The paper reports on a study of the relationship between the curriculum for children and the curriculum for early childhood teacher education (ECTE) in two laboratory preschools in the United States which experimented with new education in the early twentieth century: John Dewey's Laboratory School at the University of Chicago and the Horace Mann Kindergarten at Teachers College, Columbia University. The research explores the assumption that new pedagogy required new approaches to teacher education, and seeks to understand the way this occurred in the context of the laboratory schools, i.e., the ways that the approach to curriculum for children was contradicted (or supported) by the ECTE curriculum. The history of early childhood education is frequently told as a straightforward story of the evolution of ideas, in which the new replaced the old after brief ideological battles. An example is the apparent overtaking of Froebel's idealism by Dewey's pragmatism at the turn of the twentieth century. The stance taken here is that change is an incremental process, whereby new ideas are layered upon the old. An example pertinent to the conference theme is a belief in the importance of children's self-activity through play and with materials for successful development. This was a core idea in the early kindergarten movement, expressed in its pedagogy and curriculum, and enacted in programs in which children used specialized materials under the direction of a teacher. We ask how this core idea was expressed in the children's program and ECTE curricula in the laboratory preschools.

Aesthetic experience and transformation: the case of the experimental stations in Soviet Russia, 1917 – 1929

Yordanka Valkanova

Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

This paper looks at the implementation of some of the dominant ideas about aesthetic experience and transformation in Soviet Russia in the context of the education of orphans in experimental stations in particular. Jewish education in pre-revolutionary Russia was predominantly religious, and the arts were not included in the curricula. The leading pre-revolutionary reform movements in the Jewish community, such as Haskalah, Diaspora Nationalism, Bund Socialism, Zionism, and Bolshevism, emphasised the importance of modern arts education to the young Jews who lived beyond the Pale of Settlement. After the abdication of the Romanovs in March 1917, the provisional government abolished all restrictions based on religion or nationality, and brought about a significant transformation in the education of the Jews in Russia. The new Bolshevik government that came to power in October 1917 sought to unify all schools through labour education, communist morality, and aesthetic experience. Many school-communes were opened to accommodate the growing number of orphaned and abandoned children during the Civil War. This paper seeks to identify how the party doctrine was associated with the Jewish and progressives' ideas about arts education in the laboratory experimental stations analyses the writing of Leo Trotsky about aesthetics and transformation, Lev Vygotsky's theory of aesthetic experiencing, and John Dewey's work on aesthetics. Some scholars attribute the attraction of the Jewish reform movements to arts to the effect of isolation the Pale constituted. They call this phenomenon 'promoting productivization' of the Jewish population. For instance, Litvak (2003) suggests that the only way for some Jews to leave the Pale might have been emigrating or opting out of Judaism altogether. Indeed, as she further argues, the attraction to arts could be linked to the Jewish Enlightenment. Other discussions have stressed the influence between the institutions involved (Dror, 1999). In order to examine how the cultural dynamics and the dominant political system jointly determined the practice of arts in the commune, this paper adopts a concept, which integrates cultural-historical theory with Dalibor Vesely's assumption of the nature of the search of a common epistemological ground (Vesely, 2004). This paper concludes that such assertions provide insufficient help in navigating through this more complex ground, and suggests that the subject has yet to be examined thoroughly. Moreover, it could be argued that the implication of the development of arts education within the school-communes lays entirely in the way the educators, who were imminent representatives of the major Jewish reform movements, maintained a sense of Jewishness and Jewish solidarity.

Key words: aesthetic experience, Jewish Soviet education, orphans

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Freeing the child: from fixed desk to blank space. Froebelian and the transformation of learning through project work in the re- visioned junior school classroom

Dr Jane Read

University of Roehampton, London

This research charts changes in teaching methods and the transformation of the junior school classroom as revisionist Froebelian pedagogy took hold in state schools in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Whilst Froebel is arguably best known for the kindergarten this research build on previous work which has shown how, increasingly from 1900, Froebelians sought to establish Froebelian pedagogy more widely across the educational spectrum, firstly in infant schools and then in junior schools. In doing so their work reflected a key focus in *The Education of Man* on the child at school. The focus is on schools in London where Froebelian teachers began to implement active learning in the reconfigured classroom space through play-based project work. Through documentary analysis of written and visual records of London schools the research traces the changing experiences of junior school children as they were freed from their fixed desks and examines the concerns of teachers as they introduced freer practice in a period when success was still governed by success in formal exams and favourable inspection reports. The research draws on Froebelian literature on junior school teaching, including the impact of Dewey's work, and on the broader body of texts on progressive education which identifies the broad range of experimentation in schools in the UK in these decades. It heeds warnings that 'progressivism' (Lynch 1936) and 'influence' (Skinner 1969, 2002) are slippery concepts and interrogates what constitutes 'Froebelian' in the developments discussed in the paper.

Therapeutic play

Educational psychotherapy: an approach to working with children whose learning is impeded by emotional problems

Prof Ron Best

Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Roehampton, London

Educational psychotherapy is an educational and therapeutic method founded and developed by Irene Caspari, a Froebel-trained teacher who was Principal Educational Psychologist at the Tavistock Clinic where she worked from 1954 until her death in 1976. Her work is carried on by the Caspari Foundation, based in London, which provides therapy and trains practitioners in her approach. Educational psychotherapy uses play in many forms in working with children whose learning is hindered by emotional problems. While resembling play- and art-therapy, it is distinctive in that creative and imaginative activities are interspersed with, or combined with, activities which relate specifically to the learning tasks with which the child has difficulties. It is the child's learning - or, rather, their difficulties in particular learning tasks such as reading - which initiates the therapy, and this remains in focus throughout. The practitioner is thus both therapist and teacher. In this paper, the theoretical foundations of educational psychotherapy in the work of Irene Caspari, Wilfred Bion, Melanie Klein, John Bowlby and D. W. Winnicott are outlined, and the approach is exemplified in two short case studies. In both cases, both rule-governed play (games) and unstructured play are used.

In the first (from Caspari's own account), a 12 year-old boy who is described as 'hyperactive' and 'unmanaged both at home and at school', has difficulty in combining and synthesizing letter sounds to make three-letter words. By performing 'villain-rescuer' scenarios, and playing the game 'Hangman' with his therapist, he overcomes his fear that what he destroys cannot be mended, and this helps him to be able to break-up words and synthesize letter sounds. In the second (from a practitioner with the Caspari Foundation), an eight year-old boy's behaviour is badly affected by a home background that is unpredictable and sometimes violent. Except for arithmetic, he does not engage well with classroom tasks. In therapy, his aggression is acted out in activities which, like sums, are controlled and predictable. Helped to work through the feelings aroused by his disorganized family experiences, he is able to make progress both socially and educationally.

The application of this approach in therapeutic story groups, where children collaborate in composing a narrative of a journey by ship is also briefly described. Here, too, the playfulness of creative activity helps children to explore their emotions in the safety of the metaphor. The paper concludes with some comments on the potential for, and constraints facing, the introduction of educational psychotherapy in schools.

A child's play? The meanings attached to play as therapy

Dr Andressa Gadda

Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCIS), University of Strathclyde, UK

Since early 2013 a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) in Scotland has been offering a post-adoption support program to its clients that aims to support the development of secure attachments between adoptive children and parents through play. This therapeutic approach is founded on a set of evidence-based propositions about the importance of secure attachment in promoting children's healthy development and ensuring placement stability. The program consists of six sessions - two home visits to the family and four group sessions - delivered over a six month period by especially trained Senior Practitioners. The VAA running the program asked the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) to carry out an evaluation of this program. The evaluation followed a realist approach which seeks to identify 'what works, for whom and in what circumstances' (Pawson & Tilley 1997). It adopted a multi-method approach including observations, questionnaires, diaries and interviews with parents and Senior Practitioners in order to explore whether the program had, in any way, been beneficial to adoptive parents and their children. This paper will consider some of the key findings of this evaluation, paying particular attention to children's engagement with the structure, versus the unstructured, play during the sessions. The presentation will also raise a number of questions about the meanings attributed to play as a form of therapy for looked after children.

A grounded theory investigation into the philosophical and pedagogical theories of play by blind and visually impaired children

Dr Simon Hayhoe

Canterbury Christ Church University, UK

This article presents a grounded theory investigation into the academic, social and cultural roots of the theory of play for cognitive and emotional development of blind and visually impaired children. Data is analysed through an epistemological model of disability, and through a notion of passive and active exclusion from cultural activities through institutional policy and practice. In common with the findings of a previous study on the development of theory and practice in art and museum education, it is argued that theories on the use of touch over other forms of perception were developed with negative consequences, and that theories were overly influenced by a form of reductionist philosophy of enlightenment from the 17th and 18th centuries. Furthermore, it is also argued that such philosophical and pedagogical theories were influenced by the cultural and religious predisposition of their authors. The pedagogical approaches that developed from the enlightenment philosophies, it is additionally argued, have done little to develop a full range of perceptual experiences during play, including visual stimuli of colour and tone, something that is particularly important for children with impaired vision. The study has two main conclusions. The first conclusion is that, in common with art and other forms of creative activity in education, access to multi-modal forms of play that encompass and utilize all of the senses in concert should be favoured for blind and visually impaired children – as indeed it should be for all children – and that the individual needs of the blind and visually impaired child should be considered when designing the environment and toys they use for play. The second conclusion is that research on creativity and play for children who are blind and visually impaired needs to be less influenced by the background of the author and reductionist philosophies, and instead should emphasise the individual physical, social and cultural needs of the blind and visually impaired child.

Keywords: blind, visually impaired, touch, tactile, play, creativity, pedagogy, inclusion, access, toys, enlightenment, philosophy, schools for the blind, multi-sensory.

Play culture

Embedding play, child-centred and activity-based learning in HOPE Foundation Education Centres for street and slum children in Kolkata, India

Tríona Stokes

Laura Thornton

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In 2008 Froebel College was invited to work in partnership with the HOPE Foundation and to provide Teacher Education to staff working in HOPE supported education centres for street and slum children in Kolkata, India. Brian Tubbert reported on the early stages of Phase 1 2008 – 2013 at the 2010 IFS Conference in Jena, Germany. This phase concentrated on workshops facilitated by lecturers on play, child-centred and activity-based learning. In tandem with the workshops Froebel Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), teaching in partnership with their Indian counterparts for five weeks each June, modelled good practice in the centres. Phase 2 began in autumn 2013 with agreement between Froebel and HOPE on a five-year plan to develop capacity among the HOPE teachers to deliver their own Continuing Professional Development programme supported by Froebel lecturers and modelled in the centres by Froebel NQTs. A small number of teachers displaying giftedness in teaching have been targeted to become the trainers of teachers (ToT's). The thrust of the paper will be to demonstrate the implementation of a child-centred, play-oriented, activity-based teaching and learning environment through the challenges encountered, the strategies adopted, the progress made and plans envisaged.

Play culture in the changing world: parent-child play interactions

Grace Choi

Rainbow Kids, China

Parent-child play interaction is an important part of a child's development. In China, where most city residents can only have one child, many are eager to give their children the best chance at advancing their academic status as much as possible. Nonetheless, due to the disparity between the rich and the poor and academic levels between the city and country residents most are not aware of the importance of parent-child play. As such, we at Rainbow Kids have been training parents on the importance of interacting and playing with their child on a regular and deliberate basis to help facilitate children's mental and creative development. This presentation will address the methods employed to enable these parents to "play interact" with their children as well as the feedbacks that were given during a thirty hour education course given to forty eight mothers. This presentation will also present two case studies that have been particularly successful in different ways. One is a mom who was able to develop and deepen her relationship with her six year old daughter through the use of the Gifts as a medium for play-interactions. The daughter, in turn, has changed from an expressionless-introvert with no confidence in learning to a well-adjusted, happy and inquisitive little girl. The other is a mother of a very vocal and strong willed child who was able to develop two way communications with her daughter through the use of the Gifts as a medium for play-interaction.

Exploratory play and its role in developing children's ecological intelligence

Assoc Prof Teresa Parczewska

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin

In order to overcome the current global ecological crisis it is necessary to combine cognitive skills with empathy for all living forms. As stated by Daniel Goleman (2009) this involves the development of ecological intelligence, which is a combination of these characteristics and the ability to adjust to the ecological niche inhabited by people. Exploratory play which takes into account children's need for contact with the world of nature is crucial for developing ecological intelligence. This type of play, by inspiring curiosity and bringing joy, has a strong and long-term impact on children's psyche. Ecology-themed play has a number of important functions which:

- arouses interest and stimulates creativity and independence,
- encourages children to explore and experiment,
- helps develop pro-ecology attitudes,
- creates observation skills and the ability to focus,
- enhances logical thinking,
- teaches empathy and cooperation.

It seems that in education the responsibility for future generations has been to some extent evaded. Through appropriate education it is possible to increase a person's sensitivity and involvement in the process of seeking innovative solutions related to development and environmental problems.

Self-activity

'And Mona was a perfectly sweet little cowslip': playscripts for children 1892-1939 and their evaluation by Froebelian educators

Amy Palmer

University of Roehampton, UK

This paper focuses on a much neglected area of children's literature: the play written to be performed by children. Substantial numbers of these were advertised, reviewed and discussed in *Child Life*, the journal of the Froebel Society, during the period 1892-1939. The plays were used by Froebelian educators alongside practices such as teaching Froebel's songs and games and more child-led approaches to dramatic re-creation. This was despite frequently expressed reservations concerning both the moral and educational value of their doing so. This paper introduces these plays, giving an overview of what was written in terms of subject matter and style. It then puts them in context by exploring the debates about them in the pages of *Child Life* and in other educational writings from the period, particularly those housed in the Froebel Archive for Childhood Studies. In so doing, it touches on matters fundamental to Froebelian philosophy, most notably the tension between freedom and control. Could this material aid the child's cultural and creative development or did it tend to hamper and restrict it? This paper argues that there was a change over time, with a considerable lessening of concern on the part of educators towards the end of this period corresponding to an explosion in the production of material. An increase of interest in psychological theories amongst Froebelians at this time was a significant factor in bringing about this change.

Observing children in the course of free play in Polish preschools

Assoc Prof Barbara Bilewicz-Kuznia

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland

Play is the basic and most important form of preschool-aged children's activity and the main factor of their development. In the light of the Polish core curriculum of preschool education, children should spend at least one fifth of their daily stay at preschool playing. The article presents the results of the observation of pre-schooler children during the time dedicated to playing in the morning and afternoon. The analysis concerns the external and internal conditions of play. As far as the external conditions are concerned, the study assesses the spatial arrangement of the preschool classroom, the types of special interests corners, the quantity and quality of toys and props in them. The observation focused on the kinds of activities in which the children engaged, as well as the time of their duration and the places where the children played. The study analyses the content of the observed free play, the number of participants, the form of play and the roles assumed by the children. The article describes the significance of the teacher in the children's play, as well as the quality of the contact with the children and his or her influence on initiating and finishing play. The assumptions concerning play described in the core curriculum of preschool education in Poland have been subject to criticism in the present paper.

Key words: free play, preschool/nursery school/kindergarten, the Polish core curriculum of preschool education, the conditions of play.

The pen tells the story: young children's playful writing encounters

Kate Lucy Smith

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The framework for this discussion is an ongoing ethnographic piece of research, with six children aged 4 to 5, which explores their experiences as writers in their first year of school using participatory methodology. The paper presented here discusses the meanings that children make of their 'writing' or mark making through their engagement in self-directed, co-constructed writing activity in a classroom context. Close examination of children's use of mediational writing tools within the activity of writing, using dialogical methods, can reveal hidden opportunities for researchers and professionals to 'read' and understand the multiple ways in which children are able to transform language as young writers. To illustrate this argument I will present a selection of data as two separate writing 'encounters'. These are playful, sensory, self-initiated activities, where children are shown to be competent users and creators of writing signs and symbols for clear representational purpose and intent. Writing 'encounters' have a social intention and are always transformational for those involved. They are challenging to understand, but these 'encounters' contain important meanings for children, as representational acts.

Analysis about the development of recognition of infants in brick play

Kyoko Mukugi

Miyazaki University, Japan

Yumiko Taoka

Ryukoku University, Japan

Atsuko Morikawa,

Hijiyama University, Japan

A child learns to recognize their place in society through play. Children's self-activity through brick play deepens their understanding of the world and through friendships supports their moral development. However, for the Japanese teachers who work with children in groups, supporting children's brick play is problematic as further clarification is needed in recognising the usefulness of brick play in relation to children's age and development, so that appropriate support can be offered.

In this study, we investigate the brick play of children from 1 to 5 years old in a Japanese kindergarten and a day nursery school with children from nine months and a nursery school with children from 3 to 5 years old. As a result of this investigation the characteristics of brick play in relation to the age of the children was extracted. What was particularly important was the link between age and the ability to communicate within the brick play.

