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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

It is now widely recognised that humanity faces urgent problems affecting local, regional and global environments, and social and economic development. The Earth's limited natural resources are being consumed more rapidly than they are being replaced, and the effects of global warming upon ecological balance and bio-diversity are well known. Rising sea levels threaten millions in less developed nations. The implications in terms of migration, increasing poverty, the supply of food and upon human health and security are extremely serious. The goals of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014, DESD), are therefore to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

Sustainable Development is widely understood as a form of development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). Sustainable Development may therefore be considered to represent an attempt to provide equity with, to, and for, future generations (Speth, 2008). This recognition serves to highlight the crucial role that is to be played by early childhood professionals. As soon as we recognise that the world population group with the greatest stake in the future are children, that it is their future that depends upon it, then the matter becomes a citizenship issue and a question of rights. If we consider ourselves advocates for young children then we have a special responsibility to promote this subject.

Many of the most fundamental values of tomorrow's society are also being formed in early childhood contexts today. Early Childhood Education therefore has a major role to play in achieving sustainable development. But if we are to collaborate in the development of a more sustainable future, and in developing an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Early Childhood, then we must develop some common understanding of ESD and we must work together to achieve it. Yet individuals often find it difficult to recognise the essential commonalities of ESD experience in Majority and Minority world countries. This edition of the journal seeks to provide specific support in this respect.

John Siraj-Blatchford and Inger Björneloo
Guest Editors

LETTRE DES RÉDACTEURS

Il est maintenant largement reconnu que l'humanité doit faire face à d'urgents problèmes concernant son environnement local, régional et global ainsi que son développement social et économique. Les ressources économiques limitées de la terre sont consommées plus rapidement qu'elles ne sont remplacées ; les effets du réchauffement climatique sur l'équilibre écologique et la bio-diversité sont fort bien connus. La montée du niveau des océans menace des millions de personnes dans les pays les moins développés. Les conséquences au niveau de la migration, de l'augmentation de la pauvreté, de la production alimentaire et, par dessus tout de la santé humaine et de la sécurité, sont extrêmement sérieuses. Les objectifs retenus par la décennie des Nations Unies concernant la Formation au Développement Durable (2005-2014, DESD), devront, par conséquent, intégrer les principes, valeurs et pratiques liées au développement durable, dans tout ce qui concerne l'éducation et la formation.

Le développement durable est généralement interprété comme une forme de développement qui soit en mesure de répondre aux besoins actuels sans compromettre les possibilités que devraient avoir les futures générations de subvenir à leurs propres besoins (Brintland, 1987). Le développement durable pourrait donc être considéré comme une tentative visant à établir une certaine équité entre la satisfaction des besoins présents et celle des générations futures (pour elles et avec elles) (Speth, 2008). Cette reconnaissance permet de mettre en évidence le rôle crucial qui doit être joué par les professionnels de la petite enfance. Dès que nous prenons en considération le fait que le groupe le plus concerné par le futur est l'enfance, c'est-à-dire que c'est leur avenir qui en dépend, alors la question devient un problème relevant de la citoyenneté et du droit. Si nous nous considérons comme les avocats des petits enfants, alors c'est à nous qu'incombe la responsabilité de promouvoir ce sujet.

De nombreuses valeurs fondamentales pour la société de demain s'élaborent aujourd'hui dans le contexte de la petite enfance. La formation de la petite enfance a, de ce fait, un rôle majeur à jouer dans la réalisation du développement durable. Mais si nous contribuons au développement d'un futur plus durable et à la promotion d'une formation au développement durable (FDD), dès la petite enfance, il importe que nous développions une FDD et que nous travaillions ensemble à sa réalisation. Aujourd'hui, les gens ont de la peine à reconnaître ce que la formation au développement durable (FDD) peut avoir de commun dans les pays développés et dans les pays en voie de développement. Cette édition de notre journal cherche à fournir des arguments spécifiques à ce sujet.

John Siraj-Blatchford and Inger Björneloo
Rédacteurs invité

CARTA DEL REDACTORES

No es ampliamente reconocido que la humanidad encara problemas urgentes tanto a nivel regional como global, en el ámbito del medio ambiente y el desarrollo social y económico. Los límites de los recursos naturales de la tierra, están siendo consumidos más rápido de lo que son reemplazados y los efectos del calentamiento global sobre el equilibrio ecológico y la bio diversidad son bien conocidos. El levantamiento de los niveles del mar amenazan a millones de personas de los países menos desarrollados. Las implicancias en términos de migración, incremento de la pobreza, la provisión de alimentos y sobre la salud y seguridad humanas, son extremadamente serios. Las metas de las Naciones Unidas para la Década por la Educación para el Desarrollo Sustentable (2005-2014, DEEDS), intentan integrar los principios, valores y prácticas para el desarrollo sustentable en todos los aspectos de la educación y el aprendizaje.

El Desarrollo Sustentable es ampliamente reconocido como aquella forma de Desarrollo que satisface las necesidades del presente sin comprometer la satisfacción de las necesidades de las futuras generaciones (Brundtland, 1987). El desarrollo sustentable puede, por tanto, ser considerado como el intento de ofrecer igualdad con, para y por las futuras generaciones (Speth, 2008). Este reconocimiento sirve para iluminar el rol crucial que deberá jugar la Educación Preescolar y sus profesionales. Tan pronto como se reconozca que el grupo poblacional en el mundo con más posibilidades ser víctimas en el futuro son los niños y las niñas, que es “su” futuro el que depende de ello, entonces el asunto pasa a ser un problema de ciudadanía y una pregunta sobre los derechos. Si los profesionales de la infancia nos consideramos como defensores y potenciadores de los niños y niñas, entonces tenemos una enorme responsabilidad en este tema.

Muchos de los valores más importantes de la sociedad del mañana, están siendo formados en la educación preescolar hoy día. La Educación Preescolar por lo tanto tiene el rol más importante en el logro de un desarrollo sustentable. Pero si deseamos colaborar con el desarrollo de un futuro mas sustentable y con el desarrollo de una Educación para el Desarrollo Sustentable (EDS), en la educación de la infancia, entonces debemos desarrollar algunas comprensiones comunes en torno a la EDS y debemos trabajar juntos para lograrlo. Muchas personas encuentran dificultades en reconocer los aspectos comunes de las experiencias para una EDS en los países mayores y menores.

Esta edición de la revista busca proveer apoyos específicos en relación con este importante tema.

John Siraj-Blatchford and Inger Björneloo
Redactores invitados

EDITORIAL: EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

John Siraj-Blatchford

It is now widely recognised that humanity faces urgent problems affecting local, regional and global environments, and social and economic development. The Earth's limited natural resources are being consumed more rapidly than they are being replaced, and the effects of global warming upon ecological balance and bio-diversity are well known. Rising sea levels threaten millions in less developed nations. The implications in terms of migration, increasing poverty, the supply of food and upon human health and security are extremely serious. The goals of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014, DESD), are therefore to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning.

Sustainable Development is widely understood as a form of development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). Sustainable Development may therefore be considered to represent an attempt to provide equity with, to, and for, future generations (Speth, 2008). This recognition serves to highlight the crucial role that is to be played by early childhood professionals. As soon as we recognise that the world population group with the greatest stake in the future are children, that it is their future that depends upon it¹, then the matter becomes a citizenship issue and a question of rights. If we consider ourselves advocates for young children then we have a special responsibility to promote this subject.

Many of the most fundamental values of tomorrow's society are also being formed in early childhood contexts today. Early Childhood Education therefore has a major role to play in achieving sustainable development. But if we are to collaborate in the development of a more sustainable future, and in developing an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Early Childhood, then we must develop some common understanding of ESD and we must work together to achieve it. Yet individuals often find it difficult to

¹ United Nations Children's Fund (1990) *First Call for Children: World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children and The Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNICEF, New York, Sect 26 p239

recognise the essential commonalities of ESD experience in Majority and Minority world countries².

The opening paper in this edition of the journal may be challenging to many Western early childhood readers. Some colleagues who asked about our progress with the journal over the past months have expressed genuine surprise when they were told it would include papers on such diverse subjects as indigenous knowledge, entrepreneurial thinking, and projects concerned with the recycling of waste. Perhaps the first thing that we should say in this context is that the most important principle to be understood about indigenous knowledge is that it is something (just like ethnicity) that we all possess. And again, rather like ethnicity, if you don't recognise your own indigenous knowledge, then it is highly unlikely that you will ever come to fully respect the indigenous knowledge of others.

ECONOMICS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It is often argued that an education that promotes thrift (or frugality) simultaneously supports the development of positive environmental values and pro-environmental behaviour. But perhaps the most controversial subject that is suggested to be of relevance to early childhood education and care in these pages is the paper by Fomba Mbebeb concerned with developing productive life skills and entrepreneurial thinking. In the African context in which it was written and in many other majority world contexts the suggestion that children might learn about entrepreneurship in their early years may be considered unproblematic. Yet for many minority world liberals otherwise sympathetic to the cause of education for sustainable development it may still be regarded as controversial.

It may be useful at this point to consider how such a perspective would have been considered odd to Robert Owen, the man who opened the first preschool in the United Kingdom in 1816³. Owen was also the founder of the international Co-operative Movement, and he campaigned fiercely against child labour in the 19th Century. Owen also played a major role in the early development of the British Labour movement, yet he was a successful entrepreneur who also promoted social reform. He believed that people were more important than profit, but also that profits could be invested for the common good of the people.

As Hägglund and Pramling Samuelsson (this issue) argue, modern educational systems are closely integrated with the global economy, and the

² Following Budgett-Meakin (1992), the terms 'minority' and 'majority world' are adopted here as an alternative to other popular yet problematic terms such as 'first', 'third' or 'developing' world. The 'majority world' is taken to include the majority of the world population who live on the largest proportion of the planet. The term 'Minority world' thus applies to the inhabitants of those rich, high consumption, countries that have historically exploited the majority world.

³ That was 21 years before Froebel opened his first kindergarten in Germany. See Siraj-Blatchford, J. (1996), *Robert Owen: Schooling the Innocents*, Nottingham, Educational Heretics.

economy directs education towards needs that are themselves the product of systems nourished by global market ideologies. Concern has been expressed about this in many other early childhood texts. Dahlberg and Moss (2005), for example provide a profoundly pessimistic account of the state of late capitalist liberalism:

Poverty, inequality and the HIV /AIDS pandemic blight the global landscape, as do burgeoning urban slums which are now home to a billion people. Widespread violence is practised both by states and by groups (whether called terrorists or freedom fighters) challenging these states. An almost palpable weariness and insecurity hang over many workers doing their best to be flexible and competitive in an increasingly uncertain world. The grave damage mankind has done to its home, the Earth, has become vividly apparent as global warming manifests itself in extreme weather conditions, while many essential resources including water show signs of severe stress. International organisations – the United Nations, the WTO, the European Union stagger under the impact of national self-interests, the decay of earlier idealism and a loss of confidence in their potential for good among the population at large.

For Dahlberg and Moss it is difficult to see a future that holds out very much hope.

One response to these concerns might be to try to create an education system that plays an independent and critical role in society. But while this may be a laudable (if challenging) aim for Higher Education, it is difficult to see how this might be applied in the early years. The more radical realisations of the Freinet and Movimento Da Escola Modern (MEM) educational models of France and Portugal might provide possible models for a radical engagement with local communities. But to claim independence without any critical engagement with society might be considered an example of the kind of complacency that, in the end, constitutes a ‘passive complicity’.

These are challenging issues for all of us to consider. If pre-schools are to engage in a radical engagement with their local communities on the issues of sustainability then it is important that we step beyond any emphasis on strategies that see children as; “‘redemptive agents’, programmed as solutions to our present problems” (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005, p. 11). How might we respond to the suggestion that as early childhood professionals we are looking to the children to save us from the mess that we have gotten ourselves into? A crucial question is also concerned with what it is that the children are currently learning about sustainable futures from the adults (including us) around them. How are we behaving as role models? How are we influencing the children’s parents as their primary role models?

In a paper entitled *Have the Cake and Eat It: Ecojustice Versus Development?*, Jucker (2004) has argued that it is impossible to look at the educational issues related to sustainable development until we have developed a clear understanding of the ideologies that perpetuate unsustainability. He argues that we must recognise both the pervasiveness and the fallacy of concepts such as “development”, “growth”, and “progress” before we can start to see what

ecojustice might mean. For Jucker, the solution is to look to indigenous societies for ‘prompts for a good, yet noncommodified life’: “On the basis of such an analysis, we can then proceed to formulate some fundamental parameters for ecojustice education”. The most important one that he identifies is that teachers have to; “embody the ecojustice principles they are likely to advocate to their students”.

But perhaps we should also consider whether we are vilifying the economic market system for the excesses of (however large) a minority of capitalist abusers. Speth (2008) has been one of many recent authorities who have posited a ‘third way’. While Speth acknowledges the fact that the sort of contemporary capitalism that we have seen in recent years is unsustainable, his prescription is reformist rather than revolutionary. He argues for a post-growth society with a much more sophisticated understanding of what it is that constitutes human happiness and well-being. Sen (1999) has also been significant in contesting the idea of development as economic growth. Sen’s definition of human development has prioritised the enlargement of the individual’s functioning and their capability or freedom to function.

Speth⁴ argues for a new form of capitalism that involves:

- a shift to environmentally honest prices, including an end to environmentally perverse subsidies;
- a shift to a post-growth society where our jobs, our communities, and our environments are no longer sacrificed to push up GDP;
- a shift to a post-consumer society which recognizes that endless purchases of what the market has to offer has not led to lasting improvements in our own sense of well-being and happiness; only our relationships can do that;
- a shift in corporate focus away from serving shareholders (only) to serving all stakeholders;
- a shift in our politics from weak to strong democracy, where popular sovereignty is reasserted;
- a shift from seeing environment as an issue unto itself, to seeing it as one of a broad array of issues (e.g. social justice) that will rise or fall together.

Whether we refer to it as capitalist or post-capitalist, such a society would still require entrepreneurs. Jean Baptiste Say, a French economist who is most commonly credited with first coining the term in the 19th century argued that entrepreneur’s were people who shifted economic resources out of an area of lower, and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield. Entrepreneurs,

⁴ Speth’s Washington Post discussion is online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2008/04/25/DI2008042502861.html>

by this definition, create value. An entrepreneur is a person who has the ability to recognise opportunities of benefit to an enterprise or community, and the will and the capacity to undertake appropriate innovative action, while accepting any associated risks. It takes courage to be an entrepreneur, and cool thinking. Entrepreneurship can be exercised in different types of economic systems and in the various contexts of the private sector, the state sector, mixed ownership sectors, the cooperative sector, and the nongovernmental sectors of an economy.

Entrepreneurs should be recognised as a dynamic force in any economy, envisioning the possibilities of new types of economic activity and then realizing them, they give birth to new enterprises, and commercial activities, and create new economic sectors. They generate employment for others and they help us produce goods and services more efficiently. Immediately following the revolution in Cuba entrepreneurship was banned and a tightly controlled economy was introduced. When it was legalized once again in September 1993, it sprang back quickly, manifesting itself through micro enterprises and markets of all kinds (Ritter, 2009). Already the emergence of this market-oriented entrepreneurship has produced major benefits for Cuba (if admittedly at some costs). Micro enterprise and micro financing does have its critics, but most development agencies and charities have come to regard it very positively. The term ‘social entrepreneurship’ has also increasingly been applied over the years. This is typically defined as an individual who measures success in *impact* rather than profit. It can be either within an overall ‘for-profit’ or a ‘not-for-profit’ organization.

In the early days of the commercial recycling of aluminium in the UK, I remember a company approaching the school I was teaching in and offering to pay by the kilo for all of the drinks cans that we could collect⁵. At that time I was teaching 4 year olds and used the opportunity to create a project that looked at recycling in general and on the material properties of aluminium as well. We decided that the children should decide themselves how the money should be spent on the school and a concerted effort should be made to engage the parents and their wider families in the project. The children were so enterprising in their strategies for the collection that a sizable sum was soon raised. Some of the income was spent on purchasing more recycling bins to support the continuing project. All aspects were discussed with the children through focused classroom meetings and the school council and the whole project provides an example of early entrepreneurial education in practice.

⁵ These opportunities still exists in the UK e.g.g <http://www.alupro.org.uk/cash%20for%20cans.htm>

THE OTHER 'PILLARS' OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome document refers to the three “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” of sustainable development as “social development”, “economic development”, and “environmental protection”. In the development of education for sustainable development in early childhood, the challenge for educators is therefore to develop educational systems, curriculum and pedagogic practices that are sustainable in terms of each of these pillars. It is also important to understand that sustainable developments are supported by the three pillars acting together, and that any practices and policies developed without taking each into account are likely to fail. From the perspective of sustainable development the most efficient or effective environmental, economic or social strategy may not be the most sustainable. Arguably, not every curriculum project needs to address all three pillars, although it is interesting to note that the aluminium recycling example cited earlier was able to do so. The most important point for ESD is that neither should be neglected.

In an inspiring second paper in this edition; Harmony as the basis for education for sustainable development, Chan, Choy and Lee provide a case study of the ESD practices in the Yew Chung International kindergarten in Hong Kong. The paper argues that the Chinese value of “*He*” (和) or Harmony can contribute to understand sustainable development as the concept encompasses the relationships between human and nature (ecological sustainability), and between human and human (social and economic sustainability). According to Chinese tradition, harmony is achieved through equilibrium and balance. As a musical concept, early definitions of the word apparently regarded it as ‘mutual responsiveness’ and this was extended further by analogy, to include harmony in human relationships and interactions.

Arguably, the model provided by Yew Chung emphasising multilingualism, intercultural understanding and respect for cultural diversity has relevance for all early childhood contexts and offers the possibility of developing integrated approaches to ESD along with a new globally cosmopolitan form of citizenship. Chan, Choy and Lee show how traditional Chinese stories are applied to model harmonious relationships, and the virtues of thriftiness, compassion and harmony, and many other moral stories from around the world may be used to develop ESD values.

Hägglund and Pramling Samuelsson provide the third paper in this edition which includes a broad overview of the historical roots and recent developments in education for sustainable development in the early years. The authors discuss a wide range of issues involved in early childhood education for sustainable development primarily within the Swedish context although readers will identify many issues of wider relevance. For Hägglund and Pramling Samuelsson, education for sustainable development in early childhood should follow the model of the Brundtland report, it should be recognised as ‘dynamic rather than

static, as a means rather than an end, and as a challenge for continuous cultural and social change rather than a once and for all measurable outcome'. It should also be challenging in terms of developing 'global solidarity and justice'. Their paper presents the possibility that children might be invited to enter into a dialogue with adults and is particularly critical of the common practice of restricting them to; '*a space where justice and belonging are detached from adulthood's care and concerns*'. Another key theme addressed by Hägglund and Pramling Samuelsson is that of globalisation and this is a subject to which we will return.

In the fourth paper; *Exploring the resistance*, Sue Elliott and Julie Davis stress the urgency of addressing the environmental challenges. They pose the question; Why has early childhood education been so slow to engage with sustainability? The answer they provide is that despite the efforts of many isolated early childhood environmental activists the lack of any wider uptake has been due to a failure by state and federal governments to support the initiative. The authors cite the lack of research in the area as problematic, but they also identify problems within the early childhood education profession itself:

1. Despite the emphasis that has historically been given to the importance of outdoor play in natural setting for early childhood education, in many Western countries the opportunities for this provision has diminished.
2. Even where the opportunities for outdoor play in natural settings are maintained or re-introduced, the very strength of the consensus regarding its importance often encourages the mistaken belief that simply exposure to the environment may be sufficient to achieve education for sustainability.
3. The assumption that environmental concepts such as the greenhouse effect and ozone depletion are beyond the intellectual capabilities of young children has served to inhibit curriculum development. Yet 'emergent' approaches to curriculum are applied routinely in other areas of knowledge and understanding, and this emphasis on scientific content knowledge prioritises conceptual knowledge over attitudes and skills such as problem solving, creativity and collaboration.
4. Practitioners often assume that education for sustainable development would be about teaching children about impending tragedies, rather than something offered as an antidote to the 'doom and gloom' with the potential of empowering children to actively support the development of more positive futures.
5. In their recent attempts to reconceptualise early childhood education radical poststructuralist and postmodern researchers have failed to recognize the challenges of achieving intergenerational and inter-species equity and have therefore continued to reproduce essentially anthropocentric worldviews.

For Elliott and Davies Education for Sustainability has both humanistic and ecological values that include living within ecological limits, and an action-orientation for social change, participation and democratic decision-making, with intergenerational and inter-species equity as a final goal. They argue for the development of a paradigm shift towards education for sustainability with an appropriate theoretical space developed within contemporary systems theory which incorporates notions of stability, adaptability and co-evolution. This suggests a particularly interesting way forward that might be informed more closely by Fuchs (2001) fusion of systems and network theory (more on this below).

In the fifth paper in this edition; *The preschool child of today – the world-citizen of tomorrow?*, Eva Johansson contributes significantly to the philosophy of sustainable development in early childhood education. Johansson identifies a number of core values and competences as possible dimensions in children's early learning for global citizenship. She argues that teachers need to acknowledge the fact that young children are already asserting their rights and responsibilities, and that they struggle with issues of solidarity and individuality in their interactions.

Johansson refers to a crisis in Western education, whereby senses of community and responsibility for others have been seen to have been increasingly replaced by an individualistic morality. A growing tension between individual freedom (individuality) and responsibility for others and the world (global solidarity) has inevitably become part of the moral life of preschools. Yet, in their day-to-day interactions, young children show themselves capable of making complex moral judgements, and it is important for teachers to extend the curriculum contexts beyond the confines of the sort of struggles over toys that Johansson describes. Curricula need to be developed that provide opportunities for children to engage with conflicts that occur beyond the classroom context. This may be achieved in part through engaging children in local community campaigns and, as suggested earlier, through the adoption of pre-school models informed by Freinet (Starkey, 1997) and MEM (Folque and Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). Again, Johansson highlights the importance of children's moral courage, responsibility and reflection. Perhaps we should all take time to consider our own.

The penultimate paper in this edition is provided by Pearson and Degotardi who argue that globalisation has resulted in the promotion of individualistic child-centred approaches that assume all learning should be shaped by children, engaged in spontaneous self-directed and intrinsically motivating play. As the authors suggest, such crude notions of discovery learning have been widely criticised even in American and European contexts where they originated and in the Majority world, they are often even more fundamentally out of place. Yet there is now a growing consensus that accepts the need to apply diverse value systems in early childhood programmes across different

socio-cultural contexts and, as Pearson and Degotardi suggest, this resonates strongly with the ESD approach to the education of young children which acknowledges the distinct social, cultural and physical environments in which children are raised and to which they belong. The authors cite Barbara Rogoff (2003) and argue for a ‘cross-fertilization of ideas about education’, rather than the transfer of hegemonic policy and practice across contexts:

... notions of change and sustainability can co-exist if communities are given the opportunity to develop early childhood educational practices which work towards collaboratively formed goals in culturally relevant ways. Innovations can take place, but these innovations need to be meaningful to both teachers and learners if they are going to develop the sense of agency, ownership and confidence required to empower individuals and communities to bring about a positive and sustainable community development.

This is a crucial issue and takes us to the heart of the current debates about the status, threats and affordances of globalization.

GLOBALISATION

Early Childhood educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners have been expressing concerns about the uncritical international acceptance of crude interpretations of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) for many years. At their most extreme these concerns have been expressed in terms that suggest cultural imperialism. Developments of the internet in particular have led to much greater international circulation of early childhood materials, and as English has increasingly been awarded the status of a new lingua franca, the philosophies, policies and practices that have been documented in the English language have dominated.

Migration and ethnic diversity are also the products of globalisation, and I want to argue here that it is important, as early childhood educators that we should face up to the inevitability of these processes. Most crucially perhaps, this should not, as Rogoff (2003) has observed, be considered to constitute any kind of catastrophe or *new* challenge for humanity. While Amos et al (2002) suggest that the beginnings of globalisation might lay in the 16th Century, Much more realistically, Rogoff (2003) takes us much further back, referring to other technological innovations such as the introduction of farming from Mesopotamia 10,000 years ago, and the events that followed the domestication of horses in the Ukraine about 5,000 years ago (p. 334). What has especially accelerated these processes in recent times has been the development of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) that have opened up international trade and communication beyond all previous possibilities (Amos et al, 2002):

New information technologies allow the acceleration of world-wide communication and connect distant localities in such a way, that almost every phenomenon is potentially shaped by events occurring very far away. (op cit)

These processes of globalisation result in both costs and benefits. On the one hand transnational companies have built upon the colonial domination of the past to exploit those least able to defend themselves (Chomsky, 2004), and, on the other hand, we have improved global dialogue in terms of peace, environmental protection and human rights. As writers such as Beck, (1999, p. 43) and Moss and Petrie (2002, p. 43) have observed, a phenomenon found to be associated closely with globalisation has also been ‘glocalisation’ which results in the “reinvention of the local within a global context”.

In the past cultural change has been at times very rapid and brutal, and at other times peaceful and slow. People have some times entered into it willingly and sought to learn from others and at other times they have struggled violently to keep hold of their ancient traditions and social practices. Cultural change is always somewhat fearful but it is also inexorable. Modern historical studies now routinely overturn the simplistic accounts of cultural domination that I learnt about in school (e.g. Anglo-Saxon invaders of England). They have shown that the cultural changes that take place even in the most extreme cases of large scale migration or invasion have never been simply one-way. The invaders may bring with them foreign practices but they are themselves reshaped by the beliefs and practices of those they settle within or conquer. In any event, cultural change has always been fearful, and even if we may have to accept that to some extent, arguably, it is inexorable.

Rogoff (2003) cites the moving testimony of an infant Inuit child in the USA to illustrate the cruelty of the missionary excesses of cultural imperialism in the past. These excesses have often caused extreme suffering, most especially by children. Similar stories are told about the experiences of the ‘Stolen children’ of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in Australia (HREOC, 1997). Colonial education was central to the processes of Western Empire building and the place taken in that by the Christian Church has yet to be fully acknowledged. In fact such an acknowledgement may be particularly important at a time when Islamophobia has become so widespread (Annan, 2004). We must never forget the abuses of the past or the responsibility that comes with being relatively powerful (as informed professionals) in the World today. But those of us from the minority world must also be very careful not to pass on to the children any guilt that we might feel about this⁶. Whatever our background, we should be looking towards a future that is built upon the best of all of our cultural traditions rather than becoming fixated with any false images of either a glorious, or an horrific, past. In any event, this is a case where children will learn much more from our actions than from our words.

⁶ This also applies to the environmental unsustainability of any of our current practices. As Hick’s (1994) and Hicks and Holden (1995) argued, too much of the environmental education of the past may have led to children adopting pessimistic attitudes of dystopia. We need to engage children in envisaging positive futures.

In the past people have sometimes assumed that we cannot learn from the cultural practices of others. Poststructuralist, anti-foundationalist and post-modern writing has been particularly influential in encouraging this way of thinking. In a brilliant theoretical treatise, Fuch's (2001) shows us how claims of incommensurability, whether they are posited as being between research paradigms, or any other cultural practices may be considered simply the response of tightly connected social networks to competition or a threat to their foundations where they act to; "isolate and shelter [their] basic certainties" (pp. 16-17). In these circumstances:

Each network will observe the others core as a contingent construct, not as a basic natural necessity. They will behave as constructivists about the others core practices, and as realists about their own. They will debunk each others core as being composed of 'ideologies' – beliefs and ideas suspiciously unaware or deceitful of their 'true' motives and interests – while asserting that their own ideas and beliefs are just right and righteous, and that they capture the empirical and moral order of the world as it really is, without any construction going on at all (op cit, p. 34).

Fuch's overall argument is that we should respond to the challenges of anti-foundationalism and scepticism with a sociology of *foundations* that *explains* them (or their absence):

In this approach antifoundationalism and skepticism signal a local fragmentation in social solidarity within weak cultures, not a global and philosophical crisis of representation (op cit, p. 74).

As Fuch's (2001) points out, 'paradigm incommensurability' involves a good deal more than simply people misunderstanding each other, and is more the *result* than any cause of a breakdown in communication. Also, the good news is that:

...incommensurability is not opposed to communication, but actually encourages and energises it, by irritating the background certainties and institutional invisibilities taken for granted in each of the interacting cultures (op cit, p. 93).

From this perspective, the postmodern challenges set by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence's (1999) popular postmodern text may be seen to be themselves symptomatic of an inherent weakness in the culture of early childhood education. Efforts should therefore be made to reduce fragmentation through improved communication and collaboration.

From a global perspective we need to accept that what the words 'survival' and 'sustainability' mean in practice will vary considerably in different contexts. The practical priorities will certainly be different. In many minority world contexts the priority may be to encourage greater respect for finite resources, and an understanding of global interdependence. In many majority world contexts, the highest priorities are sometimes to provide the most basic care for children and to improve literacy. While in the former minority world context 'survival' is often seen as a medium, or even as a long-term abstract threat, for too many in the majority world the brutal realities of the struggle for

survival are all too apparent on a daily basis. What these ‘sustainable’ activities that we engage in all have in common is our common concern to educate children for a sustainable future. The practices themselves may *seem* very different, but only if we ignore our global interdependence. The fact is, that the environmental damage that the rich have been doing to the planet has always hurt the poorest in the world the most (and the quickest).

The challenges are great and common efforts and definitions are called for, as the ultimate challenges are for humanity in general. Despite our work in different national, economic and cultural early childhood contexts, efforts are being made to come to a better understanding of how our very different efforts *do* actually contribute towards the really important common goals. The final paper in this edition of the journal provides a set of recommendations for the ongoing development of Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Education. The recommendations were the product of an extended international collaboration of an expert group initially convened by Ingrid Pramling in Sweden. In addition to face-to-face meetings, the collaboration made the most of the internet tools available to the group and they shared their ideas and conducted their discussions using blogs, email and internet telephony. The discussions that were generated were broad ranging and often reached substantial depth of analysis. The final product, despite its concise nature reflects this.

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DEVELOPING PRODUCTIVE LIFESKILLS IN CHILDREN: PRIMING ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSETS THROUGH SOCIALISATION IN FAMILY OCCUPATIONS

Fomba E. Mbebeb

SUMMARY

Building on the premise that societal sustainability depends on mental and behavioural sustainability, this paper provides a framework within which the complex challenges of sustainable early childhood education in the majority world is discussed. The work contends that entrepreneurial mindsets priming is a viable component of early childhood education through life skills orientation within the family. It argues that historically, vocational training of children has been the primordial responsibility of the family before the advent of schooling, a source of mismatch between acquired skills and sustainable livelihood. The work considers the family a major socialising agent in early childhood, and also an enterprise for knowledge production, strategies in entrepreneurial upskilling and sustainable lifeskills. The work does not advocate for rejection, but for the deconstruction of dominant capitalist learning values, which are fraught with crisis of relevance in sustainable childhood learning and development. As a proactive measure in developing entrepreneurial minds and societies discussions are oriented towards current policies and cultures in sustainable childhood education in context.

RÉSUMÉ

Partant du principe que la durabilité d'une société repose sur la durabilité de la pensée et comportements, ce document offre un cadre au sein duquel seront abordés les défis posés, dans l'ensemble du monde, par la nécessité d'une éducation durable dans le domaine de la petite enfance. Ce travail soutient le point de vue selon lequel l'esprit d'entreprise, favorisé au sein de la famille par des activités centrées sur la vie quotidienne, est une composante primordiale vitale. Se fondant sur l'histoire, il postule que la formation professionnelle des enfants a représenté, avant l'introduction de la scolarisation génératrice de disparités entre les connaissances acquises en son sein et les compétences durables pour la survie, une responsabilité primordiale de la famille. Ce travail n'entend pas se faire l'avocat d'un rejet mais bien plus d'une reconsidération ou « déconstruction » des valeurs capitalistes actuellement promues à l'école, valeurs qui ne sont pas étrangères au manque de durabilité de l'éducation et des apprentissages durant la petite enfance. Afin de mettre en évidence des mesures préliminaires au développement de l'esprit d'entreprise au niveau des esprits et des sociétés, les contributions qui composent ce travail se pencheront sur les cultures et les politiques éducatives actuelles, s'agissant de leur impact sur le caractère durable de l'éducation de la petite enfance.

RESUMEN

Construyendo la premisa que la sustentabilidad social depende de la sustentabilidad mental y comportamental, este artículo provee de un marco de trabajo en el que los complejos cambios para una educación preescolar sustentable en la mayor parte del mundo, son discutidos. El trabajo aborda el

establecimiento mental de emprendimiento como componente viable de la educación preescolar, apoyando el desarrollo de las habilidades para la vida en el seno de la familia. Se argumenta que históricamente, la vocación para la educación infantil ha sido una responsabilidad primordial de la familia, antes del advenimiento de la escuela, una fuente de desencuentros entre el desarrollo de habilidades capitalistas adquiridas y habilidades para ganarse la vida en forma sustentable. El trabajo no defiende ni promueve el rechazo, sino la deconstrucción de los valores capitalistas de aprendizaje que están enfrentando una crisis importante para el desarrollo y aprendizaje sustentable en la infancia. Una mediad proactiva es el desarrollo de mentes emprendedoras y argumentativas orientadas hacia políticas y culturas en contextos de educación infantil sustentable.

Keywords: Early childhood; sustainable education; life skills; occupational socialization; entrepreneurial mindsets; sustainable livelihood

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Africa is to provide children with learning opportunities that will enable them to develop creative minds and productive competence and become tomorrow's citizens, parents and workers. This concurs with the vision of the African Union's (AU) (2007) for "an integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa, driven by its own people to take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy." Through sustainable education strategies this drive intends to facilitate productive capacities in the young in order to promote knowledge, psychological independence, wealth creation and a sustainable society. This is why the concept of sustainable development has become critical on regional and national agendas especially with regards to youth and childhood education policy. According to the United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (2006) young people are agents of change with the potential of taking a leading role in tackling Africa's future development challenges. Childhood development has then been positioned at the centre of human development as a foundation for a wholesome personality, productive lifeskills and requires a relevant and qualitative education. To Nsaminang (2007) different cultures invest in children, not as end states but in recognition that tomorrow's adults are the products of their childhood. Although early childhood is also a determinant of adult personality, the ages between 5 to 8 years are critical in priming vocational skills and entrepreneurial mindsets due to children's acquisition of basic life skills and involvement in problem solving activities. At this developmental stage in Africa children learn how to become adults by participating through socialisation (observation, imitation and participation) in family and related occupational activities. Although early childhood is socially and culturally constructed, the ages 5 to 8 years are isolated within context with regards to entrepreneurship priming. Analysis is focused on the nature of children's engagement in relationship with families and how occupational

socialisation facilitates vocational development and entrepreneurial mindset priming.

The sustainability of any society depends on behavioural dispositions that are in turn dependent on educational values employed to niche children to adapt in a sustainable mode to today's environment while developing aptitudes for tomorrow's challenges. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an essential part of human development and sustainable learning can be understood from the standpoint of developing attitudes and skills necessary for current and future adaptability. Rohweder (2007) explained that education for sustainable development starts with the challenges related to the general societal, environmental situation and inherent development opportunities. With the current sustainability drive education has been tailored towards cultural and indigenous knowledge as prerequisites for sustainable learning. Despite biological dispositions, nurturing children has been emphasized as a growth-promoting mechanism through socialising agents: formal and informal education frameworks. Interest in non formal education owes much to the fact that it is a socio-cultural enterprise where knowledge is generated for and with learners in a participatory and utilitarian mode; and the family plays a primordial role in early childhood learning through socialisation.

An important issue in sustainability debates, although often neglected, is the psychological argument that societal sustainability depends on mental and behavioural sustainability; thereby informing strategies in early childhood education. Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson and Yoshie Kaga (2008) advised that sustainable education must begin in early childhood, as the values, attitudes, behaviours and skills acquired in this period may have a long-lasting impact in later life. In Africa for instance need has been expressed for the development of creative and productive minds for a relevant human capital base possessing inherent entrepreneurial culture necessary for Private Sector Development (PSD). Nurturing the schooling child through hands-on family experiences has been perceived as natural and vital in life course development in African societies. This implies a shift from dominant Eurocentric values, which purports that "the African personality is at best the product of the 'civilizing effect' of western culture on the cultureless people of a 'dark continent'" (Khoapa.1984:113). Current advocacy trend calls for the resuscitation of indigenous African education that rest in the shadow of Western globalisation ideas (Itabari, 2006), and integration into school life as a necessity paradigm. Nsaminanag (2006) was categorical that African indigenous education is part and parcel of the culture and it is built on the daily routines and activities of the family and kinsmen. This validates the position of the family as a socialising agent in early childhood education that can promote entrepreneurial competence.

The paradox: One cannot loose sight of the positive contributions of the capitalist systems through technology and globalisation drives to childhood

development in Africa, but it is evident that there is a mismatch between schooling and societal requirements. Nsaminanag (2006, p. 335) was critical that “whereas indigenous African education tradition tends to connect children to their local context and activities of daily life the school tends to separate and distance them”. Inherent in this uncertainty is a paradox that can be examined from two perspectives: historical African indigenous lifeskills preparation and school-like cognitive competence. In pre-colonial Africa learning was based on an indigenous educational system that is preparatory, utilitarian, communal and holistic in the learner’s natural ecology – where things are happening. In African traditional setting occupations and vocational training of the young were tied to family or kinsmen. The primary obligation of the family was to niche the child for a comprehensive task in the family and society. Socialization of family members and kinsmen into economic roles became a cultural value in respect of the old age utilitarian education practice. Learning mostly occurred through imitation, observation and apprenticeship where learners were socialised into lifeskills in a life space. Learning in a real life situation had direct impact on vocational awareness, entrepreneurial drive and employability; consequently validating indigenous education praxis since traditional societies knew no “tough time” in school-to-work transition and no unemployment as trainees graduated directly into jobs or became job creators. With the advent of colonization and schooling attitudes changed and responsibility for economic and vocational education gradually drifted from family and community circles to academic institutions as guarantor of jobs and income. The family then remained with socio-moral and cultural education of the child. The paradox holds that instead of schooling guaranteeing employment and income it has at times been stigmatised as a mechanism for unemployment, poverty and exclusion. Uncritical acculturation has instead promoted foreign values that reinforce dormant entrepreneurial culture, dependency syndrome, youth exclusion and declining economic returns putting tomorrow’s children at risk of decent employment and sustainable livelihood. Despite demographic pressure the International Labour Organisation (2006) projected that youth employment in Africa will drop in 2015 (28.9%) as compared to 2005 (30.80%) and 1995 (31.10%) despite demographic pressure. This indicates a bleak future for the youth and necessitates development of entrepreneurial skills at early childhood. Institutional responses have been grossly inadequate and unsustainable, and stimulating alternative reflections on informal vocational education in developing appropriate skills for future challenges.

WHY ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET PRIMING?

Entrepreneurs have been considered the drivers of the economy and architects of entrepreneurial institutions and societies. According to Chigunta (2004) the importance of promoting entrepreneurship is also reflected in the increasing role that self-employment plays in job creation in Africa as a source of sustainable

livelihood. Although caution has been expressed concerning entrepreneurial development in early childhood as a panacea to future youth inclusion it has a number of potential benefits. According to Røe Ødegård (2006) entrepreneurship education is a strategy to strengthen the individual's ability to see and exploit opportunities in an economic, social and cultural context. It therefore poses as a proactive strategy to combat endemic psychological dependence of youth, unemployment, poverty and changing labour market demands. Risk taking is a main characteristic of entrepreneurial behaviour and the young has a strong disposition for risk-taking, innovation and change. Enterprise life skills do not only help within enterprise context but also for the young to develop broad based life skills that will ensure adaptability to non-enterprise ventures. This enhances adaptive livelihood capabilities in society as a whole denoting innovative thinking, reasoning and acting in order to explore available opportunities and survival strategies.

With ongoing globalisation process, socio-economic realities are fast changing and young minds are more flexible in developing attitudes and skills that are more responsive to challenges. It is therefore logical that young minds will be particularly responsive to new economic opportunities and trends. Today many youths experience feelings of frustration and insecurity due to a perceived bleak future and this has fostered feelings of doubt, nonchalance and dormancy. Entrepreneurship priming can therefore promote resilience as it encourages young people to find new solutions, ideas and ways of doing things through experience-based learning (Chigunta et al, 2005). This influences children's attitudes from that of rent-seeking to profit-seeking and introduces a culture of enforcement capable of creating wealth. McClelland (1961, p. 92) observed that "training children to be independent with entrepreneurial skills will promote high need achievement if training is encouraged by parents". For Chigunta et al. (2005) entrepreneurship education could help address some of the psychosocial problems and delinquency that arise from joblessness. Ensuring optimal conditions for the early growth of African children is therefore a prerequisite for subsequent competition in the global economy. Despite perceived advantages Mophasa (1998) cautioned that vocational competence-oriented education and skills development should conform to the tradition and mores of the society.

CONCEPTUALISING ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

There is a significant body of knowledge on socialising the developing child by the African family. This knowledge, however, is mainly focused on vocational development, particularly entrepreneurship priming. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education have of late been perceived as a core value in ensuring sustainable education ventures in recent times and as a response to changing patterns of sustainable livelihood. Drawing from the European Union's Expert Group in 2002, Røe Ødegård (2006, p. 20) defined entrepreneurship as a

“dynamic and social process where individuals, alone or in collaboration, identify opportunities for innovation and act upon these by transforming ideas into practical and targeted activities, whether in a social, cultural or economic context.” Current definitions of entrepreneurship education emphasizes that the concept is wider than just business start-up, asserting entrepreneurship as a mindset; involving attitudes, achievement drive, locus of control, self-esteem and risk-taking. But the value of knowing cannot be limited to thinking, reflections and retention and should extend to actions through knowledge transfer as observed with the participation of children in family occupations. Nsaminanang (2005) defined socialisation as the process through which human newborns become social beings through the learning of habits, values, skills, beliefs and other requirements necessary for effective participation in a group. Although academic institutions and the work environment as major socialising agents in children’s entrepreneurial development (Maphosa, 1998), the role of the family cannot be undermined. Work based learning is focused on Active Participant Learning (APL) where actors meet with field realities and practice learning by doing. This approach concurs with indigenous African education strategies, which Itabari (2006) explains as a simplistic process of socialization involving the preparation of children for work in the home and the community. This further validates the role of the family as a major socialising agent in early childhood development.

Family activities, within “household” and beyond, affect enterprise drive, growing up and occupational diversity for the young. Morphasa (1998) reported that the influence of the family in mainstreaming entrepreneurial personality is stronger where there is a family tradition of business activities. With regards to learning-work transition, entrepreneurial competence is one of the major changes in life course development especially in early childhood as children expand their world through experience with siblings, peers, teachers and parents (Dehart & Sroufe & Cooper, 2000). The journey from school to work for instance is a sign of self-fulfilment that is highly dependent on vocational development. If children at early childhood are able to develop sex-typed behaviours it is customary that most of such behaviours, acquired through observation and imitation are occupation-specific activities of parents or kinsmen. Children develop gender-role concepts with masculine and feminine occupational orientations and characteristics through participation, and a sense of vocational development is observed emerging unconsciously in them. Although there is ongoing debate on the involvement of children in occupational activities as child labour, emphasis on entrepreneurship development through occupational socialisation should be encouraged as a strategy for responsible citizenships development if void of abuses.

Developmental theories have experienced long standing debates on Euro-American and Afro-centric approaches to effective child rearing practices in Africa. According to Nsaminanag (2006) contextualist psychologists have

stressed how different ontogenetic pathways and intelligences are conditioned by ecological and social systems in which children are nurtured. This steams ongoing debate on indigenous learning and schooling with regards to sustainable livelihood, with the valuing of positive indigenous knowledge in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). According to Serpell (2007, p. 23) “the applicability of psychological and educational theories beyond the cultural contexts in which and for which they were originally designed has been a focus of debate”. Despite diversity Nsaminang (2007) reported that the common attributes of ECCE systems is ideological and this may be explicit or implicit, regarding the meaning and purpose of human life. Freire (1971) was also critical that hegemonic education offering is a force of domination having an ideological intent of indoctrinating learners to adapt to the world of oppression. Ideologically-oriented schooling packages designed for the development of children are deprived of exploration, discovery and social justice, and cannot effectively nurture entrepreneurial personality in context. Despite the forgoing Emeagwali (2003) argued that institutional science is taught in the context of a Eurocentric paradigm that embodies disdain, disrespect and arrogance, aimed at perpetuating Euro-American superiority. Indigenous apprenticeship has not disappeared from collective memory notwithstanding the odds, consideration the fact that indigenous apprenticeship trainees dominate the informal sector and the entrepreneurial world.

Indigenous knowledge systems have been perceived as reservoirs of survival strategies with invaluable inputs to sustainable education and livelihood. Several arguments have favoured the use of indigenous knowledge in sustainable development practices (Pence & Shafer, 2006). African indigenous education is a system of learning that builds on cultural community realities and integrates knowledge about all aspects of life (Nsaminanag, 2006). African traditional education builds on the principles of indigenous knowledge, which Kolawole (2001) terms ‘technical’ insight or wisdom gained and developed by people in a particular locality, through years of careful observation and experimentation with natural phenomena around them. This contrasts the “alienating hazards of a socioculturally detached, text-based curriculum ... accentuated in Africa by the remoteness of the factitious exercises and formal texts of the academy from the cultural practices of everyday life” (Serpel, 2007. p. 25). Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2002) recounted that male education produced farmers, warriors, blacksmiths, rulers and other male dominated occupations while female education was predominantly designed to produce future wives, mothers and home-makers. The African family is recognised for the production and consumption of ECCE knowledge as a fundamental institution and it is therefore a challenge for academic institutions to consider the role of the family in vocational development in early childhood.

VALUE TRANSMISSION AND MINDSET PRIMING

Despite the fracture of many African families in value transmission (Chigunta, 2002), the socialising roles of African families have continued to engage the attention of scholars and researchers with regards to sustainable education strategies. A family is an institution constituted of a group of individuals comprising parents and children living together. In the case of nuclear family system children and parents constitute a household but with the extended family system children, parents and relatives or kinsmen live together. In African societies family circles are highly enlarged where consanguinity is not a necessary precondition for family membership. Nsaminanag (2006) observed that the composition and function of the normal family varies throughout Africa but the most common type of African family is the extended family. Farnham-Diggory (1990) emphasised that education must begin where the child is, and that the child is the starting point of the curriculum implying that the child is at the centre of education. The child spends its early life in the family and the later provides the primary learning environment for the child before it enters school (Sylva & Blatchford, 1994). Discussions on child centred education have therefore given invaluable credits to the family for mainstreaming life skills as a socio-moral responsibility. From the perspective of sustainable education, the critical role of the family in preparing tomorrow's citizen, worker and leader is increasingly being recognised. "Initial [family] experiences have an enduring impact on the physical, intellectual and personality development of the child, a fact which adds to the importance of the family's socialising function" (Ansu, 1984, p. 63). Much of early childhood education remains the responsibility of families, churches, communities and not of schools with different offerings and methodologies. Since the family approach to education is utilitarian and action-based it has the potentials of bridging the knowing-doing gap, fostering sustainable thinking, behaviours and livelihood.

According to Gibb & Wendy (1994), some seminal works have indicated the important role that the entrepreneur's family plays in the development of certain entrepreneurial personality characteristics. Occupations have often been described professionally as activities associated with income generation and livelihood. But in the present context occupational activities involve household chores and extra domestic livelihood activities that can mainstream vocational and entrepreneurial skills. With regards to cognitive apprenticeship Farnham-Diggory (1990) exalted the necessity of building educational programmes around occupations as the best ways of fostering livelihood skills. In Africa the procurement of skills, knowledge and attitudes through traditional lifelong learning process is as old as society and this system has been the basic system of productive manpower (Agubande, 1985). Children's experiences with family occupations; paid or unpaid unveil productive capacities as future manpower base developed by the family for the community. As the first educator with the greatest influence in shaping the young's attitudes, values, behaviours, habits and

skills (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008), family role as an enterprise cannot be contested. It poses as an economic entity that produces not only goods and services for public consumption but also children as future workforce. Sylva and Blatchford (1994) reported that Ethiopian children start assuming work responsibilities at a very early stage in life and are often engaged in helping their mothers in domestic work of various kinds. Sylva and Blatchford also found that children looked after domestic animals such as goats, sheep and cattle and also fetched firewood from nearby bushes and water from the river. In rural communities they went on errand to nearby kiosk to buy small things like sugar, coffee, salt, and candles. To Nsaminang (2007) the practice of early training in sharing, self-care and performance of chores indicates keen awareness of the innate ability in children to become self-regulated and competent. The philosophy is training for life and not necessarily training for a job, which later on translates into a variety of occupational options and entrepreneurial behaviours for learners. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2002) recounted that “a child destined to become a fisherman, as already noted, learned not only to catch fish but also to preserve and market it; to make and mend nets; to manufacture canoes and to erect temporary fishing huts. A male individual in most non-literate communities could, therefore, embark on a variety of occupations without difficulty. He could work as a builder, farmer or fisherman. A woman worked as a gardener, housewife and cook, besides being a caretaker and nurse to her children”. With sustainable African traditional education, learning outcomes are easily translated into entrepreneurial ventures as learners upon “graduation” seize opportunities, take risks and become entrepreneurial personalities.

REVITALISING FAMILY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Globalizing forces and Technology are valuable assets in developing sustainable skills in African children, but there is a need for a balance between indigenous and foreign knowledge systems in developing responsible industry in children. Chigunta (2002) exalted a need for enhanced human capital development through transformation of vocational training to enable young people acquire relevant skills, master their lives and contribute to sustainable development. Despite the benefits of schooling its shortcoming has been observed in the effective priming of entrepreneurial mindsets, but fortunately it has not eroded the values of African edge old values in vocational competence development. According to khoapa (1984) Africa is grown on a rich philosophical soil with a people with a unique view of themselves and the world; a people with a culture, inhabiting a continent with lots of sunshine. The development of African indigenous knowledge systems from different perspectives is the only way to discover a true African personality. In this vein, Emeagwali (2003) suggested that the entrenchment within the curriculum of structures necessary for the critical evaluation, understanding and revitalization of African Indigenous Knowledge

(AIK) is an important challenge for 21st century policy makers and educators. This implies going back native within the context of African education thought and family values in generating survival strategies. But renewing the identity of African indigenous education especially within family context cannot go without challenges. Common blocks comprise foreign mentality, endemic knowledge dependence, mismatch between family and school curriculum and systematic follow up and evaluation by parents. Despite challenges there are inherent opportunities in African historical wisdom through family occupational culture that can foster sustainable childhood education through vocational skills development.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

It is unfortunate that in Africa entrepreneurial development in early childhood is receiving the lowest interest and investment despite socio-economic exclusion of young people. Instead, vocational and entrepreneurial development in young children is perceived by western minds as unproductive and associated with the ills of child labour, maybe due to narrow understanding of entrepreneurship as venture creation. But it is high time entrepreneurial development is perceived from a variety of attitudinal and behavioural competence necessary in responding to sustainable livelihood exigencies. This also means embracing indigenous learning values that are customarily at variance with school curriculum; and consequently decolonising schooling curricula. Shifting paradigm does not imply rejection of foreign education values on African soil, but reflecting divergently and profoundly into African education thought that made and still make things work in traditional societies before contemporary education. Formal education needs to be complemented by informal education and the family must therefore invest in life-long education and inculcate entrepreneurial spirits at early childhood. This will spur a new breed of young enterprising minds that can foster sustainable livelihood through entrepreneurial ventures in the survival sector. With this strategy the young will believe in their own creative powers and the ability to see and utilize local resources as a basis for creating values, developing workplaces and taking responsibility in their local communities (Røe Ødegård, 2006). The clarion call for the resuscitation of positive aspects of African indigenous thought and integration into school curricula cannot therefore escape the crucial attention and role of the family in its drive to training for life and responsible citizenship. Recognizing this position Nsaminang (2005), advanced that localization and globalization compels global thought, and third millennium education should niche the child in his or her own culture while simultaneously providing competencies for the imperatives of the global village. With sporadic dilemmas of modern education stakeholders of sustainable childhood education in Africa needs to recognise the critical role of indigenous knowledge and family socialisation in developing life skills and entrepreneurial personality.

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HARMONY AS THE BASIS FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE EXAMPLE OF YEW CHUNG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS¹

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SUMMARY

This paper argues that Chinese value of “He” (和) or Harmony can contribute to understanding sustainable development as the concept encompasses the relationships between human and nature (ecological sustainability), and between human and human (social and economic sustainability). This interconnectedness with the “other” has its historical roots in ancient Chinese philosophy. This paper reports the practice of an international education provider in Hong Kong which embraces the Chinese value of “He” in its educational philosophy. A case example of how to use an integrated approach on education for sustainable development in early childhood setting is described.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article propose que l'idéogramme chinois “He” ou Harmonie peut aider à comprendre le développement durable puisque ce concept sous-tend les rapports entre l'être humain et la nature (durabilité écologique) et les rapports entre les êtres humains (durabilité sociale et économique). Les racines de ce lien réciproque avec “l'autre” remontent jusqu'à l'ancienne philosophie chinoise. Ce document décrit la pratique d'une éducation internationale à Hong Kong qui épouse le concept chinois “He” et sa philosophie pédagogique. Il y est décrit un exemple sur la manière d'offrir une approche intégrée en enseignement permettant un développement durable dès la petite enfance.

RESUMEN

Este artículo argumenta que el valor Chino del “otro” o de la “Armonía” puede contribuir a comprender el desarrollo sustentable integral, ya que el concepto abarca las relaciones entre el ser humano y la naturaleza [sustentabilidad ecológica] y entre seres humanos (sustentabilidad económica y social). Esta conexión con el ‘otro’ tiene sus raíces históricas en la Filosofía China Antigua. Este artículo abirda la práctica de una propuesta educativa internacional en Hong Kong la cual incluye el valor Chino del “otro” en su filosofía educativa. Un ejemplo de cómo usar un acercamiento integrado en educación para el desarrollo sustentable integral en la temprana infancia, es descrito.

Keywords: Harmony, early childhood education, sustainable development

¹ Yew Chung Education Foundation has been established for 75 years. It provides international education from early childhood, primary, secondary to college levels. Yew Chung International School has campuses in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Chongqing, Qingdao in China and Silicon Valley in the United States of America.

This paper briefly reviews the philosophical roots of “*He*” (和) or “Harmony” as a key concept to understand Chinese interpretation of sustainable development. It will then explore “Harmony” in the educational philosophy of an international education institute – Yew Chung Education Foundation. The example of current practice will be cited as illustration of Education for Sustainable Development in an early childhood setting.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is an emerging concept and continues to evolve over the years. The famous Brundtland Report defined it from the lens of long-term benefits as opposed to short term benefits. Accordingly, “sustainable development” refers to “development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meeting their needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43). The Johannesburg Declaration at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) further identified three inter-related areas of development: environmental, social and economic domains. To ensure long-term sustainable development, the competing interests between environmental, social and economic development should be balanced.

The pressing reality of limited natural resources coupled with excessive human consumption has urged people to pay attention to the un-sustainability of current environmental development and its implications for future generations. The global financial crisis has illustrated clearly the interconnectedness of global economy and the widespread problems caused by unrestraint individuals’ actions. People are becoming increasingly aware of the damage humans have done to planet earth and society. There is an urgent need to decelerate the process. The United Nations has designated the years from 2005 to 2014 as the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. UNESCO was assigned as the lead agency for promotion of the decade and set quality standards in education for sustainable development.

It is not acceptable to enjoy the benefits of economic development at the expense of social justice and environmental conservation. McKeown, Hopkins, Rizzi, & Chrystalbride, (2002) argued that education is an essential tool to move society towards sustainability. By raising the public awareness of sustainability, education is an initial step towards sustainable development. Nonetheless, in a conference dedicated to discussion of “The role of early childhood education in a sustainable society”, Pramling Samuelsson and Kaga (2008) pointed out that interpretations of the concept of “sustainable development” were subjected to debate. The developed and the developing counties have significant different concerns. Diverse cultural traditions also provide different interpretive angles.

CHINESE UNDERSTANDING OF HARMONY AND ITS APPLICATION TO SUSTAINABILITY

The Chinese character of “*He*” (和) or “Harmony” was vividly featured in the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics 2008. While spectators were amazed at the movable type-printing performance, the character itself has highlighted a key value deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture. The Chinese value of “*He*” (和) might serve as a theoretical basis for interpretation of the emerging concept of sustainable development. It might provide new insights for the art of balancing diverse interests. Centrality of the Chinese value of “*He*” in the interpretation of sustainable development is evident in the document released by the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). In preparation for the Beijing Olympics 2008, the Commission released an overarching plan in a document entitled “Program of Action for Sustainable Development in China in the Early 21st Century” (5 Feb 2007), which specified the objectives, principles, priority areas and safeguard measures for the country’s sustainable development. In particular, two major principles stated clearly the key for balancing different needs by emphasizing “harmony between man and nature” (principle 2) and “harmony between social and economic development, and resources and environment” (principle 5).

Many argued that Education for Sustainable Development is fundamentally about values (Liu & Liu, 2008). The promotion of living together in peace and “harmony” is a top priority for the United Nations. In order to build towards a culture of peace and international understanding in the 21st century, the Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Value Education (APNIEVE) has identified “universally acceptable” values for education. “Harmony” is identified as one such important value. In fact, the vice-president of the APNIEVE, Prof. Zhou Nan-zhao from China called Asia Pacific countries to lead in this common endeavor. It seems that the Chinese philosophical understanding and emphasis on “*He*” can be regarded as a possible contribution to the world values and provide another basis for the interpretation of sustainable development. The next section will trace the historical understanding of “*He*” within the Chinese culture.

“*HE*” AS A CHERISHED IDEAL

Based on the analysis of *Li Cheng-yang* (2004, 2006), a Confucian scholar, “*He*” is portrayed as the highest ideal in the Confucius classics of *Zhong-yong* (中庸). The foundation of harmony is *Zhong* (中 or equilibrium), meaning without inclination to either side. As *Zhong-yong* lays out the foundation for Confucian metaphysics, Li (2006) argued that harmony is the most cherished ideal for Confucianism as a whole. “*He*” is not only evident in Confucianism it is also evident in Taoism (Chen, 2002).

HISTORICAL ROOTS AND DEFINITION OF “HE” – MUSIC TO THE EARS

The earliest form of “He” appeared in the inscriptions on bones and tortoise shells in 16th to 11th century B.C.E. (i.e., the *Shang* Dynasty 商朝). It was also recorded in some of the earliest Confucian texts such as *YiJing* (易經), *Zouzhuan* (左傳), *Sijing* (詩經) and *Zhouli* (周禮). According to Li (2006), “He” (和) can be interpreted as “harmony” or “harmonization”. Originally, the roots of “He” is related to music. Early definition of “He” regarded it as “mutual responsiveness”. This original meaning of “He” came from “sounds” and was referring to the rhythmic interplay of various sounds (*Xu-Shen’s Shuo-wen-Jie-zi* 許慎 說文解字). It could occur in nature, or between people. Later, during the Spring and Autumn period, the definition of “He” extended to mean “harmonization”. “He” did not simply mean that sounds mutually respond, it described that various sounds respond to one another in an appropriate way, which is mutually promoting, complementing, and stabilizing (*Guo-yu* 國語). As it developed, the notion of “He” as harmonious interplay of sounds, by analogy, can mean harmony in human relationships and interactions (Li, 2006).

FORMS OF HARMONY

He or Harmony is the guiding principle for Chinese interactions. The dialectic interaction process continuously adapts and transforms toward interdependence and cooperation. Human interactions encompass three dimensions, including (1) intrapersonal, (2) interpersonal, and (3) nature-human dimension. In other words, there should be:

1. Harmony within the individual
2. Harmony between individuals, and
3. Harmony between human beings and the nature

1. HARMONY WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL

Traditionally, it is referred to the harmonious interplay of the human mind and body. In education, it can be understood as holistic development of children. Liu & Liu (2008) suggested that harmonious development of an individual denotes having the capacity for lifelong learning and all-round development in physical, cognitive, social and emotional domains.

2. HARMONY BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

In the *Analects*, Confucius regarded “He” as a criterion for being a *jun-zi* (君子 or an honourable and good person). Confucius said, 君子和而不同，小人同而不和 (子路篇, Chapter 13:23). It means that “Honourable people have harmony even though they may be very different from each other. Ignoble people may share a great deal in common, and yet they do not have harmony.” (translated by the Yew Chung Culture Committee, 2006, p. 203). Harmony presupposes the existence of differences (Li, 2006). “An honourable person

would respect different opinions and be capable to work with different people in a harmonious way. The pre-requisite of harmony is the recognition of diversity. Today, true harmony in a community is based on the acceptance of diversity and differences among individuals. Confucius believed in harmony and diversity among people” (Yew Chung Culture Committee, 2006, p. 95-97). Some argued that we have entered an era of conflict between civilizations (Huntington, 1996), but Confucius’ belief of “different and yet harmonious” can be used for resolving potential conflicts that may exist among cultures (Tang, 2004; Yew Chung Culture Committee, 2006). Harmonious relationship implies mutual complement and support (Cheng, 1991). The ancient wisdom is still highly relevant today.

3. HARMONY BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE NATURE

“*He*” is not limited to human relations. The idea of unity of human with nature pervades in Chinese thought, which can be found in the teachings of both Confucianism and Taoism. The doctrine of *Tian-ren-he-yi* (天人合一 or unity of human and heaven) denotes that human beings are an integral part of nature (Chen, 2002). Based on this understanding, benevolence is shown to all creatures and the natural environment. The interpretation of environmental sustainability is not based on human self-interest for long-term gain, but instead on a sense of solidarity with nature. This is what *Zhang Zai* (張載), a prominent Confucian scholar in the Song Dynasty called as *Min-bao-wu-yu* (民胞物與), “granting benevolence to mankind and creatures” (Yew Chung Culture Committee, 2006, p. 237), which can also be expressed by forming one body with nature.

There is similarity between the Chinese concepts of “*He*” and the Western concept of “stewardship”. Both concepts make sure people understand that natural resources are finite and it is important to take individual responsibility and actions to protect the environment. However, there is a difference between the two. As stewards, humans are given a responsibility to manage the resources in nature. Humans could abuse this responsibility and turn it into a power to exhaust the natural resources excessively for insatiable human use for lifestyles, commerce and industry. Nature is still treated primarily as the “other” for the use of humans. On the other hand, “*He*” regards the natural environment as part of an integral whole, having solidarity with human beings. A harmonious co-existence between human and all creatures is of prime importance.

This conceptual framework of “*He*” is consistent with education for sustainable development. In regards to harmony between human and nature, environmental awareness and concern could be raised in early childhood. In regards to social harmony and social sustainability, intercultural education and respect for cultural diversity could be promoted. Children could also be taught to understand the impact of global interdependence and the virtue of thriftiness, as an introduction to the understanding of economic sustainability. Yet understanding the concept of sustainable development may present some

difficulties for young children. However many traditional Chinese stories model harmonious relationships, and the virtues of thriftiness, compassion and harmony. These stories, especially told in simple language, will be very useful for the integration of literacy development and value education, and can be used to teach children about harmony in social, economic and ecological domains. The following examples suggest the value of ‘setting a good example’, and of ‘conservation’:

STORY 1

Once Qi Huan Gong told Kuan Chong: “Our nation is very small and is running short on wealth, but the amount spent on clothing and horses by the courtiers are enormous. The nation cannot afford such ongoing and unrestrained spending. I am very eager to stop this trend from continuing, can you think of a way?”

Guan Zhong replied: “The kinds of food a ruler eats, the courtiers will eat the same; the types of clothing a ruler likes to wear, the courtiers will wear the same. Things used by the ruler will be copied by the courtiers. But you insist on eating cinnamon serum, wearing colorful clothing of high quality, and wearing coat with fur. These things are not easy to get, but people will follow your example. This is the root of the lavishness among the courtiers, you are the promoter of this practice and they merely enhance it. As stated in Sijing (詩經 The Book of Poetry): “How can you convince your people if you cannot establish a role model of your own?” If you really meant to prohibit such a trend from continuing, why don’t you be the one who take the lead?”

Qi heard Guan’s words and thought this is a good idea, “Yes I’ll do it!”

Qi packed away his luxurious goods and wore basic clothing, and ate regular food. After a year, the people in the nation were transformed and became thrifty and frugal.

(From Wisdom of Chinese Great Sage)

STORY 2

The legendary ancient Chinese king/sage Yu (founder of Xia Dynasty), once commanded that the forests should be allowed to grow at ease in springtime. No one shall axe down any trees. For the fishes and sea turtles to grow at ease during the summer, no one shall snare or net fishes, hunt birds and steals eggs from bird nests.

At the Yew Chung Educational Foundation, Harmony is embedded in both its educational philosophy and practice, and has been incorporated into education for sustainable development.

YEW CHUNG EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The Yew Chung environment aims to offer the best elements of Chinese and Western cultures, based on universal and culture-specific core values. In particular, the Chinese values of 仁 Ren or humanity, 義 Yi or righteousness, and

和 *He* or harmony are emphasized. They are expressed by nurturing a caring attitude, a sense of social responsibility, a love for peace and a respect for cultural diversity in young children. According to the Yew Chung ECE Value Statement

Yew Chung Education is based on a fundamental value and love for human kind. While it values every child, for who he/she is it aims at the fullest possible development of Ren (仁) or humanity in an individual. This individual will make positive contributions to the development of a just and inclusive society.

Yew Chung believes that a harmonious society is built on quality education of each individual. Education is the foundation of building individuals for a harmonious world. There is a saying in Chinese, suggesting that “in a three-year-old child you can almost foresee how the child will be at eighty” (三歲定八十) (Chan, 2007). Investment on EC education can halve the efforts and multiply the effects on building a harmonious society. ECE is the basis for education and has long-lasting effects (Barnett, 1995; Thompson, Reynolds & Temple, 2001; West, Denton & Reaney, 2001).

This ideal is consistent with the argument that education for sustainable development must begin in early childhood as the values, attitudes, behaviours and skills acquired in this period may have long-lasting impacts (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). Yew Chung believes that young children are catalyst for change. Once young children internalized the urgency and importance of sustainable development, it might also change adult behavior by influencing their parents and the wider community. A small effort can possibly make a change to the whole environment. Yew Chung’s educational objective is to prepare the next generation to be responsible global citizens in the 21st century. In response to the rapidly changing world, the school is preparing students to understand and respect Chinese and Western cultures, in order to promote a peaceful and harmonious world.

In terms of building harmonious relationship between individuals, Yew Chung International School emphasizes intercultural understanding and respect for cultural diversity (Deardorff, 2006; Dyson & Genishi, 1994). Teachers make efforts in understanding children’s diverse cultural backgrounds, and connect this realisation with their instructional efforts by maintaining a culturally congruent learning experience for all individual learners (Hyun, 2007; Hyun & Marshall, 1997). All children learn two languages, i.e., Chinese and English at Yew Chung. Through engaging in conversation and immersing themselves in the two languages, children are participating in a multicultural community (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Ruan, 2003; Gomez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005). Activities that raise children’s awareness of the similarities and differences in cultural practices were incorporated (Mushi, 2004). It allows children to understand harmony in diversity and the foundations for social sustainability.

Regarding economic sustainability, traditional Chinese stories that model proper relations and thriftiness are regularly used for instilling an early understanding of economy in children. For the purpose of this paper, the following case study provides an example of a project focused on the harmonious relationship between human and nature.

A CASE STUDY: EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

A plan of education for environmental protection was developed by the ECE teachers to raise children's awareness of environmental sustainability. An integrated approach was used where the concept was introduced in different activities such as language, science, arts/craft, and physical education. The objectives were: (1) to educate children to recognize the importance of recycling materials, (2) to raise the awareness of energy and water conservation, and (3) to introduce methods to protect the environment (e.g., reduction of air pollution). The teachers had selected the theme of "Reusable Waste" to instill a caring attitude in children. Teachers and children learned, researched, and explored the relationship of waste to sustainable development together.

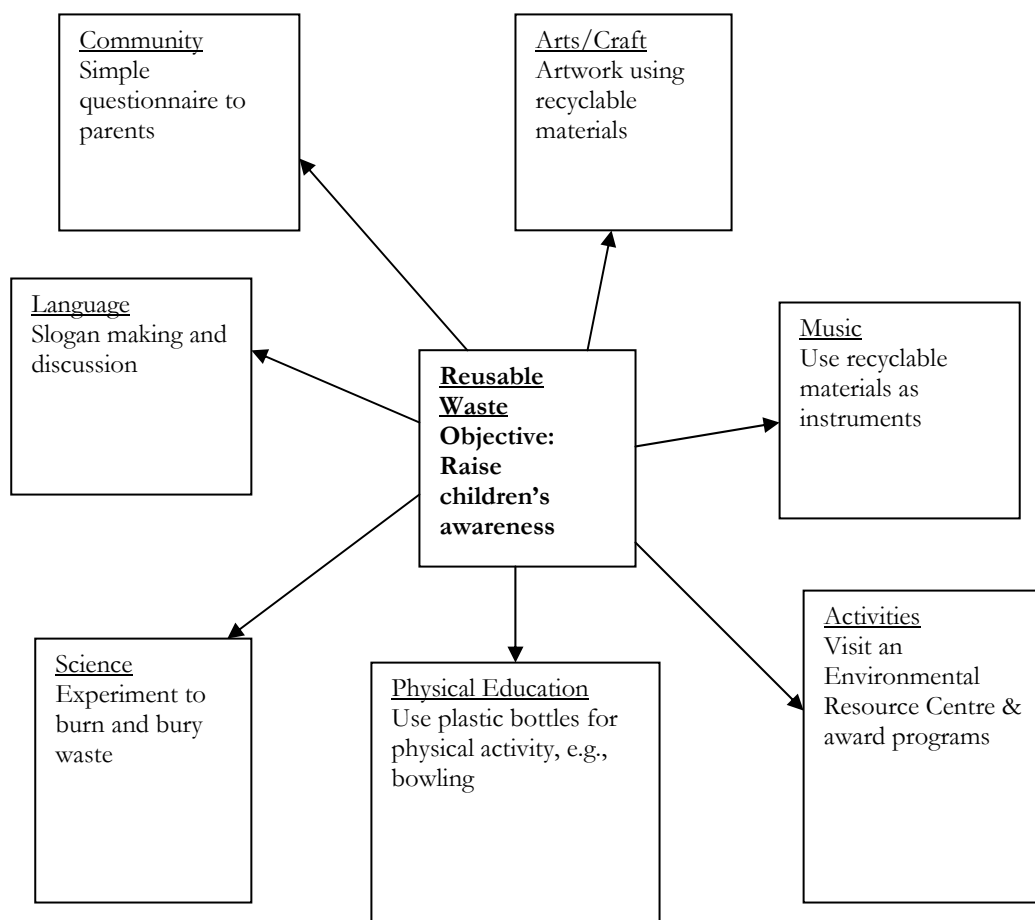


Figure 1. Planning web on education for environmental sustainability

CREATING AN INTEREST AND BRAIN-STORMING

The ECE teachers created interest by scattering litter all over the classroom while the children were having outdoor activities. Then, the teacher ran to the children and told them there was a problem in the classroom. When the children saw the waste materials in the classroom, they were asked questions about waste, such as “What were the different types of waste? How waste affected our lives?” Children participated in brain-storming and raised further questions. The project of “Reusable waste” was launched.

INVESTIGATION OF HOME WASTE

As a small investigation project, children were asked to examine how much and what types of waste they created at home. Each child went home and listed the waste they made in a day. The frequency of different types of waste was tallied and each child contributed to the total count. From the results, a summary chart was created and the outcome was visible for all children.

INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL WASTE AND VISIT TO ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE CENTRE

Teachers and children investigated how the waste were handled in school by discussing with the school helpers and observed when the garbage collectors arrived. A tour was also scheduled to bring children to an Environmental Resource Centre at Fanling, N.T. The children learned about the amount of waste people in Hong Kong made and how the government handle or manage waste.

SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS

The teachers conducted two experiments with children to see different ways of handling waste. The first experiment was to ask children to bury different types of waste under the soil, to see how long it would take for each type of waste to decay. After the experiment, they were informed the number of years it would take. The second experiment was to burn various types of waste to see the effects on the environment. Both methods of handling waste had negative impacts. This raised the awareness of children’s understanding of waste management.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Teachers also shared news clips with children about the current affairs of waste management, and how it affected the community. Children learned that actions can be taken by the community to reduce waste, such as recycling or reusing materials. Children were encouraged to bring reusable materials to school and an award system was in place.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

During outdoor physical activity time, teachers encouraged the children to devise different ways to play with recycled materials, e.g., used plastic bottles for bowling, hockey, and treasure hunt.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Children were asked to create slogans and posters for environmental protection. The posters were drawn and placed around the school, so that everyone were informed and reminded. Moreover, a simple parent survey was conducted to identify the knowledge of parents about recycling, as an attempt to raise the parents' awareness of the importance of recycling.

YEW CHUNG FARM

Many educators note that urban children live a sedentary lifestyle, with the advancement of new technology (Lee, Tsang, Lee, & Ma, 2000). Children now spend a lot of time viewing television, playing video-games and surfing on the Internet, and reduce their outdoor activities. In order to prevent the development of "nature-deficit disorder" (Louv, 2005), Yew Chung encouraged children to have direct contact with nature and therefore operated a farm to create a stimulating learning environment for urbanized children and their families. The purpose was to help children "to learn through life experiences", education IN the environment, not just education ABOUT the environment.

By scheduling regular visits to the Yew Chung Farm, the children have the opportunity to get close to nature and learn to love, protect, and preserve the environment. Children not only get to learn about different forms of plants in the Farm, but also gain hands-on experiences in the whole planting process: ploughing the soil, planting the seeds, watering the land, and they revisit to care and water it every day. From this experience they have discovered the miracle of how a little seed can grow into a plant, blossom, and bear fruits; they have also used their five senses to feel the beauty of nature, and feed the animals. After the activity, as active learners, children looked up further information from books and the Internet. From this experience they realized the importance of cherishing and protecting the nature and all creatures. They also understood the interdependence of human and nature, and the beauty of living harmoniously.

ARTS ACTIVITIES

The teachers and the artists-in-residence have created artworks using recycled materials such as plastic bottles, beverage cans, papers, fabrics, etc, with an environmental protection theme. One example of interest was the pink dolphin project.

RETURN TO NATURE (PINK DOLPHIN PROJECT)

Dolphins are social animals and they engage in free-spirited and playful behaviors. It has been found that dolphins have highly complex social interactions (Frantzis & Herzing, 2002). They swim, play, and live together in harmony. Based on years of studying dolphins' behavior at the Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute in Greece, Frantzis commented that "the image of dolphins...probably had some relaxing effect toward humans and were probably a symbol of harmony and the health of the marine environment" (Justice, 2004). In fact the concepts of harmony and sustainable development may be illustrated by the mammal.

Taken the symbolic meaning into account, the artists-in-residence at Yew Chung International School used a creative project to raise children's awareness about harmony with nature. The theme of Pink dolphin was used as it is endangered species. Pink dolphins appear in the South China Sea and children in Hong Kong could have a chance to see them. The artist used three dolphins to symbolize three different relationships between human and nature. Children worked with the artist to decorate dolphin-shaped wood boards using different types of materials.

The first dolphin was decorated with waste materials to symbolize the damage humans have made to the creature and the natural environment. The mammal's body was strapped with wires and mixtures of household and industrial waste. It gave a graphic expression that the dolphins were suffocating in polluted waters by non-reusable waste. At this stage, humans and dolphins were not living in harmony. The suffering of dolphins was caused by human actions. Human behaviour represented a threat to the survival of other creatures in nature. This also illustrated the interdependence and interconnectedness between human and nature. The second dolphin was decorated with reusable materials such as plastics and papers. The recycled use of materials symbolized humans' realization of the damage they had done in the natural environment. It represented a progression as environmental awareness had been raised at this stage. More actions could be taken to "reduce, reuse and recycle". It is important to assimilate such concepts into ECE settings so that young children can cultivate these habits into their daily living. Finally, the third dolphin was decorated with natural materials such as tree branches, leaves, twigs, and stones. This representation illustrated the final stage and the meaning behind this project: *A return to nature*. The fresh and natural materials reminded humans to cherish the natural surroundings. Children learned to appreciate the natural beauty in the materials they used for decoration. Only through harmonious relationship with nature could humans achieve balanced lives. It echoed the Confucian ideal of "*granting benevolence to mankind and creatures*". The three dolphins did not only symbolize a progression of awareness about environmental protection, they also represented a wish for change from the past to the future, and with the hope for building a better environment that all creatures can live

harmoniously. After all, the goal of reaching harmony in a sustainable living is very much a form of arts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Chinese concept of “*He*” could present a fresh theoretical basis for understanding sustainable development. The natural environment was regarded as part of an integral whole, having solidarity with human beings. Benevolence should be granted to mankind and creatures. The concept is very useful in educating children about the meaning and importance of sustainable development. By adapting the concept of “*He*” (Harmony) in its educational philosophy, Yew Chung Education Foundation has been successful in enhancing children’s respect for nature and cultural diversity. The integrated project also provided a learning environment that nurtured harmonious relationships between humanity and nature, and between individuals.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

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SUMMARY

Since the end of the 1980:s when OECD published the Brundtland report, in which the concept of sustainable development as a critical global issue was introduced, the role of education for global survival has been frequently discussed and explored, by politicians as well as researchers. In school curricula and educational practice, efforts have been made to include material and issues related to, for example, climate changes and nature resources in teaching and learning. Surprisingly little attention has however been paid to the question of the way (and on what premises) early childhood education might (and should) be involved. In this article we discuss some aspects of early childhood education with a bearing on its role in education for sustainable development. The fact that early childhood education belongs to the larger educational system means that global political and economical issues are involved when planning and conducting education for sustainability in pre-school as much as in the rest of the educational system. Recent changes in Swedish educational policy, characteristic traits in pre-school pedagogy and the pre-school child as learner of sustainability are commented upon and discussed.

RÉSUMÉ

Depuis la fin des années 1980, lorsque l'OCDE a publié le rapport Brundtland abordant le concept du développement durable comme problème majeur, le rôle de l'éducation pour la survie globale a été fréquemment discuté et exploré par les politiciens et les chercheurs. Dans les programmes scolaires et dans la pratique éducative, des efforts ont été faits pour inclure dans l'enseignement et dans l'apprentissage du matériel et des questions liées, par exemple, aux changements climatiques et aux ressources naturelles. Étonnamment peu d'attention a été accordée à l'implication de l'éducation de la petite enfance. Dans cet article, nous discutons de quelques aspects de l'éducation de la petite enfance, dont son rôle dans le développement durable. L'éducation de la petite enfance faisant partie du système d'éducation dans sa globalité signifie que les questions de politique et d'éducation mondiales sont en cause lorsqu'il s'agit de planifier et d'offrir l'éducation relative au développement durable à l'école maternelle, aussi bien que dans le reste du système scolaire. Les récents changements dans la politique scolaire suédoise, traits caractéristiques de la pédagogie de l'école maternelle et de l'enfant de maternelle se formant au développement durable sont les éléments commentés et discutés.

RESUMEN

Desde fines de los años 80, cuando la OCDE publicó el informe Brundtland, en el que se introduce el concepto de desarrollo sustentable como un asunto crítico a nivel global, el rol de la educación para la

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sobrevivencia global ha sido objetivo de discusión y análisis permanente por parte de políticos e investigadores. En el curriculum escolar y en las prácticas educacionales, se han desplegado esfuerzos para incluir materiales y asuntos relacionados con, por ejemplo, el cambio climático y los recursos naturales en la pedagogía y el aprendizaje. Sin embargo, resulta sorprendente que se considera poco en qué forma y sobre qué premisas puede y debería participar la educación preescolar. En este artículo, analizamos algunos aspectos de la educación preescolar respecto de su rol en la educación para el desarrollo sustentable. El hecho de que la educación preescolar pertenezca al sistema educacional general significa que hay asuntos políticos y económicos globales involucrados al momento de planificar y orientar la educación para la sustentabilidad tanto en la educación preescolar como en el resto del sistema educacional. Aquí, se comentan y analizan cambios recientes en la política educacional sueca, rasgos característicos en la pedagogía preescolar y los preescolares en su condición de personas que aprenden sobre sustentabilidad.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Early Childhood Education

INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, media, policy and research have directed increasingly and concerted attention towards problems related to global survival. A complex net of interrelated issues covering climate change, decreasing energy resources and increasing poverty has been demonstrated. Also, related to these problems, global justice and democracy as necessary and fundamental frames for global survival have been articulated. When the OECD in the end of the 1980s published the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987) on sustainable development this was a manifestation of an increasing international awareness of a number of serious global problems that called for global policies and strategies. The UN and its sub-organisations play a significant role in initiating and supporting world meetings and summits connected with this theme. So do other actors, in particular various NGOs who have been active in finding ways to agree on international strategies for political, economic and cultural action to meet global threats to the survival of the planet and mankind.

Education plays an important role in this endeavour. A considerable amount of literature and documents have been produced on the role of education as a strong force to initiate and practice ways to prepare citizens all over the world to act as to change the situation. When UN declared 2004-2015 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Education, this underlined the idea that education is a major road for realising global sustainability (UNESCO, 2004). The UN declaration has been developed at regional and local levels, for example by the UN Economic Commission for Europe and its Committee on Environmental Policy, who has outlined a strategy for education for sustainable development in Europe during the period (UNECE, 2005). Thus, without hesitation, there is a clearly articulated political and moral call for education to take part in the project to “save the world”. However, surprisingly little attention has been paid to in what way and on what premises early childhood education might and should be involved. This observation was taken as a departure point

for an international work shop on *The role of early childhood education for a sustainable society*, organised by UNESCO and Göteborg University in 2007 (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008; SOU, 2004:104). During the workshop, a variety of perspectives on early childhood education as a contributor to a sustainable world were presented. The main conclusion from the workshop was a general agreement that early childhood education has all the necessary requirements for contributing to education for sustainability. Its professional competences, cultural experiences, interdisciplinary knowledge base, and personally engaged young and grown up participants were all examples of the arguments that were brought forward.

In this article we will discuss some premises of early childhood education that may be regarded as strengths in education and learning for sustainable societies, but which also may raise critical comments. Our discussion is based on research primarily conducted in Sweden, but with theoretical and conceptual framings linked with recent international research on education and young children. An introductory overview of the role of education for sustainable development in a general perspective will be followed by a discussion of the relationship between early childhood education and the rest of the educational system. Swedish policy during the last decades will serve as an example. Thereafter we will present and discuss some aspects on pedagogical practice as studied and developed in the context of early childhood education. Finally we will discuss the young child as an actor in the sustainability project by raising issues related to the child's position as a right holder and citizen, as a member of a childhood invited to a dialogue on the status of the globe or locked up in a space where justice and belonging are detached from adulthood's care and concerns.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Neither sustainable development nor education can be seen as only, or primarily, a national issue. Both concern social, cultural, environmental, economical and political courses of events with bearing on a global arena. Such a perspective goes well with how the concept sustainable development has been defined. According to the Brundtland report:

1. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It contains within it two key concepts:
 - the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
 - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.
2. Thus the goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries – developed or developing, market-

oriented or centrally planned. Interpretations will vary, but must share certain general features and must flow from a consensus on the basic concept of sustainable development and on a broad strategic framework for achieving it. (WSED, 1987, chapter 2)

This definition emphasises the global perspective. It also recognizes economic and cultural diversity, in terms of needs as well as in terms of contexts for interpretation and implementation of the goals set out in the report. Further, the concept of sustainability is presented in the report as dynamic rather than static, as a means rather than an end, as a challenge for continuous cultural and social change rather than a once and for all measurable outcome, and, finally, as challenging in terms of the development of global solidarity and justice.

When “translating” the definition of sustainable development into educational goals, the integration of environmental, social, economical and value dimensions is emphasised. In this sense, the way education for sustainable development is conceptualized in a similar way to peace education, education for democracy, values education, and citizenship education (Björneloo, 2007; Björneloo & Nyberg, 2007; Hägglund, 1996, 1999; Hägglund & Hill, 1999; Siraj-Blatchford, 2008; Wickenberg et al, 2004; Öhman, 2007). Taken together, this constitutes a field of educational research and practice with explicitly normative signatures, implying ideological and political criteria to direct educational policy and practice. This means that education for sustainable development is not only a matter of finding “subject-areas” for teaching and instruction, but also should integrate values related to democracy, solidarity and justice as necessary contributors to the survival of the earth and mankind. When, at the World Education Forum in Dakar 2000, more than 160 governments agreed upon a common framework for strategies to expand learning opportunities for all, this was a demonstration of the importance of education for global survival on fair conditions, in line with the core idea of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2008). In the recent report on the progress of the millennium goals, there is some optimism, but in general, a pessimistic tone dominates, it suggests that the goal that was set in 2000, education for all in 2015, will not be reached. The report is pointing at several reasons for this, among other things; “...failure of governments to tackle persistent inequalities based on income, gender, location, ethnicity, language, disability and other markers for disadvantage. Unless governments act to reduce disparities through effective policy reforms the EFA promise will be broken.” (ibid, p. 1).

The Dakar agreement suggests that education has an outstanding role to play to support the development of democracies, and to transform knowledge and values. The history of education also illustrates, however, that success in this matter is dependent on power and economical structures, more or less interrelated with colonialism (Davies, 2004). To a large extent, the idea of education as a tool for supporting economical and democratic development has been implemented in north-to-south, industrialized-to-non-industrialized or “enlightened” to “non-enlightened” directions. This model of transformation of

knowledge as a means to create a better world is now met by critical voices, arguing that there are reasons to re-define this one-directional model as the model for successful education (*ibid.*). There are at least two reasons for this model to be questioned.

The first is based on theoretical and empirical insights on the strong impact of contextual and situational dimensions in all kinds of learning. This has contributed to an understanding of education and transformation of knowledge rather as a socio-cultural project than a question of “exporting” knowledge from one culture to another (Vygotsky, 1986). A second reason concerns globalization and its implications. The extensive changes in social and cultural meanings of national borders, brought about by the shift from local to global economy, has revealed that other borders than the ones defined by nations are at work. When overpopulation, environmental damage, climate catastrophes, war and famine are no longer seen as uniquely caused by lack of knowledge among local populations, but linked to complex, global systems with extensive contributions from nations in the North Western hemisphere, then education as a solution to these problems accept some new challenges (Lauder et al, 2006). According to Lauder and others (*ibid*) one such challenge has to do with the fact that modern educational systems are closely integrated with global economy, directing education towards needs being born within systems nourished by global market ideologies. Without going into this analysis any deeper, we can note that one fundamental issue raised is the question whether “...education is in some sense separate and removed from society so that it can act on it as an independent force for progress” (*ibid*, p. 61). Referring to the western education system and its role in social segregation, the authors conclude that the existence of inequality and lack of recognition of difference is a severe impediment to this, but that

... inequality is not just a matter for education but for the structuring of the labour market and the welfare state, ... Without the appropriate economic and social conditions issues of social justice and democracy will not be settled. And, arguably, these are the necessary conditions for addressing the most fundamental problem of all, the sustainability of the planet (Lauder et al, p. 61-62).

In brief, the role of education is described here in terms of increasing inter-relationship with economic systems, thereby risking its independency and critical role in society.

Although not specifically directed towards early childhood education, this very brief over-view of education in a global perspective indicates some, as we see it, fundamental issues that need to be considered in creating a relevant basis for researching early childhood education and sustainable development. Bearing in mind its outstanding potential to contribute to global change on one hand, and its troubled relationship with globally established structures of injustice on the other, we will now enter early childhood education as a “specific case” of education. We will do so by taking a closer look at the Swedish preschool as an institution in the educational system, at pedagogical practices in early childhood

education, and at the preschool child as a learner with the right to be involved in issues that concerns her life here and now and in the future.

THE SWEDISH PRESCHOOL

A majority of Swedish children participate in preschool from their early years. Before the age of two, 84% of all children attain preschool. In the Swedish educational policy, the preschool is seen as a part of the education system, expected to be the first step on a life-long learning process. A national curriculum directing the educational agenda, and a university-based teacher training programme integrated with education for school teachers, are examples of changes that during the last decades have had impacts on the development of the Swedish preschool institution (SOU 1999:63). These changes can be traced to and are linked with changes in the Swedish family, the labour market, and to educational policies over the years (SOU 2000:3). In various ways the preschool has been used to strengthen political agendas in these areas rather than to support young children's learning. The overall object of preschool is however declared to be to support parents' needs of child care, contribute to equality between women and men, and to give all children opportunities to develop their intellectual and social abilities.

In the first official national curriculum for the Swedish preschool in 1998 sustainable development as such is not described as a particular goal (Ministry of Education and Sciences, 1998). However, its content explicitly refers to basic values which are relevant for sustainable development defined as above, including solidarity, tolerance, equality and justice. The establishment of a national curriculum, and the more recent increasing focus on university status of the pre-school teacher training has been interpreted as a political recognition of pre-school as being a full-worthy member of the educational system. However, has been pointed out that the relationship between institutions for early childhood education, other educational institutions, and society, in a historical perspective have not been stable, but have changed over time. For example, Vallberg Roth (2002) has shown how curricula, and discourses for young children's education have shifted during history according to views of the relation between men and women, children and adults, and the roles of religion and society. Historically, she suggests various curricula emphasising "time-typical" views of gender and authority, with a curriculum focused upon God, around 1850 to 1890 (with a patriarchal code), a curriculum of the Good Home, around 1890 to 1930/40 (a sex segregated code), a curriculum of the Welfare State, around 1950s to the middle of the 1980s (the gender-neutral equality code), and a curriculum of the Situated World Child, from the late 1980s up to today (a pluralistic, sex/gender code).

When it comes to a curriculum specifically directed towards sustainable development, such a curriculum is not available in Sweden or in the rest of the world. In fact education for sustainable development is hardly discussed as an

object, or as an act of learning (Pramling Samuelsson et al, 2008). The object of learning, that is, what children are supposed to learn in preschool is defined in the Swedish curriculum in terms of goals to strive for. This means that the directions that the teachers are supposed to focus children's interest towards, rather than the exact content that the children are to learn, is emphasised. With reference to what was earlier mentioned, that it is possible to link values as formulated in the Swedish national curriculum for the pre-school to the definition of sustainable development, one may argue that this is a way to integrate sustainable development into the agenda for pedagogical activities in the Swedish pre-schools. That is, to respond to the call for education for sustainable development as a vision, or a perspective rather than as a specific content.

In Sweden today, there are signals indicating a political re-orientation for the status and position of the pre-school in relation to the rest of the educational system. One line of change concerns an increasing number of institutions governed by interests other than the public ones. This goes for pre-schools as well as for compulsory and secondary schools. Critical voices have been raised warning for an increasing social and cultural segregation as a result. A second line of change concerns a suggested re-structuring of the organisation of professional training for teachers in early childhood education. According to a recently launched official report (SOU 2008:109), the period of training will be shorter and less integrated with school-teachers to be, compared to today's organisation.

Taken together, when considering the Swedish pre-school institution and education for sustainable development, we have pointed at some issues worth closer attention and reflection. The lack of a curriculum explicitly formulating goals directed towards sustainable development, changes in governing structures, and the expected re-organisation of teacher training may contribute to a less powerful position for the pre-school to support social justice and equality. These are complex issues and we realize that what have been introduced here can hardly be seen as a complete picture. However, in the light of education for sustainable development, we find it important to consider the status of the Swedish pre-school institution as an independent (and potentially critical) actor at the educational stage, something that currently may be at risk. However, even though external conditions are objects for change at the moment, this does not necessarily mean a change in the daily practice inside the institutions. We will now turn to some aspects of pedagogical practice in early childhood education with relevance for learning for sustainable development.

THE PRESCHOOL PEDAGOGY

The preschool was developed on other grounds and merits than the school, and is still run differently in most places in the world. The idea of young children's education in Sweden has in its origin strongly related to Fröbel and his views on

how to educate pre-school children (Fröbel, 1995). The idea of using the child's every day life as a frame of reference, formed a fundamental principle in his pedagogical theory. All activities performed at home, like kitchen work, sawing, working with wood work, gardening, etc. served as basic foundations for learning. This can be seen as a way of coming close to children's experiences and to what is familiar and well known for them (Sommer at al, in press). Learning should start from where the children are, according to Fröbel. He also knew that young children were different from older children and therefore he advocated a pedagogical approach based on play, learning and work. As he saw it, young children have to be active in body and mind in order to find interest in and respond to opportunities for learning.

The idea of transmitting knowledge to children, commonly practiced in school, has never been an issue in the preschool context. Even though practice can have different qualities and give each child various experiences, according to Wals, preschool pedagogy has its own tradition and qualities:

So let us return to kindergarten and explore why kindergartens offer more for moving towards a more sustainable world than many of our universities. Kindergarten ideally is or can be places where young children live and learn, explore boundaries, in a safe and transparent world without hidden agendas. Kindergartens are places where conflicts emerge everyday and used as a 'teachable' moment. Kindergartens today are multi-cultural places where kids with different backgrounds all come together and get to know each other as they are, not as they are portrayed by others'. Kindergartens are places where different generations meet and interact (children, parents and grandparents). //...// There are no dumb questions in kindergarten and there's always time for questions and questioning. The life-world of the child forms the starting point for learning and not disciplinary problems (Wals, 2006, p. 45).

Even though this description of pre-school transmits a somewhat idealised image, it carries some qualities, potentially efficient in learning for sustainable development. One important trait that is identified is the emphasis on regarding the child as a whole individual. This implies that care and learning have to be integrated as of equal importance (Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2006). The balance between these approaches has been discussed by Halldén (2007). She argues that it is important to see the child as an independent agent, but she also underlines that this agency must be balanced by care provided by the adults and society. According to her there is a risk to loose aspects of care in our ambitions to teach and transmit knowledge to children. As we see it, care is an important aspect of all learning when it comes to young children. In the context of early childhood education for sustainable development it would be difficult not to include aspects of care as a necessary dimension in learning solidarity, democracy and rights.

Research has shown that preschool children's lives in Sweden are highly institutionalized. Also, it has been shown that daily life in pre-school constitutes an arena for developing and practising moral, ethical and social dimensions of relationships (Johansson, 2007, Löfdahl & Hägglund, 2006, 2007). This is an

important observation when discussing sustainable development as it has bearing on the recognition of social difference, a fundamental dimension in care and solidarity, core concepts in sustainable development.

Research on pre-school children and learning has shown that children learn through play as individuals, and that we should learn from this and integrate play and learning into a wholeness in goal directed preschools. Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2006, 2007) studied the opportunities that teachers' had to achieve this, and found that there were certain criteria that had to be met. There must be an oscillation between fantasy and reality, the positions of the teacher and the child have to be equal (both interested and curious), both teacher and child need to be actively involved, and there should be space for children's initiatives and ideas. Following this approach, the teacher regards the child as competent and willing to try to understand. Elkind (2007) suggests play, work and love as the three criteria for a new model of early childhood education. Although somewhat different from the one presented by Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson, there are similarities in the way play and learning are integrated.

There is a lot of knowledge in the world that is unknown for children. Working towards making the unknown visible to them means to create opportunities to discover the unknown in what they do and work with (Sommer et al, in press). This puts demands on the teachers to be aware of what the child's learning should be directed towards (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). On the other hand, there are also unknown phenomena for the teachers, particularly concerning the future. From a pedagogical perspective, this is a difficult challenge. One way to deal with this might be to try to identify what all children may benefit from in the future. Johansson (2007) suggests that courage, integrity, critical thinking and responsibility are necessary personal attributes in order to be prepared for an unknown future. Also, we would say, the ability to recognize injustice, and to discern when human rights are violated is needed.

A central question for teachers working systematically with education for sustainable development is to articulate goals in terms of ideas of sustainable development in their own minds and also be able to meet and challenge children's experiences and ideas (Pramling Samuelsson, 2005). This puts high demands on the pedagogical approach. An openness to diversity and to applying children's own ideas and experiences in fostering their awareness of meanings is likely to be successful (Pramling, 1996). Although there is a broad agreement on the fact that children's play is a most important aspect of learning, many teachers in the Western part of the world have not found ways to develop this into practice. The opposite is found, for example in many Chinese contexts, where teachers are engaged in children's play since they believe that this is the best way to influence children to learn what they intend (Pramling Samuelsson & Fler, 2008).

During the international workshop referred to above, recommendations for education for sustainable development were formulated (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). It was concluded that early childhood education carries traditions based on, among other things, thematic oriented instruction, authentic topics, and close relationships between teachers and children. Some problems were also articulated, first and foremost the fact that in a global perspective, not all children have access to preschool education and even where they do, many don't have the high quality educated teachers and safe and secure environments to learn. When it comes to education for sustainable development, it was suggested that teachers needed to develop and make concrete their ideas on what sustainable development might mean in young children's everyday life. During the workshop it was also suggested that there is a tendency among adults to image the future as a catastrophe, and to feel that they should protect children from information about the problems that lie ahead. As has been shown however, children develop concepts and make sense of difficult, abstract and dark phenomena such as war, famine and death, even if they have not concretely experienced it (Hong-Ju, 2006, Hakvoort & Hägglund, 2001).

In this section we have presented a summarized overview of some aspects of the pedagogical practice in preschool, aspects that we see as important in the perspective of education for sustainable development. We have pointed at traits in the fundamental ideas of learning and teaching in the preschool tradition, such as the integration of playing and learning, of care and learning and the necessary link between children's life experiences and learning. We have considered the new directions that are being taken in Swedish educational policy in general and early childhood education in particular. In a recent national evaluation of the Swedish pre-school, it was concluded that the planning, conduct and evaluation of pedagogical activities tend to be more and more "school like", with a greater emphasis being placed on intellectual achievement and the grading of each child's development (Skolverket, 2008). Since a fundamental pedagogical challenge in early childhood education is to find approaches allowing for combining the traditional school subjects, and in transforming and practicing values, the object of learning in early childhood education for sustainable development needs to be articulated as an inclusive, experience based matter rather than as a narrow, abstract piece of measurable knowledge.

THE CHILD AND LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A final focus in our discussion concerns the child's involvement in education for sustainable development. One of the unquestionable demands is that the acquired insights and knowledge are sustainable, i.e. they must survive time and space. This means not only long lasting knowledge for each child, but also that the content in what is learned makes the child aware that time and place are changing entities. Such an approach does not only provide foundations for

education for sustainable development, but it is also a way to create a sense of connection and belonging for the child. Such a sense of connection, of being part of something that stretches further than one's own person, may be considered an important prerequisite in learning for sustainable development.

This way of looking at the child in a wider context challenges traditional models of development and learning, where the child is regarded as not-yet-grown-up, as someone not yet complete as a human being. According to Lee (2005), the concept of separation as it has been used and understood in research on children and their development, needs to be more closely examined and questioned. One of his arguments for this is that if parents and teachers are striving for the child to reach independence and have the ability to separate from other people, they may create an individual who is unable to connect and relate to other human beings. Instead of trying to foster the ability to separate from others (i.e. to stress individualistic norms), Lee argues for 'separability', that is, an ability to both separate and connected in relation to other people. If this ability to meet other people as both dependent and independent is encouraged, the value of dependency and attachment is also recognized: "If all separateness rests on separability, then everyone, adult and child, no matter how effective their performance of separateness is in gathering value to themselves, is always attached, connected and dependent" (Lee, 2005, p. 156).

We think that the ability to act independently and to recognize dependency in relation to other human beings is a core issue in learning for sustainable development. This way of understanding the fundamental condition of humanity corresponds to what has sometimes been referred to as an inbuilt tension in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Publications, 2009). The Convention articulates both the child's right to be protected and her/his right to participate, both the right to be dependent and to be independent. Compared to the general Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention opts for a right holder who is not only able to separate from others but who is also allowed and able to ask for support and protection from others.

When discussing the issue of connectedness and belonging, it is also well worth underlining the content in article 12 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, according to which the child has the right to have a say and to be heard in questions that will have consequences for her/him. Sustainable development truly belongs to those issues that will have consequences for the life of the next generation and beyond. Therefore it is logical to argue that children should be involved in these matters. However, such an ambition demands careful planning and reflection in order to meet the necessary balance between the child's right to be protected and to act independently, as discussed above. It also demands a thorough examination of what kind of experiences in children's present life are likely to have long-lasting bearing on future competence to contribute to sustainability. In a recently conducted study on children's social learning in pre-school settings we found that the collective

social knowledge such as rules for social inclusion, and views on what kind of resources (age, gender, ethnicity) have social value, were to a large extent developed by the children without much involvement from adults (Löfdahl & Hägglund, 2006, 2007). If this observation holds, there are reasons to consider children's experiences of social justice and equity in informal situations in pre-school. One may argue that if this primarily is a matter of child-child interaction it means a kind of situated social knowledge, developed in a context separated from adult guidance and control.

Our image of the child as a learner for sustainable development is a person with the ability to comprehend complex and difficult truths about life, today and tomorrow. This child holds rights and a kind of citizenship which recognizes her/him as someone who can demand serious efforts from responsible adults and institutions to create effective contexts for learning about premises for sustainability.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

In this article we have discussed a range of issues involved in early childhood education for sustainable development. We have considered the fact that early childhood education belongs to the larger education system and therefore is a target for global political and economical forces which may jeopardize its possibilities to act independently in forming and conducting education for sustainability. We have pointed at some recent changes in Swedish educational policy which probably will influence conditions for life in pre-school, and we also commented some characteristic traits in pre-school pedagogy, traits that we find important to develop and articulate in education for sustainable development. Finally, we pictured a child who we expect to be prepared for learning about sustainability. Included in this child's learning is an awareness of a life long responsibility and a conviction that working for a sustainable world demands co-operation between human beings across borders of time and space. We have not argued that this is an easy pedagogical task, but hopefully we have encouraged further discussion and reflection.

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EXPLORING THE RESISTANCE: AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATING FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Sue Elliott and Julie Davis

SUMMARY

Climate change and sustainability are issues of global significance. While other education sectors have implemented education for sustainability for many years, the early childhood sector has been slow to take up this challenge. This position paper poses the question: Why has this sector been so slow to engage with sustainability? Explanations are proposed based on a review of research literature and the authors' long engagement in seeking to bring early childhood education and education for sustainability together. The imperative is for the early childhood sector to engage in education for sustainability without delay and to 'get active' for a sustainable future.

RÉSUMÉ

Les changements climatiques et le développement durable sont chargés d'une signification globale. Alors que d'autres secteurs de l'éducation se sont impliqués dans l'éducation au développement durable depuis plusieurs années, celui réservé à la petite enfance a tardé à relever le défi. La question que pose cet article est: Pourquoi ce secteur a pris tant de temps à s'engager vis-à-vis le développement durable? Des explications sont proposées sur la base d'une revue de la recherche et de l'engagement des auteurs qui tentent de réunir l'éducation de la petite enfance et l'éducation pour le développement durable. Il est impératif que le secteur de la petite enfance s'engage dans l'éducation pour le développement durable sans délai et qu'il demeure alerte dans le futur.

RESUMEN

El cambio climático y la sustentabilidad son cuestiones de importancia global. Mientras que otros sectores educativos han implementado la educación para la sustentabilidad hace muchos años, el sector de la temprana infancia ha sido lento en asumir este desafío. Este trabajo plantea la siguiente cuestión: ¿Por qué este sector sido tan lento para comprometerse con la sustentabilidad? Las explicaciones que se proponen han sido basadas en un estudio de investigación literaria y el largo compromiso del autor buscando unir la educación de la temprana infancia con la educación para la sustentabilidad. El imperativo es que el sector de la temprana infancia se comprometa con la educación para la sustentabilidad sin más demora y se plantee activamente por un futuro sustentable.

Keywords: Sustainability, early childhood education, education for sustainability, environmental education.

INTRODUCTION

National and international media events, reports and conferences such as Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), the *Stern Review* of the economics of climate change (2006), the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2006; 2007), the Garnaut Climate Change Review (Commonwealth Government of Australia, 2008) and most recently, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań, Poland (December, 2008) have heightened awareness of how humans are over-stretching the Earth's life support systems. As has been reported in relation to the findings of the 2007 United Nations Global Environment Outlook 4 Report, "Humanity is changing Earth's climate so fast and devouring resources so voraciously that it is poised to bequeath a ravaged planet to future generations" (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Oct 2007). Global warming is not just about the state of the natural environment; it is increasingly recognised as having significant health, security, economic and social justice dimensions.

The long term health and survival of human populations and the health of global natural systems are closely entwined. The need for fundamental changes in how we live has become impossible to ignore. Education has a key role and all sectors – including early childhood education – must be a part of re-imagining and transforming current unsustainable patterns of living. The year 2005 marked the beginning of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), but it is unlikely that many early childhood educators have heard of this significant initiative. Yet, there is possibly no greater global concern impacting on the lives of young children – with ramifications for both present and future generations – than the state of the environment and the equitable and sustainable use of its resources.

SUSTAINABILITY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It is generally recognised that education has a major role in aiding societies to make the transition to sustainable ways of living. Furthermore, there is evidence – over thirty years – of educational sectors including schools, universities, technical colleges and community education, making concerted efforts to raise awareness of, and seeking to implement environmental/ sustainability education. For example, Australia, at both national and state levels, has committed to a Sustainable Schools initiative, mirroring other 'whole school' approaches underway around the world such as Europe's Eco-schools, the Green School Project in China, Enviroschools in New Zealand and the Foundation for Environmental Education's (FEE) Eco-schools, the largest internationally coordinated effort with members in 48 countries (Henderson & Tilbury, 2004). This same period has seen the rise of a vigorous international research community around environmental/ sustainability education, paralleling the theorising and debates that have emerged over the past few decades in the

educational field more generally. Yet, a scan of contemporary research journals in early childhood education finds little reference to environmental and sustainability issues, their impacts on young children or how early childhood education might contribute to changing unsustainable ways of living (Davis, forthcoming).

Perhaps this omission is because the benefits of living in a globalised, technologised material world have so colonised our thinking and acting that we cannot see the harm; or perhaps the issues are just so overwhelming that early childhood educators feel they are powerless to 'make a difference'. Perhaps, we have become 'hard wired' to respond only to the most imminent threats rather than the long term, cumulative ones; or perhaps we educators educate for 'sustainability' and, therefore, the matter is being taken care of? Whatever the reasons for the lack of interest in sustainability issues, we are already 'doing environmental' clearly some members of the early childhood field who do recognise that the early years are a pivotal period when understandings of sustainability and the ethics of living sustainability are constructed (UNESCO, 2008).

OVERCOMING THE RHETORIC: DEFINING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The term 'environmental education' emerged in the 1960s and was defined by the Tbilisi Declaration in 1977 as a comprehensive lifelong education that should be responsive to a rapidly changing world. 'It should prepare the individual for life through an understanding of the major problems of the contemporary world, and the provision of skills and attributes needed to play a productive role towards improving life and protecting the environment with due regard to ethical values' (UNESCO, 1978: 1). In practice, environmental education has tended to focus on 'green' issues such as nature conservation and the promotion of human connections with the natural environment. However, a reexamination of the Declaration suggests that its original intention does, in fact, align with the intentions of the newly emerging 'education for sustainability' – seen as replacing 'environmental education'. In effect, the recent change in terminology from Environmental Education to Education for Sustainability (EfS) attempts to redress the perceived 'greenness' of environmental education and to focus more explicitly on the pedagogies of humans as agents of change.

While there is no 'right' definition or way of practising EfS, the prevailing orientation in Australia emerges out of critical theory. Critical theory provides a basis for investigating power relationships and the marginalisation of some social groups (Freire, 1972; Habermas, 1971). Traditionally, these social groups include those excluded by gender, class and race. As it relates to education for sustainability, marginalised groups also include children and future generations as

well as non-human species, places, and even natural elements, such as water, soil and air. Critical theory also assists in understanding how education systems have played their part in this marginalisation (Stevenson, 2007). In other words, challenging the status quo in education is a fundamental tenet of EfS. As Orr, a leading advocate of education for sustainability has commented: “The crisis [of sustainability] cannot be solved by the same kind of education that has helped create the problems” (1992: 83). Over a decade later, UNESCO Director General Koichir Matsuura reiterated that ‘education will have to change so that it addresses the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems that we face in the 21st century’ (Australian National Commission for UNESCO, 2005: 2). Essentially, then, EfS is education with a transformative agenda – it is about creating change towards more sustainable ways of living, even though we may not yet know what these changes will look like. It has both humanistic and ecological values including: living within ecological limits, action-oriented for social change, participation and democratic decision-making, and equity as an intergenerational value or goal (UNESCO, 2005).

In Australia, two important initiatives that provide pedagogical support for the implementation of EfS are the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the National Environmental Education Statement for Schools in Australia (2005). These related documents provide curriculum principles and strategies that imply a pedagogical advantage in early childhood education with respect to the implementation of EfS. The National Environmental Education Statement for Schools (2005), for example, suggests experiential learning, values clarification, creative thinking, problem solving, story telling and inquiry learning as important in EfS, while the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005) document cites the following key education principles as pivotal: interdisciplinary and holistic, values-driven, critical thinking and problem solving, multi method, participatory decision making, applicability, and locally relevant. Both sets of characteristics clearly align with early childhood pedagogy (Arthur et al, 2008) and suggest that what is required is a deeper understanding of the links between the pedagogies of EfS and early childhood pedagogies.

Drawing on these similarities, a description of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS) is proposed. We claim that ECEfS is an empowering approach to education underpinned by both humanistic and ecological values that promotes change towards sustainable learning communities. Consequently, ECEfS seeks to empower children and adults to change their ways of thinking, being and acting in order to minimise environmental impacts and to enhance environmentally and socially sustainable practices within early childhood settings and into homes and the wider community.

Nevertheless, despite these similarities the early childhood sector has been slow to engage with EfS. This makes our question ‘Why?’ very pertinent. In our reflections on both early childhood education and EfS, it is not so much about

radically changing what early educators do, but understanding that there are strong reasons why it is important that sustainability be urgently addressed in and through early childhood education.

EXAMINING THE RESISTANCE: WHY THE SECTOR HAS BEEN SLOW TO ENGAGE WITH EFS?

As noted earlier, recent international reviews of early childhood EE/EfS have shown that the early childhood education field has been slow to engage with thinking and practice around sustainability issues, despite uptake by other educational sectors. In Australia's only national review of early childhood environmental education (the New South Wales Environmental Protection Agency's 2003 report 'Patches of Green'), which was conducted before the term 'education for sustainability' became more common but focussed on EE within a socio-political educational framework, green patches were described as 'exemplary individuals, organisations and centres that shared a passion and commitment to the importance of early childhood environmental education' (NSW EPA, 2003: 1). These green patches were localised, disconnected, had limited support, resources or research, and were rarely acknowledged within either the environmental education or the early childhood fields. Later, in 2006, Elliott reported on a growing number of initiatives at local and state levels and the emergence of some interest from both early childhood and environmental organisations at the national level via their professional associations. However, this growing interest and engagement is yet to be constructively supported by state and federal governments – seen as central to widespread systemic uptake. Thus, mobilisation of the sector continues to be ad hoc. In order to further confirm the low level of interest in ECEfS Davis (forthcoming) surveyed a set of Australian and international research journals in EfS and ECE looking for research at their intersection. The results simply confirmed that there has been very little research related to ECEfS or early childhood environmental education – in sharp contrast to other sectors of education that have developed over decades.

In seeking to understand why the field of early childhood education has been slow to engage with the challenges of sustainability both nationally and internationally, the authors propose the following explanations:

1. TRADITIONAL OUTDOOR PLAY IN NATURE ELIMINATES THE NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED.

There is a long history of children learning through play both in and with nature outdoors and this is deeply embedded in early childhood education. Educational theorists such as Froebel and Dewey espoused the virtues of learning outdoors in natural settings for children. Froebel (1782 – 1852), often regarded as the father of the kindergarten movement, identified analogies between the work of educators and gardeners, describing kindergartens as 'gardens for children' where

close contact with nature was foundational to children's education and children were nurtured akin to plants. Later, Dewey (1859, 1952) lamenting the impact of the industrial revolution on children, suggested that a school surrounded by natural environments was to be encouraged. Rivkin (1998) summarises thus "good schooling for Dewey was dependent on the outdoor world, because that is where life occurs" (p. 200).

While play in nature outdoors in early childhood education persists, this tradition is being eroded. For example, particularly in Western countries, there are perceptions that 'real learning' takes place indoors. There are concerns about safety outdoors and flow-on litigation and new learning technologies offer attractive alternatives that militate against experiential learning in natural outdoor playspaces (Furedi, 2001; Gill, 2007; Louv, 2005; Malone, 2008; Palmer, 2006). Internationally, there have been urgent calls for the traditions of play outdoors in nature to be reinvigorated (Elliott, 2008; Gill, 2007; Lester & Maudsley, 2006; Louv, 2005; Palmer, 2006; Wilson, 2008). However, there are also concerns that these may be too late for children already being reared in 'safe', often synthetic playspaces that are devoid of direct nature experiences. The possibility of adults and children embracing EfS in such unsustainable playspaces appears remote.

Further, where 'play in nature' traditions do remain, educators may succumb to the notion that EfS is *only* about venturing outdoors to play, and nothing more. Case studies of natural playspace development in early childhood services (Elliott Ed, 2008) have revealed that while the learning focus, at first glance, may seem to relate only to connections with 'plants, rocks and logs', underlying themes of sustainability abound in the collaborative processes of natural playspace development. In these case studies, children, parents and educators explored values, problem solved, engaged in participatory decision making, and developed a sense of place and local relevance. These are strategies and principles closely aligned with those previously noted (National Environmental Education Statement for Schools in Australia, 2005; UNESCO, 2005). These themes have the potential to be further expanded, and made even more explicit, by educators who are aware of and concerned about sustainability issues. However, the opportunities are easily overlooked. A view of play in nature outdoors as being *sufficient* to address the challenges of sustainability is inadequate (Chawla, 2006; Elliott, 2008). As Davis (1998) has stated "... thinking about the environment is just not expansive enough to embrace the broad range of ecological and social concerns that we are facing" (p. 120).

2. SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES ARE CONCEPTUALLY BEYOND THE GRASP OF YOUNG CHILDREN AND ARE TOO DIRE

The next explanation for the slow uptake of EfS in EC is based on two misconceptions that, in our experience, frequently come to the fore when engaging with early childhood educators, environmental educators and the wider community. Environmental education or EfS is often perceived as comprising

abstract concepts beyond the cognitive grasp of a developmentally-defined Piagetian pre-operational child, aged 2-7 years (Berndt, 1997). For example, how can a four-year-old construct an understanding of the greenhouse effect, climate change or a hole in the ozone layer when such concepts are not readily observable and cannot be experienced first hand? How can a child possibly engage with these burdensome issues? Such questioning reveals two misconceptions.

The first relates to conceptions of learners and learning. There is no recognition, for example, that daily experience with the air we breathe and the water we drink might underpin later learning of abstract environmental concepts – in other words, young children *do* have foundational experiences with environmental/sustainability concepts. This misconception also proffers the idea that education for sustainability prioritises conceptual knowledge over values and skills such as problem solving, creativity and collaboration. This is an erroneously narrow view of EfS as being simply about the acquisition of knowledge about environmental topics. We suggest that this is founded on outdated transmissive modes of learning which do not reflect current pedagogical thinking. Further, this misconception is not aligned with current socio-cultural perspectives of children as capable and competent learners (Arthur et al, 2008; Edwards, Gandini & Foreman, 1998). Indeed, researchers such as Palmer and Suggate (2004) have been able to demonstrate that even 4 year olds are capable of thinking about complex environmental issues and topics.

A second misconception derives from images of the young child as innocent, vulnerable and immature. Childhood is seen by many as a transition period, the time prior to adulthood and therefore, less valued. From this perspective, it could be argued that the health woes of the planet are topics that are just too dire to be presented to young children deemed incapable of acting to protect it. Sobel (1996) asserts that a ‘doom and gloom’ approach that focuses on environmental issues may be counter-productive and lead to ‘ecophobia’ – a fear of environmental tragedies and alienation from nature (Sobel, 1996: 5). In contrast, however, there are now documented examples of ECEfS as a positive, transformative and empowering process (Davis, Gibson, Pratt, Eglington & Rowntree, 2005; Davis & Elliott, 2003; Elliott, in press; Vaealiki & Mackey, 2008; Young, 2007). In these examples, critical and transformative theories are foundational, and gradual change and collective action are the hallmarks of the approaches being taken by early childhood communities that have embraced EfS. With appropriate pedagogies, young children have been shown to be significant players in the changes needed for creating sustainable futures. Adults can encourage children to be ‘problem seekers, problem solvers and action takers in their own environments’ (Davis, 2007 on line). ECEfS can be viewed, then, as an antidote to doom and gloom with the potential to empower in support of repairing and healing the planet.

3. *CURRENT ECE RESEARCH IS BASED IN ANTHROPOCENTRIC
WORLDVIEWS THAT BLIND RESEARCHERS TO ENVIRONMENTAL
CONCERNS*

Contemporary early childhood researchers, predominantly the poststructuralists, have been instrumental in shifting the paradigms in early childhood education in order to effect theoretical and pedagogical change (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Mac Naughton, 2000). Indeed, Woodhead (2006) attributes social constructionist, post modernist and poststructuralist perspectives as being influential in liberating early childhood from narrow conceptualisation's of what is 'natural, normal and necessary' (p. 21). As a result, there have been significant changes over the past decade or so, with respect to how issues such as gender, class, culture and ability equities are constructed and 'taught' in early childhood settings (Arthur et al, 2008; Dau, 2003; Mac Naughton, 2003). Intergenerational equity – a central concern of those working in the field of education for sustainability – is a concept that proposes that each successive generation should live sustainably, so that future generations might experience a similar quality of life to that of past generations. This is a temporally-located equity founded on the sharing of the planet's resources, not only with future human generations, but also with non-human species. It is apparent, though, that the thinkers and researchers who have been at the forefront of reconceptualising early childhood education have ignored intergenerational and inter-species equity as discussions about these equities are virtually non-existent in this newer early childhood literature. Hence, we postulate two 'blind spots' (Wagner, 1993:16) that we attribute to an (unreconstructed) underlying human-centred or anthropocentric worldview.

Blind Spot 1: Nature is silent and silenced

First, poststructuralist perspectives privilege humans and human meanings through a focus on language. What is not conscientised or conveyed through language seemingly has little relevance. Methodologically, text and the deconstruction of text reveal meanings and relationships that place humans at centre-stage. Such a placement denies agency to the biosphere. Nature is invisible, does not have a voice, and does not provide a text for deconstruction of power relations between humans and nature. Only conscientising humans can create texts. As a result, non-human species and natural elements are automatically and fundamentally 'silenced' from conceptualisations that rely on voice and text for authenticity. Yet, the biosphere does exist, and impacts on human life and constructions of meaning, in profound ways on a daily, – even moment by moment, basis. Acknowledgment of the agency of the biosphere and the way humans interact with, and feel, the biosphere is fundamental to intergenerational equity. In summary, Berry (1988: 240) states:

The natural world is subject as well as object. The natural world is the maternal source of our being as earthlings and life-giving nourishment of our physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral and religious existence. The natural world is the

larger sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence.

Thus, like most theoretical paradigms, poststructuralist thinking ignores the biosphere and reinforces anthropocentrism, blinding adherents to alternative perspectives that arise from a biocentric worldview or ontology that does not place humans centre stage, but rather promotes the intrinsic value of all life, now and into the future.

Blind Spot 2: Human/nature relationships are complex rather than dichotomous

Second, dichotomies such as male and female, or rich and poor that reveal human power relations are fundamental to poststructuralist research. The human/nature dichotomy is another 'blind spot' that highlights an underlying anthropocentric ontology. The two challenges inherent in this dichotomy are the diverse contextually driven human/nature power relations that are possible, and the absence of nature's voice in the dichotomy. To illustrate the first, events such as Hurricane Katrina and the Indonesian tsunami, as depicted in Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, show that humans cannot control nature. Indeed, humans can experience extreme disempowerment in relation to some natural events. Yet in other human/nature interactions – such as irrigation, mining and clear felling – nature is perceived as an untamed resource that humans must control and conquer in order to survive, a position of empowerment for humans. Hence, a dichotomous view of human/nature relations does not represent the real complexity of human/nature relationships. To think in terms of a human/nature dichotomy is anathema to ecologists and environmentalists who view the world as a complex web of self-regulating systems where humans are part of nature not its master. Based on these 'blind spots', we contend that a poststructuralist theoretical perspective that has informed early childhood research in recent years cannot adequately provide the philosophical and research framework needed to support a paradigm shift towards education for sustainability. The challenge is to create a unique theoretical space underpinned by biocentric ontology to progress thinking, research and the uptake of ECEfS.

Fortunately, theoretical support for EfS research can be drawn from contemporary systems theorists including Bateson, Maturana and Capra who have provided significant input into bridging the academic silos between the study of biological systems and the study of social systems to forge what is known as systems theory. According to Capra (2005:4) 'living sustainably means recognising that we are an inseparable part of the web of life, of human and non-human communities, and that enhancing the dignity and sustainability of any one of them will enhance all others'. Systems theory incorporates notions of stability, adaptability and co-evolution. Capra (1999) also adds that, at critical points of instability, new structures and relationships may creatively emerge. Stern (2006) and Gore (2006) would conclude that we are on the cusp of a critical point of instability right now! In accepting the value of systems theory, one leaves behind

reductionist and dichotomous approaches and embraces the notion that the sum of the whole is more than just the sum of the parts. There is no room for dichotomies and relationships of power in systems theory. Human relationships are researched, then, as one part of the complex social and ecological systems in the biosphere, not as the central set of relationships. Systems theory, we assert, offers a new theoretical space for ECEfS thinking and research. It offers the potential to redefine relationships between people and nature, and between children, educators and parents. These are fundamental relationships needed to drive transformative change in early childhood learning communities.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to impress upon readers the urgency surrounding global environmental issues and the need for early childhood educators to 'get on board' in helping to address these major concerns. We have also sought to overcome the rhetoric around EfS and to explain why we think the early childhood sector has been slow to engage with EfS when some other educational sectors have been engaged for decades. Further, we have highlighted the transformative potential of EfS in early childhood communities and for ECEfS research to be informed by critical theory and systems theory. As each successive public report on the state of the planet creates a more dire global picture – with severe potential impacts on children and future generations – we have no hesitation in affirming the imperative for early childhood educators to engage with EfS. The time for stalling has passed.

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Sue Elliott lectures at RMIT University. She is a doctoral candidate at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia and aspects of this article are based on her EdD research.

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THE PRESCHOOL CHILD OF TODAY – THE WORLD-CITIZEN OF TOMORROW?

Eva Johansson

SUMMARY

Ideas of sustainable development, globalization and global citizenship raise questions about justice, rights, responsibility and caring for human beings and the world. Interest in the role of education for sustainable development has increased during the last decades, however little attention has been directed to early education. Even if the moral dimension in learning for sustainable development is evident it is seldom discussed or analysed. The aim of this paper is to discuss issues in everyday interaction as aspects of learning for sustainable development in preschool. The examples used as the basis for discussion are drawn from research on morality among young children (aged 1-6 years) in various daycare contexts in Sweden. From the analyses certain core values and competences are identified as tentative dimensions in early learning for global citizenship.

RÉSUMÉ

Le développement durable, la mondialisation et la citoyenneté amène des questions relatives à la justice, aux droits, aux responsabilités et au bien-être des personnes et du monde. L'intérêt de l'éducation face au développement durable a augmenté ces dernières décennies, malgré le fait que peu d'attention ait été accordée à l'éducation de la petite enfance. Même si la dimension morale dans le développement durable est évidente, la question y a rarement été discutée ou analysée. L'objectif de cet article consiste à exposer des avenues possibles dans la vie de tous les jours au préscolaire pour relever les défis du développement durable. Les exemples qui servent de base à la discussion reposent sur la recherche sur la moralité effectuée auprès d'enfants âgés de 1 à 6 ans dans des contextes variés de services de garde suédois. À partir des analyses, certaines valeurs fondamentales et des compétences sont identifiées comme des dimensions à privilégier dans les premiers apprentissages relatifs à la citoyenneté.

RESUMEN

Ideas del desarrollo sustentable, globalización y ciudadanía global plantean cuestiones sobre justicia, derechos, responsabilidad y el cuidado de los seres humanos y el mundo. El interés en la significación de la educación para el desarrollo sustentable ha aumentado durante las últimas décadas, sin embargo poca atención se ha dirigido a la educación preescolar. Incluso teniendo en cuenta que la dimensión ética y moral en el aprendizaje para el desarrollo sustentable es evidente, rara vez se discuten o analiza. El objetivo de este trabajo es examinar las cuestiones en la interacción cotidiana como los aspectos del aprendizaje para el desarrollo sustentable en preescolar. Los ejemplos utilizados como base para la discusión se han extraído de la investigación sobre la moralidad de los niños pequeños (edades 1-6 años) en diversos contextos de centros de cuidado y educación en Suecia. Desde el análisis de algunos valores fundamentales y competencias se identifican algunas dimensiones tentativas para el aprendizaje para la ciudadanía global.

Keywords: learning, "sustainable development", "global citizenship", preschool-children

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – A MORAL ISSUE

The concept ‘sustainable development’ has been interpreted in various ways and often with a normative accentuation of “the good life”. A basic principle in the discourses of sustainable development is that economic, social and environmental issues are interrelated (Björneloo, 2007). Indeed, ideas of sustainable development often raise questions about solidarity, justice, rights and caring for human beings and the world (op cit, 2007). One of the central proposals in this paper is that sustainable development is a moral issue based on intersubjectivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). We are as humans, part of, and responsible for, a common world. The philosopher Peter Kemp (2005) analysed ideas for sustainable development and the ‘world citizen’, which he maintains as a necessary ideal in all education. According to Kemp, the world citizen identifies her (or himself) as a part of at least two societies. One identity is as a member of the (national) society in which we are born and/or live our lives. Another identity refers to our existence as human beings in a shared world. The idea of sustainable development is a moral issue and justice is the base, says Kemp. Schools and preschools are inevitably bound to an obligation to present the moral voices of society: “If this moral voice of today is not a voice of the world citizen, then the system of education has become bankrupt.” (Kemp, 2005, p. 24, my translation). With these statements Kemp underscores two important issues: 1. the moral dimension in sustainable development, and; 2. the important role of early education in learning for global citizenship.

Interest in the role of education for sustainable development has increased during the last decades, however little attention has been directed to early education and to the moral dimensions of learning in early education settings. The aim of this paper is to discuss the moral issues evident in the everyday interactions between children and teachers in preschool as potentials for learning about sustainable development and identities of ‘world-citizenship’. The base for the discussion are previous investigations of morality among children (aged 1-6 years) in different day care contexts in Sweden (Johansson, 1999, 2007). The data used in this discussion consists of video-observed interactions between teachers and children in preschool. The interactions have been analysed with a focus on the following questions: What kind of moral values are considered important in early learning for global citizenship and sustainable development? What kind of competences do children need to develop today being a member of a global society of tomorrow? From the analyses certain core values and competences are identified as tentative dimensions in early learning for global citizenship. These dimensions are scrutinised against the background of a neo-liberal society, the context of preschool, and previous research on moral values in early education.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNITY – A TENSION?

The position taken here is that the idea of sustainable development and the world citizen concern intersubjectivity, and the relation (and tension) between

the individual and the (local and global) community. How can this relationship be described in today's post-modern society? The Swedish society has, according to Sven-Erik Liedman (1997, 2001) changed; from being a society built on authorities, to a society built on individuals' freedom and autonomy; from being a society built on a relatively homogeneous religious ground, to a secularised society; from being a society based on values such as stability and safety, towards a society that prioritises change and flexibility. This picture of increasing individuality in society has been described as a worldwide process characterising post-modern societies (c.f. Bauman, 1997). This picture of increasing individuality is also often viewed as a tension in education, where senses of community and responsibility for others are assumed to be replaced by an individualistic morality (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2005). From an international perspective, there also appears to be an interest in maintaining democratic values while, at the same time, respecting different systems of values (Berger & Luckmann, 1995). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children should experience and internalise values for human rights, and develop their own opinions and moral responsibility (Swedish Government Report 1997:116). Particularly in the formative early childhood years, education has an important responsibility for assisting the future adult citizens of the world to be moral and respectful individuals. There is however not a common system of values in today's society, on the contrary a diversity of values develop and take shape in different communities, situations and phases of life. Preschool today, in Sweden and internationally, is to a larger amount than ever before, a place where different opinions and values meet and are confronted. The democratic values emphasized in educational programmes and curriculums are also being challenged in media and other forums. Cultural codes and values are given new expressions. On the Internet for instance, many children gather in "the global village" and childhood itself can be seen as a gigantic identity-project (Bauman, 1997).

To sum up, the development of Swedish society indicates on the one hand an increasing individualization and on the other hand an increasing globalisation. This tension between individual's freedom (individuality) and responsibility for others and the world (solidarity) is inevitably part the moral life in preschool. The tension complicates, but does not exclude, the issue of early learning for global citizenship and of the idea of the world citizens.

THE PRESCHOOL CHILD – A MORAL AGENT

What do we know about the child's moral life from previous research? There is no doubt that morality is an important dimension in children's lives. The child is seen as an interactive agent, a member of culture and society, involved in manifold life-worlds and engaged in various existential periods in life which influence his or her morality (e.g., Killen & Smetana, 2006). Early in life children show care for others' wellbeing, and a sense of rights and of justice (Dunn, 2006;

Johansson, 1999). Friendship is highly valued as is reciprocity and power (Corsaro, 2003; Greve, 2007). Children differentiate between moral, conventional and personal issues. However, the boundaries for these domains may be defined differently (Turiel, 2006). Research also indicates that children contribute to each other's moral understanding (Dunn, 2006). In their interaction children (and teachers) develop different moral contracts, for how to treat each other (Johansson, 2007). Children's morality is not separate from society; they struggle with values regarding existence, ownership, justice, respect for and understanding of others. Even if the theoretical agreement on these ideas is not always apparent, Shweder et.al. (1997) suggested that children's morality is oriented towards individuality, community, or divinity.

CORE VALUES: TO SHOW CONCERN AND DEFEND RIGHTS

Findings from previous research has revealed that conflicts of rights as well as acts that threaten one's own and others' wellbeing hold potential for children's moral learning (Johansson, 2006; Killen & Smetana 2006). Let us now follow a moral interaction between several children in a Swedish preschool:

Jack (4:10), Oscar (3:7) and Gustav (4:1) are playing in the 'dolls-room' with some bats made of plastic. Tomas (6:4) is watching them. The bats belong to Oscar who has brought them from home. Tomas points at the bat Jack is playing with. "Can I have that bat?" he asks. Jack looks at him. "I am playing with the bat now!" he objects. He leans towards Tomas and sounds determined. "It's not yours!" shouts Tomas pointing at Jack. "But I am using it," says Jack, now with a lower tone voice. Gustav and Oscar are silent, watching the others. Tomas turns to Oscar, he points at the bat asking: "Oscar, can I have that?" "Yees," says Oscar. Tomas stretches his arm towards Jack, who quickly turns around protecting the bat with his body. /.../ Jack gets up from his chair. Tomas follows. "No, No I want to!" Jack protests loudly as he tries to hinder Tomas from grabbing the bat. Jack turns around to the wall, holding the bat with both hands. He cries loudly. Tomas continues trying to pull the bat from Jack. There is a tension in the room.

Now Gustav gets on his feet: "Hey, hey, you!" he shouts. He lifts his bat up in the air in a threatening gesture towards Tomas. "My big brother is really strong!" he says firmly. Tomas shakes Jack a little. "My big brother is really strong," Gustav repeats. Oscar is coming closer. He sucks his bat looking tense. Tomas keeps on shaking Jack. "But I have it now," Jack sobs. Gustav repeats his message: "My big brother, my big brother is really strong." Gustav jumps up and down on the floor. Now Tomas succeeds in taking the bat from Jack. He turns around and Jack hits him in the back. Tomas pushes Jack against the wall. At this moment Gustav takes a step forward. He hits Tomas with his bat. Tomas replicates and hits Gustav with the captured bat. Oscar gazes quickly at the camera and then at Jack who is crying. Jack looks helpless. "Not yours, I had it first," he says. Tomas holds the bat towards Jack. "So! So!" he says. "It is not your bat." Tomas voice sounds gloomy.

Gustav has left the room but soon he comes running back. He holds a large plastic dinosaur in his raised hand. He quickly throws the dinosaur towards Tomas. The dinosaur hits Tomas head. "Ohhh!" Tomas shouts. Gustav runs quickly out of the room. "Mama," he cries. A teacher comes.

She asks Tomas what has happened. "He threw a dinosaur," says Tomas. He sounds offended. "And he..." Tomas points at Jack (who is still crying). "He wants this bat, even though I was allowed to borrow it from him." Now Tomas points at Oscar. "But, if Oscar let Tomas borrow the bat, and the bat belongs to Oscar you know, then Oscar has the right to decide," says the teacher. "I also wanted the bat," cries Jack. "Yes, but ... You have no bat. Then you have to wait," corrects the teacher. /.../ Later Jack goes out into the hall. The bat lies on a bench. Jack takes it up, looks at it and then he puts the bat on the bench again. /.../ Now Gustav enters the hall. He hands his dinosaur to Jack saying friendly: "You can borrow that." But Jack does not take the dinosaur.

The most dominant value in the situation above is about rights, in particular about who has the right to play with the bat and under what circumstances. Tomas wants to play with the bat Jack is using and he gets permission to do this from Oscar, the owner. From the perspective expressed by Tomas ownership confers the primary right to the bat. From Jack's position, however, it is his access and use of the toy that motivates his right. Tomas pursues what he believes is his right while Jack also defends his perceived right. What might be the reasons for Oscar's approach in this situation? Maybe it is an issue of justice and rights? Maybe Oscar thinks that Jack has played enough with the bat and now it is Tomas' turn. Perhaps Oscar lent his bat to Tomas because Tomas is older and bigger and that he often claims his rights through his bodily strength? There are several possible interpretations. Nevertheless Oscar acts from a position of having the first right to the bat because he is the owner.

Jack's weak position is evident; he shows his disgrace; he cries; he looks down and turns away. His resistance is in vain; he holds the bat tight but is forced to let it go. The other boys watching the conflict seem involved but act differently. Oscar remains quiet and still during the conflict. Why is this so? Maybe his position as an observer to the conflict is taken because of Tomas' known powerful position in the group? Maybe he expects me, the researcher, to intervene or maybe he waits for a teacher to take care of the situation? Oscar is part of the situation for another reason – he has suspended Jack's permission to borrow the bat while giving the right to Tomas. Oscar seems to be in a state of tension, with his raised shoulders, sucking at his bat. In contrast, Gustav acts explicitly to support Jack. He does this in various ways. He protests loudly, he waves the bat in threatening gestures, he jumps, and he strengthens his argumentative stance with threats about a big brother. Besides, he hits Tomas and throws a toy at him. In the last part of the interaction Gustav shows support for his friend in a different way – he makes an offer to Jack to borrow his dinosaur. The value of others wellbeing is upheld by Gustav by way of attacking the victimiser but also through comforting the victim.

Now consider the ideal of the world-citizen and the skills that might be needed. The courage and the responsibility for the other that is shown in this interaction are extremely interesting. The idea of world-citizen presupposes human beings are able to reflect, to take responsibility and to act in the purpose of supporting their own and others rights, as well supporting justice and others'

wellbeing. Gustav shows these abilities and defends these values in the situation above. Although Gustav has a weaker position (in this group of children and in relation to Tomas), we can imagine that he is a bit frightened of Tomas. In spite of this Gustav stands up for what he seems to believe is Jack's right. The moral challenge of the situation appears stronger than the fear of Tomas. Gustav defends and protects Jack with the various strategies that he has at hand. Indeed, the courage and responsibility expressed by this young boy is important to consider from the perspective of a world-citizen. Gustav has the courage to support a friend regardless of the fact that he runs the risk of getting hurt himself. Gustav overrides expectations often expressed by other children in the group in other interactions that he is a person who is morally bad, who destroys and hurts others. In understanding the interactions of these children about rights and responsibilities, about solidarity and individuality, teachers need to acknowledge the skills that children possess in their interactions.

We can look also at the teacher's role in the interaction above. Initially, she listens to the words of Tomas, thereby assisting him to assert his rights in the situation. The teacher supports his right to play with the bat. She is motivated in her position by the fact that Oscar is the owner of the bat; therefore he has the right to decide who can play with the bat. Since Tomas has been given this right from Oscar the consequence that follows is that Jack has to wait. From the perspective of the teacher (and Tomas) ownership confers the primary right to the bat. In terms of democracy, which is a core value in the Swedish curriculum, we can ask whose voice is primarily heard in this situation? What possibilities are given to the other children to have a voice?

From this example, and from previous studies on children's morality (Johansson, 1999, 2002, 2007; Johansson & Johansson, 2003) it is possible to conclude that values such as rights, justice and the wellbeing of others are core values in children's interactions in preschool. These values are also proposed by Kemp (2005) as important in a global society. The competencies of the children apparent in the above interaction include courage, responsibility and reflection. These competences evident in young children's interactions reflect important dimensions in early learning in preparation for global citizenship. How do children learn these values and competencies?

From the literature the competences and conditions proposed as central to children's moral learning now diverge. On the one hand, it has been stated that moral principles (i.e. the rules for how to act) guide moral actions. Research has also proposed that moral judgements (Fjellström, 2004) are vital in a child's moral development. A child needs to develop the abilities to discern and consider both situational and more general moral principles. On the other hand, research has concluded that morality is not mainly a question of interpreting and reflecting on abstract principles. Rather, children's morality is concerned with the ability to discern the complexity of social situations in which values and norms arise and are negotiated (Frønes, 1995). Discernment in complex social situations

requires a capacity to communicate and be open to various social perspectives. Communicative competence (Habermas, 1971) emerges from the child's experiences of interaction with others, especially with peers. A child can learn about morality under certain important conditions, these include; the other's reactions; their perception of the implications and consequences of what the acts might be, and their personal closeness to the other (Johansson, 1999). Moreover a certain "room of distance" (Johansson, 2007) can be of importance for children's morality. Indeed, this is not a distance from the other; it is rather a distance that allows room for reflection. The totality of the situation also seems important for the children's actions. A supplementary idea is that children need to develop identities as moral persons with inner motives to act in a moral way towards others (Nucci, 2001) and through such participation with others children develop a sense of community.

Several studies have shown that children can consider the moral complexities in social situations (Johansson, 2006; Killen & Smetana, 2006). Children are aware of particular values and norms about how to treat others and they have the ability of discernment in complex social situations. This is an important condition but not sufficient to ensure moral actions. A child must also develop knowledge about moral values and see his or her ability to act with the intention to support others.

RIGHTS – FUNDAMENTAL VALUES IN PRESCHOOL?

According to Kemp (2005) justice and rights are core values in the idea of global citizenship. These values are connected but they are not the same. In considering the next interaction we can discuss the question of rights and justice from the perspectives of the children. Sometimes the children are confronted with dilemmas about how decisions could be taken and shared:

Hanna (6:8), Magnus (5:1) and Fredrik (5:0) are about to start playing. A central issue is who has the right to be a doctor. "Everyone," suggests Magnus and continues, "I mean everyone. Anyone." "Yes," Fredrik agrees, "All of us were the doctor." "Yes," confirms Magnus. /.../ The children move about, organizing the waiting room while they are reasoning about the play. Hanna places some chairs in a row as in a waiting room. "Now you have destroyed this!" Fredrik says with an accusing tone of voice. He goes up to the chairs and points out an empty space where one of the chairs was placed before. "They should stay as they were," he says. Hanna carries one of the chairs back to the empty spot and says: "But then the waiting room can actually be here." She sounds satisfied. Fredrik picks some papers up with a pair of tweezers saying: "No." Hanna objects firmly: "You are not the only one to decide!" "Magnus also decides," says Fredrik, but Hanna declares once again: "But I also want to decide!" "No," says Fredrik. "Yees," says Hanna. Now Magnus makes his voice heard: "Everyone decides," he says and then he adds resolutely: "I have decided!" "Hanna has decided that the cushion should be there," Fredrik says disappointingly. Hanna moves the carpet for the cars. Now Magnus objects: "Hanna moves everything." He looks at her. Hanna leans her head to the side and protests: "No, I am not moving everything." She emphasises the word everything. "Yes, you moved

those chairs,” argues Fredrik. “I just moved them because you said that they should not be there. You said that,” says Hanna. /.../

Initially the children seem to agree upon that everyone can be a doctor. They also seem to agree on sharing the decisions but they do not approve when this actually occurs. Fredrik and Hanna disagree about where to place the chairs. Hanna refers indirectly to a common right to decide: “You are not the only one to decide!” Fredrik’s counter-argument is built on the same idea. He argues that Magnus also has a right to decide. Magnus gets involved in the dispute and he takes a central decision: “Everyone decides, I have decided”. The contradiction in his statement is an interesting one on which to reflect. It shows the children’s pragmatic use of values and norms. The boys seem to imply that Hanna has ignored their agreement. She has decided too much when she moves the chairs. The moral agreement built on the idea of a right for everyone to influence the play and that this influence should be equally shared. This shared right to decide can be interpreted as a democratic ideal. However, the children’s experiences with this idea then diverge. One experience expressed by Hanna is being denied the right to decide. A second expression is that someone decides too much, noted by all children. A third experience expressed by Magnus is that everyone has a right to decide.

The situation described above is one of many similar examples from my research where children deal with issues of rights and justice (Johansson, 1999, 2007). How can it be that rights have such a dominant place in children’s morality? And why has this knowledge that young children know a lot about moral values and norms been so little understood? Research about rights seems to have low priority, even if the area now has become more visible in the literature (Killen & Smetana, 2006). The research has focussed mainly on issues about children’s experiences of certain individual rights, such as personal freedom, right to express oneself and right to make choices (i.e., Emilson & Folkesson, 2006; Sheridan & Pramling Samuelsson, 2001). Charles Helwig (2006) maintains that 6-year old children have a basic sense of rights and that they can discern and differentiate adults’ rights from their own rights. Ruck, Abramovitch and Keating (1998) found that children and younger teenagers have a preference for their right to physical care rather than to self-determination. These authors reject the idea that children’s understandings of rights develop in stages. Children’s understanding and preferences for certain rights are, according to these researchers, contextually related and connected with their direct experiences in the exercise of certain rights in everyday life. Helwig (2006) has similar reasoning. He holds that children’s conceptions of rights and freedom are linked to their concerns about self-determination, personal choices and wellbeing and that children are involved in these issues in their everyday life. The argument here is that it is important for children to develop ideas about their own and others rights in their early education. But how are rights considered from a societal perspective?

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RIGHTS

Swedish society has, according to Liedman (1997, 2001), increasingly become built on the idea of the individuals' freedom and autonomy. Similarly, this idea has become more important across Europe and western societies across the world. The picture is, however complex. Roger Fjellström (2004, p. 192) describes different displacements in philosophy of education in Sweden during the 1980s and 1990s, turning from social-democratic equality towards a liberal market-orientation and freedoms. This is often described in terms of neo-liberalism (Bourdieu, 1999). Parallel to these displacements is an increasing adaptation to the diversity of culture, to pluralities in religions and values, at least on a discursive level. It has also been suggested, according to Fjellström (2004), that it is important for families to recapture their influence over school and preschool.

Another displacement has also taken place; the proposal that society ought to take a stronger and more sustainable grip over the formation of citizens. The idea of lifelong learning, says Fjellström, is not only about developing knowledge and skills; lifelong learning is about developing the total personality (Fjellström, 2004). This mixture of liberal thoughts, in which individual rights are maintained, while respecting diverse values, is likely to become increasingly important for the life-world in preschool. The strong maintenance of rights in preschool is understandable against these social influences. When looking at the Swedish society it is evident that the importance of individual rights has been highlighted during the last two decades, and the discourse on rights in the context of preschools are simply a reflection of this. Practices in preschool are, in the main part, organized around rights, for instance rights to play with things, to share worlds with friends and peers, and rights to be able to create and express meanings (Johansson, 1999, 2007). For every child in preschool it is (or becomes) of existential importance to be active with things and to be part of the common life with peers. This is what the activities are all about within children's everyday interactions with friends and teachers in preschool. Therefore, rights are important to children in the context of preschool. This does not mean that children always gain their rights or that rights are equally shared, rather that the structures of preschool are based on notions about rights and this will, of course, influence children's developing sense of morality. The culture, the organisation and the context in preschool create conditions in everyday life that contributes to 'an ethic of rights'. In an extension of this idea, we can ask ourselves – what does this mean for the recognition of the child as a world citizen?

Consider the words: "Everyone decides." proposed by Magnus in the interaction described above. The significance is here that the right to decide is shared. The supplementary words "... I have decided!" might be understood as an expression of his awareness of his powerful position in the group. Magnus often suggests solutions and decides when the children negotiate on different

issues. The contradiction in his statement is interesting because it shows that children interpret values and norms from their understandings and issues of importance to their own life-worlds. Interestingly, rights also seem to include a collective dimension. In contrast to the described picture of individual freedom and autonomy as an evolving ideal in society the children show a strong sense for shared rights parallel with their concern for individual rights (Johansson, 1999, 2007). The moral contracts negotiated between the children often concern both collective and individual rights and both solidarity and individuality. Magnus' utterance, "Everyone decides", is one example of this kind of collective right.

THE RHETORIC OF CARE

Educational policy in Sweden emphasises an integration of priorities for education and care (Swedish Government Report 1997:157; The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2005). The ideal promoted is of a synthesis of care and education. Several researchers in Sweden, as well as internationally, however, agree that the dominant moral ideals in preschool and school are caring for others' wellbeing and that girls learn to represent this ideal better than do boys (Davies, 2003; Gannerud, 1999; Grieshaber & Ryan, 2006). From a historical perspective, teaching formerly based on a model of paternity has shifted towards a model of motherhood, not least among teachers working with young children. Most teachers are women who base their work primarily on solicitude, which has resulted in preschool and the early years at school coming to be based on a caring ideal (Tallberg Broman, et al., 2002; Thornton & Goldstein, 2006).

Gannerud (1999) has studied how Swedish female teachers at the junior level of the compulsory school conceive their profession. She found that there is a caring culture, which is a part of the teachers' pedagogy. The teachers themselves emphasize that their relationships with children, and their care for the children, were the most important parts of their role. According to Jalongo (2002) and Murphy and Leeper (2003), early childhood teachers take the position of caregivers by protecting, and by offering children affiliation and comfort. In contrast to this picture of a caring ideal in preschool, we have learnt in the examples presented in this paper that the preschool practice and children's interactions endorse an 'ethic of rights' including individual as well as collective rights. Children defend each other's rights, as we have learnt in the first interaction when Gustav defends Jack's right to the bat. But Gustav also shows a caring solicitude towards his friend. Nonetheless rights seem to be given a prominent position in the life-worlds of children and teachers. How can this disparity between care and rights be explained?

On the one hand we can understand children's and teachers striving for individual rights as a consequence of a neo-liberal society described above. On the other hand the collective dimension of rights can be interpreted as a stream

partly taking another path that in some respect counteracts the picture of an increasing individualisation. The question here is if teachers are aware of this direction. Do teachers realize that the context in preschool, and their work is highly influenced by a discourse on rights which seems to be in sharp contrast with their ideal of caring, and with efforts to unite care and education. Maybe this is an important part of the discourse – a way of talking, as a teacher, about the purpose of early childhood education. The issue is also how teachers regard individual and collective rights and the implications for children's moral learning and the idea of global citizenship that follows from these? Is it likely that individual rights are supported while the collective rights are neglected?

It is important for teachers to reflect on their own moral ideals and also on the societal discourses, and how these are lived out implicitly and explicitly through the moral contracts constructed in everyday interactions between teachers and children in preschools. Teachers' knowledge of moral values in society and the preschool is of essential importance if the ideas of global citizenship and education for sustainability are to be made visible for children. If (individual) rights dominate the preschool structure and interactions, then it must be particularly important to reflect on how care for others' wellbeing is encouraged among the children.

MORAL PLURALISM

Rights, justice and care are important moral dimensions in children's interactions (Johansson, 1999, 2007). While rights seem to be a priority for the children, care seems to be the priority for teachers (at least on a discursive level). From this paper we have also learnt that the pedagogical practices in preschool are focussed around rights. A comparable discussion is to be found in moral philosophy, where justice is often found to be in tension with care. Whereas care seeks for the specific and the contextual, on the one hand, justice on the other hand, refers to common and universal principles (Noddings, 1999). The philosopher Kenneth Strike (1999) however claims that an ethic of justice does not exclude an ethic of care. Every moral judgement rests upon the specific case and its specific circumstances. Therefore Strike suggests the idea of moral pluralism involves both justice (rights) and care.

Rather than viewing justice and care as opposites, the suggestion here is to see these values as interrelated. This means that the preschool-child as a future world citizen needs to develop moral knowledge about the particular and specific in addition to the common and global and be able to discern moral concerns both in 'the close and familiar' and in 'the more distant and far away'. Values such as care, justice and rights need to be confronted with the specific and the global. Gunnel Colnerud (2006) analyzes the concept of care against the background of school practice. The ethics of care is problematic in the school context, writes Colnerud, since teachers always confront the issue of how to distribute care. Therefore the value of justice is inevitable involved in the

everyday school practice. Besides, structures in school and preschool sometimes hinder teachers to show solicitude towards the children. There is also a dimension of power in care, between the teacher and the pupil, which is often neglected (Colnerud, 2006). In addition care involves a dimension of power between children, from the child that gives care towards the child that is the receiver of care, which we have learnt from previous investigations (Johansson, 1999; 2007)

THE IDEA OF WORLD CITIZENS – AN IMPORTANT CONTENT IN CURRICULUM

How democratic issues are treated in preschool and the kind of moral knowledge that children develop about themselves and others, is of significant concern for the future. The idea of the world citizen is about solidarity and individuality and how children will take care of themselves, as well as others, and the world. The educational practice of preschool is inevitably about children's and teachers' concern for rights, justice and others' wellbeing. It is also about democracy in terms of participation and influence. Who's voice is heard and on what conditions? These issues are global and of priority in all societies even if the implications and constructions differ according to society and culture. Moral issues such as those discussed in this paper are not new but they do take new pathways and forms in a changing society. These changing imperatives demand from teachers' different kinds of knowledge.

Every interaction in preschool can be analysed with regards to certain questions: What possible learning about global citizenship, solidarity and individuality, might come about in the preschool? What kinds of value conflicts evolve? What values (rights, justice and care) are of priority or subordinated, by whom, and on what grounds? What issues of power and powerlessness are actualised? How is participation or lack of participation expressed? What positions are given/taken by teachers and the children? The questions are numerous and complex.

The project of helping children to develop solidarity and individuality can be seen as full of contradictions. This accentuates that teachers and children need competencies such as courage, integrity, critical thinking and responsibility, but also that the expressed meanings of these concepts need to be scrutinised. We have seen some of these aspects expressed by Gustav in the interaction about the bat. Gustav seems to reflect on what is going on and he also acts. In spite of his weak position and a sense of awareness that he might get hurt he defends a friend in distress. The question is: Are these aspects visible for the teacher?

Recent research also shows that discipline and obedience are values of priority from the perspectives of teachers (Bartholdsson, 2007; Markström, 2005; Tullgren, 2004). This raises another question: Do preschools really provide for learning where courage and critical thinking are essential? To do so is challenging

in terms of teachers' knowledge and skills. First of all, teachers need knowledge about moral concepts and systems of values. Second, teachers need skills to discern the complexity of meanings that can be given value in the curriculum contexts. Several researchers (e.g., Fjellström, 2004; Orlenius & Bigsten, 2006; Thornberg, 2006) have maintained that teachers need to develop a knowledge of moral theories (moral philosophy). Furthermore, teachers require moral 'languages' and moral concepts to be able to understand and interpret complex moral dilemmas in everyday interaction. Third, teachers need knowledge of the different meanings and interpretations children give values and how children develop and learn morality especially against the background of a pluralistic society. Moreover teachers need qualitative knowledge of the kind of ethic that structures, attitudes and approaches might support or hinder in the own preschool community. There is a need for knowledge on how children interpret and relate to moral issues. This kind of knowledge is currently rarely seen in educational research but is gradually growing (Johansson, 2006). All of this also gives researchers a huge responsibility.

How moral and democratic values are treated in preschool is interconnected with the idea of globalisation. If children are to develop at least the two identities suggested by Kemp (2005): one as being part of a local community, and another as being part of and responsible for a common world, then they need to be part of a community that put these issues at the forefront. Everyday interactions in preschool concern the kinds of understandings of self, of others and the world that children are given opportunities to develop. The idea of the preschool child as a world citizen is an amazing thought that assigns a significant responsibility to teachers and researchers.

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EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A GLOBAL SOLUTION TO LOCAL CONCERNS?

Emma Pearson and Sheila Degotardi

SUMMARY

This paper makes the case that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) offers the field of early childhood a valuable base upon which to begin addressing some substantial contemporary concerns. In the paper, we outline key recent developments in the field of early childhood, particularly those related to globalisation and the spread of European American ideals. Yet ESD promotes the incorporation of local and indigenous understandings in formal education. We propose that, given; (i) broadening appreciation of the reality that early childhood education is characterised by diversity in early values and practices across socio-cultural contexts, and; (ii) global interest in and commitment to early childhood education, the field is not only in need of, but also well-placed to adopt this key principle of ESD.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article soutient que l'éducation pour le développement durable (EDD) offre au secteur de la petite enfance une base valable sur laquelle s'appuyer pour aborder des considérations contemporaines. Dans cet article, nous soulignons les récents développements dans le champ de la petite enfance, en particulier ceux liés à la mondialisation et à la diffusion des idéaux américains européens. Pourtant, l'EDD fournit des moyens pour favoriser l'intégration des questions locales et indigènes dans l'enseignement formel. Nous proposons que puisque ; (i) l'éducation de la petite enfance est caractérisée par une diversité de valeurs et de pratiques à travers des contextes socioculturels, et ; (ii) l'intérêt et l'engagement dans l'éducation de la petite enfance, le champ a non seulement besoin de, mais est également bien placé pour adopter ces principes d'EDD.

RESUMEN

Este artículo destaca que la educación para el desarrollo sustentable (ESD) ofrece al campo de la niñez temprana una base valiosa sobre la cual comenzar a analizar algunas preocupaciones contemporáneas sostenenciales. En el artículo, se delinean algunos desarrollo recientes claves en el campo de la niñez temprana, particularmente aquellos relacionados con la globalización y el esparcimiento de los ideales americanos y europeos. El ESD por otra parte, promueve la incorporación del entendimiento local e indígena en la enseñanza convencional. Proponemos apoyar estas ideas puesto que se destaca (i) uan apreciación mas amplia de la realidad, aspecto por el que la educación de la niñez temprana es caracterizada : la diversidad en valores y prácticas tempranas en los diferentes contextos socioculturales, y; (ii) el interés global y el compromiso con la educación de la niñez temprana, permite aprecair que el campo está no sólo necesitando, sino también bien situado para adoptar este principio dominante de ESD.

Keywords: Education for Sustainable Development, indigenous knowledge, globalisation

INTRODUCTION

Much of the field of early childhood has traditionally been informed and dominated by theories developed on the basis of values and practices found in European and American contexts. However, significant global and local developments during recent decades have presented challenges to some fundamental 'professional' notions regarding the education and care of young children. This paper focuses on two key aspects of these developments; growing attention to the immutable role of cultural values in the practice of early childhood education and the globalisation of early childhood education and care. We begin by drawing attention to global developments in early childhood, which have amplified the spread of European American notions about what is 'best' for children (Penn, 2008). We then review aspects of a substantial body of research that has, over several decades, established the need to account for diverse value systems in early childhood programmes across socio-cultural contexts (Woodhead, 1999). We also refer briefly to a growing body of literature that highlights difficulties associated with direct transferral of practices across diverse contexts, including those that are working towards achieving similar goals. The paper concludes with the proposal that, in light of these developments, the field of early childhood education is poised to take on board novel, cohesive frameworks for the education and care of young children that are more globally relevant than those that have been used in the past. The concept of ESD is presented as a much-needed frame upon which to build effective programmes that respond to contemporary concerns about the contextual nature of early childhood education.

WHAT IS ESD?

The concept of ESD has grown from international expressions of commitment to sustainable development practices concerning economic growth, cultural heritage and environmental protection (Agenda 21, 2005). ESD is unique in that, unlike other educational models designed to address environmental and/or global development issues, it takes an holistic approach, incorporating aspects of both environmental and global education. ESD gives precedence to the role of global perspectives and participation in addressing worldwide social justice and environmental challenges (Scheunflug & Asbrand, 2006). ESD is grounded in the belief that the formal education has a significant role to play in establishing beliefs and practices that will promote more sustainable approaches to patterns of living and development in future generations (Davis, 2007). ESD has often been associated with the promotion of environmental sustainability (Robottom, 2007), yet Vargas (2000) states that, by promoting social and cultural factors, the concept of ESD goes further than environment education (EE). In particular, Vargas contrasts the concept of sustainable development with earlier, discrete models of development and sustainability that have tended to foreground,

respectively, economic growth and environmental protection. Sustainable development takes as its premise the view that authentic development, for whatever purpose, must place local mentalities, customs and knowledge at its centre (Hounkonnou, 2002) and that the ‘three pillars’ of development – economic, social and environmental issues – are inextricably linked.

Sustainable development is difficult to define because it is highly contextualised. In many cases, the identification of examples of non-sustainable practices is more straightforward than the promotion of sustainable approaches (Breiting, 2007). Breiting therefore suggests that for the purposes of education, sustainable development should be interpreted and presented to educators according to relatable priorities. For the purposes of early childhood education, we find the interpretation provided by Engle (1990, cited in Bossel, 1999) most relevant, as it focuses on community, referring specifically to “the kind of human activity that nourishes and perpetuates the historical fulfilment of the whole community of life on earth” (p. 2). Such an approach fits closely with current conceptualisations of children’s agency, participation in and belonging to communities (for example, Early Years Learning Framework, 2008). Our intention in this paper is to highlight the compatibility of principles espoused by ESD, particularly those that emphasise the role of context in learning and education, with concerns that have been developing within the field of early childhood over a number of decades.

ESD AND THE GLOBALISATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The field of early childhood education has received increased attention in recent decades. Globally, urbanisation, changing economic circumstances, migration and adjustments to family structure have resulted in greater acknowledgement of formal early childhood care and education as a feasible alternative to home-based care-giving (Are, 2007; Bowes, Watson & Pearson, 2008). Universal provision of formal early childhood services has also been promoted via international organisations who view the early years as formative in terms of later development and learning (UNESCO, 1990). These developments have stimulated global interest in provision of early childhood services and, in particular, the goal of achieving positive outcomes for young children. Kaga (2007), for example, supports UNESCO’S goals in stating that education empowers children and societies “by equipping them with values and basic skills that allow them to critically reflect and make informed decisions about issues and courses of action” (p. 54). By instilling young children with important life and learning skills, early childhood education has the potential to promote change and enhance the lives of communities on a global scale.

While these ideals are honourable, a range of issues associated with globalisation in early childhood education have attracted debate (Penn, 2008; 2002). The implication of globalisation for early childhood with which this paper

is chiefly concerned is related to the spread of dominant European American notions about 'best practice' and preferred outcomes in early childhood. The thrust to globalise early childhood education has been led by influential organisations such as UNESCO and The World Bank. These bodies are widely informed by European American standards such as Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), which is shaped by individualistic notions of child development (Penn, 2008; 2004). DAP is underpinned by child-centred learning and teaching approaches that emphasise children's cognitive, social and emotional, physical and academic competencies (NAEYC, 2009). But abilities that may be highly valued in the majority world, such as the importance of learning from community elders, connections with nature and traditional knowledge (Burford, Ngila & Rafiki, 2003; Odora Hoppers, 2007) are not embraced explicitly within this philosophical framework.

Despite cautions against assumptions regarding the universal relevance of European American notions about what is 'right' for children, much of what development organisations espouse in terms of early childhood is informed by distinctively European American approaches (Woodhead, 1999; Penn, 2008). At the same time, early childhood and educational research and commentaries within European American contexts have themselves reflected critically on the assumed origins and continued applicability of accepted theory and practice. Mayer's (2004) review of crude discovery learning, for example, critiques both the effectiveness of this approach and its widely accepted connection to constructivist methods of education. The application of individualistic, child-centred philosophies in reforming early childhood policy and practice across diverse cultural contexts has also been examined and critiqued (Hsieh, 2004; Pearson & Rao, 2006) We highlight these issues below in order to make the case for ESD's potential to promote more contextualised approaches to achieving positive outcomes in early childhood education.

LOCATING EARLY CHILDHOOD APPROACHES WITHIN A EUROPEAN AMERICAN CULTURAL-PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

In the early childhood field, there is growing acceptance that the images of children and learning that teachers bring to their classrooms will shape the nature of their curriculum and the ways that they interact with and guide children in their program (Robertson, 2007; Sorin, 2005; Woodrow, 1999). Such deeply ingrained images are imbued with ideas about the nature and content of children's minds and the ways in which mental processes such as intentions and thoughts affect and are affected by children's social and physical world (Bruner & Olson, 1998; Degotardi & Davis, 2008). These socially and culturally specific images and beliefs are procedural as they guide adult's actions towards children as they seek to steer children towards acquiring the ideas, beliefs, and behaviours that will enable them to function as effective members of their community (Gauvain, 2001; Super & Harkness, 1986). In teaching contexts they comprise a

‘folk pedagogy’ (Bruner & Olson, 1996): A set of intuitive assumptions about children’s minds, learning and teaching, that underpin educational philosophy and decision-making in the classroom.

European American early childhood approaches such as DAP have at their core the notion of child-centredness. Child-centredness emerged in the nineteenth-century educational philosophical ideas of Froebel and Montessori. This philosophical underpinning was then bolstered in the last century by the democratic educational views of Dewey (1916), the emergence of the child-study movement, and the developmental theoretical approaches of pioneers such as Piaget (Chung & Walsh, 2000; Tzuo, 2007). While various interpretations of the meaning of child-centredness exist and continue to emerge (Chung & Walsh, 2000), a common thread that runs through these interpretations is a commitment to individual children’s intentions, needs, and thinking as key determinants of early childhood pedagogy. Child-centred approaches stress individual children’s rights and freedoms to learn through self-directed and intrinsically motivated activity and play, and thus promote educational experiences that are shaped by children, through autonomy, exploration and spontaneity in learning (Kwon, 2002). Accordingly, in most European American early childhood education contexts, child-centredness is associated with a deep-seated construal or image of the ‘individual, psychologically-driven’ child that has permeated the thinking of many Western cultures for centuries (Lillard, 1998). There is, however, mounting evidence that such notions are far from universal. Lillard (1998), for example questions the global applicability of a European American focus on internal agency and motivation, citing numerous examples of cultures that prefer to evoke observable external physical or social forces when explaining or guiding others’ behaviour. In a similar fashion, Markus and Kitayama (2003) contrast the largely European American individuated notion of self with a more interdependent self-construct evident in many Asian cultures in which identity and actions are “impelled by others, in relationship and interaction with others” (p. 2). Construals of agency, therefore, differ according to the construals of self and others inherent in any given context, with ‘individuated’ approaches valuing self-directed, internally motivated action, whereas interdependent approaches appreciate notions of social connectiveness, obligation, and shared responsibility (Markus & Kitayama, 2003).

CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF DOMINANT EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY AND PRACTICES

Differences in the construal of the self, of other, and upon human behaviour in general have profound significance for those interested in the promotion of sustainable development through early childhood education. Because broad cultural variation exists, folk pedagogical theories about how and what to teach also differ. Bruner and Olson (1998) argue that these intuitive images cannot be ignored in educational contexts of development and change because they may

contrast and consequently compete with pedagogical approaches that are imposed on communities from cultures with incongruent folk-pedagogical traditions. Odora Hoopers (2007), for example, makes the point that formal science education tends to reflect a view of relationships between man and nature that is instrumental. Such a view contrasts directly with some traditional, indigenous understandings, which view this relationship as symbiotic. For this reason, the global spread of predominantly European American early childhood approaches into diverse countries and communities may be problematic. Indeed, a growing body of evidence has begun to illustrate multiple challenges associated with application of European American understandings in contexts where such philosophical bases compete with quite different, locally-conceived ideals (e.g. Penn, 2008; Prochner 2002).

Challenges associated, for example, with perceptions regarding the incompatibility of 'traditional' (local) education practices and 'modernisation' were reported following widespread educational reforms in the Chinese city of Hong Kong (Mok, 2002). Over the past decade, Hong Kong has undergone extensive educational reforms, incorporating the preschool years through to tertiary-level education. As Cheng (2002) suggests, the reforms, which were ostensibly designed to improve 'quality' of education in Hong Kong, have been: "...*borrowed from elsewhere with little reference to the local context and with little local discussion*" (p. 59). In early childhood, the reforms have promoted the concept of the agentic child and associated child-centred approaches to teaching and learning (Chan & Chan, 2003), with resultant challenges for teachers working within a contrasting frame of reference. Initial response from the field of early childhood education in Hong Kong, to difficulties caused by clashes between local values and the introduction of 'innovative', practices developed elsewhere, centred not on problems with the approaches that were being imposed, but on the need to better educate and prepare local early childhood practitioners (Pearson & Rao, in review).

Vargas (2000) attributes part of the challenge with regard to sustainability of cultural practices to earlier dichotomisation of 'modern' knowledge, perceived as reflecting progress (and largely attributed to 'The North') and 'traditional' customs, associated with failure to progress (and, in large part, 'The South'). In the context of a wider discussion about the use of authority and discipline in Indian schools Sarangapani (2003), for example, points out that the strong focus on student discipline found in an Indian village school, despite its contrast with 'child-centredness', has inherent local ideological value and therefore should be maintained. Sarangapani further analyses the tendency for local programmes that reflect cultural values related to student obligations to be undermined as a result of extremes reflected in dominant perceptions regarding 'traditional', didactic versus 'modern', 'learner-centred' approaches. These examples reflect a global inclination for local practices to be devalued relative to those developed and adopted in Euro-American context, regardless of the latter's incongruity with

local values and customs. The pedagogical difficulties which arise when 'modern', European American approaches conflict with traditional ideologies not only influence how teachers and students make sense of their school identities and experiences, but also impact upon the sustainability of teaching, learning, and consequently, community development.

When pedagogical approaches are globally imposed on communities, a gap is created between theory and practice as educators struggle to reconcile what is promoted as the 'right' way to educate young children with their implicit ideas about learning and teaching. At one extreme, this gap will result in the promotion of educational approaches which are difficult to maintain, while, at the other extreme, it can lead teachers to abandon culturally-specific ideas and values. Either way, development, both individual and community, is compromised as teachers and learners attempt to operate within a framework which lacks meaning and authenticity within their particular context. What is emerging is an illuminating case for the need to adopt frameworks that acknowledge the legitimate use of diverse practices to reach collective goals.

THE ROLE OF AN ESD FRAMEWORK AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Hounkonnou (2002) argues that development must be inclusive and authentic if it is to be successful in its quest to engage the support and participation of local communities. She argues, however, that this premise is often thwarted, and provides a vivid illustration of the extent to which hegemonic relationships in social policy between minority and majority world cultures can undermine 'local' expertise. She describes a painting of top government officials from an African country, in which the officials are portrayed without ears, to reflect their failure to listen:

The artist's opinion might appear overstated. However, it illustrates clearly the frustration of local people who have been overlooked for decades by decision makers and development institutions. National scholars, researchers and other development agents share the same frustration, as national authorities only use their ears for foreign 'experts' and advisers. (p. 105)

Growing awareness of challenges associated with hegemonic relationships, particularly with regard to implementing successful social and economic developmental initiatives that benefit local communities, has led to increased emphasis on local participation in sustainable development programs (Evans, Meyers & Ilfield, 2000). At the heart of ESD's approach to the education of young children is its acknowledgment of the distinct social, cultural and physical environments in which children are raised and to which they belong. Kaga (2007) refers to the key principles of ESD, which include the importance of equity in access to education; the nurturance of learning and life skills that equip children to contribute productively to sustainable societies; positive attitudes towards nature and its preservation, and values such as empathy and tolerance.

Early childhood education is well-placed to adopt these key principles. Despite diversity in cultural ideas about children and their learning, there is widespread, shared acknowledgment of the early childhood years as formative with regard to establishing life-long attitudes and dispositions (Kaga, 2007). The contemporary image of children as competent contributors to society (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998) is applicable to all contexts and is reflected in the overall aim of ESD to “...to empower citizens to act for positive environmental and social change by giving people knowledge and skills to help them find new solutions to their social, economic and environmental issues” (Otieno, 2007, p. 37). As Siraj-Blatchford (2007) indicates, much of what sustainable development has to say about delivery of successful programmes is familiar to most working in the field of early childhood. Educational practitioners are likely to incorporate environmental awareness, in terms of both social and physical surroundings, in learning experiences for young children as part of a wider focus on promoting children’s understanding of the world. The ethics of equality and compassion that are inferred by sustainable development, and to which Siraj-Blatchford (2007) refers, are also familiar to most practitioners and professionals working in the field. Of equal importance, constructs inherent in the notion of ESD, whose priority is contextual relevance, can inform the global development of effective early childhood educational programs.

The holistic approach to human growth and development that is reflected in the ESD principles fits closely with fundamental notions of early childhood education and care, as does ESD’s acknowledgement of education in preparing future generations for sustainable life on the planet. A guiding principle of ESD for early childhood education is that children should be educated and nurtured in achieving skills that will enable them to contribute productively to the sustainability of their social and physical environments (Kaga, 2007). While acknowledging the value of early childhood education, the ESD framework therefore stresses the importance of developing culturally relevant, and therefore, sustainable means of meeting such goals. As Rogoff (2003) suggests, contextually-based approaches to education that draw on particular social and physical milieu to provide authentic learning experiences, offer greater potential for sustained learning than experiences that “simply import isolated features of informal or apprenticeship learning into the classroom for part of the day” (p. 361). Likewise, Pramling-Samuelson and Kaga (2007) argue that, if ESD is to be meaningful and successful, it has to be “rooted in the local concrete reality of young children” (p. 12). By developing early childhood approaches that remain true to the culture in which they are situated, early childhood educators are not only well placed to empower children to actively contribute towards the development of their own societies, but also to promote the development of culturally supported, and therefore sustainable, ways of understanding and action through which such change can be achieved.

AUTHENTIC EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ESD: WAYS FORWARD

Keating (1998) contends that education is a fundamental conduit for societal development and success, particularly during times of rapid transition. While acknowledging that education equips individuals with the means to promote community development, his statement that “a society’s ability to foster new skills, new concepts, and new patterns of learning depends heavily on its ability to renew educational institutions and practices” (p. 1) may appear at odds with our present argument related to the importance of sustaining cultural beliefs and practices. Yet notions of *change* and *sustainability* can co-exist if communities are given the opportunity to develop early childhood educational practices which work towards collaboratively formed goals in culturally relevant ways. Innovations can take place, but these innovations need to be meaningful to both teachers and learners if they are going to develop the sense of agency, ownership and confidence required to empower individuals and communities to bring about and positive and sustainable community development (Rogoff, 2003).

Given the inevitable globalisation of early childhood education, our proposal is that the global field of early childhood is in need of a shared framework of principles that lends itself to interpretation based on contextual factors. As Owuor (2007) has suggested, ESD provides an important context for the incorporation of local and indigenous understandings in formal education. Such an agenda also might help to reduce the current practice of importing programmes that reflect dominant conceptualisations of children which are still being debated. We also contend that contemporary features of the early childhood field predispose it to adopting the guiding principles underlying ESD. Global interest in early childhood education and its role in shaping future citizens of the world has increased the field’s exposure to diverse policies, theories and practices, with the potential for both positive and negative consequences (Haddad, 2007). European American early childhood professionals have engaged recently in critical discussions of the contextual nature of ‘childhood’ and early childhood education (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). At the same time, global concerns have centred increasingly around the need to protect traditional values and customs related to children and their place in the world (for example, see perspectives reflected in Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). The global spread of interest and investment in early childhood education outlined above, particularly by dominant NGO’s such as the World Bank, is likely to lead to greater diffusion of goals and practices across diverse contexts. Adoption of the principles that frame ESD’s approach to the education and care of young children would enable the field to avoid domination in this spread by traditional European American notions, which have tended to be privileged over local values and custom (Penn, 2008). Such a move would also enable the field to move forward in addressing the question of whose priorities count in shaping approaches to early childhood education, by offering a model

that promotes sustained development through appreciation of diverse and traditional understandings.

ESD does acknowledge that not all cultural practices are positive (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). The promotion of shared goals centred around provision of positive and enriching early educational experiences, expressed through diverse practices, offers critical opportunities for what Chavajay (1993) refers to as cross-fertilization of ideas about education, rather than hegemonic patterns in the transfer of policy and practice across contexts. Exposure to 'other ways' of being and thinking can assist local communities (both in The North and The South) to reflect on beliefs and practices, leading to the discouragement and change of those which, for example, are not consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

With regard to the practical implications of ESD as a framework for early childhood education, lessons can be learned from existing programmes and initiatives that promote sustainability in young children's education and highlight the importance of life skills reflecting diverse contexts. Norddahl (2008) highlights children's involvement in 'real life' problems as a useful method of providing opportunities for learning about communities and the environment, as well as empowering children to find their own solutions to issues that are faced in their community. Davis (2008) relates how teachers and children in an Australian day-care worked together to find ways to conserve water resources in their centre and community. In Kenya, Otieno (2008) describes how some preschools work collaboratively with parents and communities to support health, nutritional and educational development. The incorporation of community folklore, practices and resources in these programs have brought about positive educational outcomes as well as increased community pride and contribution. On an international scale, the curriculum of the International Baccalaureate Organisation's Primary Years Programme, which is increasingly being adopted by educational settings world-wide, emphasises the development of concepts, attitudes and action, as well as knowledge and skills, in young children's learning. The PYP is centred around transdisciplinary themes that reflect global concerns, including Sharing the Planet, Where we are in place and time, How we organize ourselves, and How the world works (<http://www.ibo.org/pyp>). By making the focus on life and community explicit in children's learning, these initiatives put sustainability logically at the core of education, rather than simply adding it to a structured programme of academic learning. The emphasis on place also permits authentic learning that reflects the priorities and needs of the local context.

While these examples provide valuable points from which to begin to work towards the kinds of principles to which we have referred widely, the field of early childhood is in need of cohesive, accessible frameworks that can be universally applied. Our proposal is that, with its combined focus on environmental protection and, in particular, equality, social tolerance, and promotion of just, peaceful societies, the framework of ESD responds to key

concerns expressed across early childhood contexts in recent decades. In turn, given its holistic outlook, and its concern with the contextual nature of education, early childhood is particularly well-placed to adopt the core principles of ESD. As Pramling Samuelsson and Kaga (2007) suggest, attitudes and behaviours relating to our place and responsibilities as global citizens of the world are shaped during childhood. ESD's key benefit is that it provides room for interpretation of 'place' and 'responsibility' and therefore has the potential to promote global commitment within early childhood to sustainable practices that reflect local concerns.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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The following recommendations for *Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)* in Early Childhood Education were the product of an extended international collaboration that was supported by a number of bodies including the Centre for Environment and Sustainability in Gothenburg, the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO, and the Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development. The recommendations were formally adopted in November 2008.

These recommendations are grounded on notions that children are competent, active agents in their own lives. They are affected by, and capable of, engaging with complex environmental and social issues. They steer away from romanticized notions of childhood as an arena of innocent play that positions all children as leading exclusively sheltered, safe and happy lives untouched by events around them.

1. ACCESS FOR ALL TO A PROCESS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

It is imperative that Early Childhood Education (ECE) is recognized as the starting point for lifelong learning within education for sustainability. There are still a large proportion of children who do not have access to ECE. As ECE offers such a valuable starting point for *Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS)*, it is therefore of highest priority that access to all ECE services is also enabled for all children.

As emphasized in the preamble, it is within these early years that children present the greatest ability to learn and develop. ECEfS has the potential to foster socio-environmental resilience based on interdependence and critical thinking, setting foundations for lives characterised by self respect, respect for others, and respect for the environment. All efforts to develop education for sustainability at every 'level' should therefore consider the relevance of their work to, and the quality of their engagement with, young children and the early childhood community.

ACTION POINT:

- Prioritise access to ECE for all children as imperative to their healthy development and life-long learning towards a sustainable future.

2. GENDER

ECE is a highly gendered field. It is a potential starting point for identifying, critically analysing and engaging with the important contributions that women from diverse contexts offer to educational practice broadly and to child development and Education for Sustainability. It also offers the opportunity to critically engage with the roles of men within the field, especially in terms of their impact as role-models for young boys. These same gendered issues and opportunities also relate to ECEfS.

There are strong reasons why we should take gender into consideration – not least among them is the ongoing challenge of all girls into education. Girls' education is a special global priority as they are currently greatly under-represented in terms of educational enrolment and their education provides sustainable benefits to societies in terms of family income, later marriage and reduced fertility rates, reduced infant and maternal mortality (including HIV/AIDS).

ACTION POINTS:

- Critical research into gendered approaches of teaching and learning embedded within the ECEfS field needs to be conducted and shared.
- There is a need to critically engage with the ways in which women and men contribute differently to laying foundations of life-long learning within a broad variety of educational contexts.
- There is a need to recognize and celebrate a relational approach often demonstrated by women, in particular, within the ECEfS field, and to adopt or translate this approach to other fields and disciplines.
- Commit resources specifically to encourage the early and continuing education of girls.

3. LEARNING FOR CHANGE

ECE has strong traditions of curriculum integration, engagement with the lived **in** environment and child participation, which align well with Education for Sustainability (EfS). ECEfS can thus readily build on these foundations and embrace the complexities of transformative learning. We know from experience and research that even very young children are capable of sophisticated thinking in relation to socio-environmental issues and that the earlier EfS ideas are introduced the greater the impact can be. To reiterate, ECE is a key step for all EfS. Furthermore, children are potential agents for change, and often influence

their families and grandparents to change towards more sustainable thinking and behaviours.

There is, therefore, a need to further develop existing Early Childhood Education approaches that lean on the experiences that children bring from their everyday lives and where problem-solving and solution seeking are relevant to sustainable living.

ACTION POINTS:

- Prioritize ECE as a first step in learning to live sustainably. This includes international educational and social development resource allocation, policy prioritization and cross-sectoral support (including with social and community workers, formal and higher education, and other community support structures).
- Build capacity of communities and families, to strengthen their roles within learning, doing and being, with an emphasis on inter-generational learning.

4. NETWORKS, ARENAS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We are aware that good practices that integrate indigenous knowledge, sustainable living practices, basic human rights and learning through experience and doing already *do* exist in many community ECEfS provisions. However, these practices remain largely undocumented and un-promoted.

Children live different childhoods. There is a need not to romanticise, but to critically engage in the varied contextualised approaches, and to document and share successful practices.

ACTION POINTS:

- Develop and promote ECEfS frameworks, approaches and practices that are strong on family and community participation, indigenous community knowledge, and every day and immediate issues related to sustainability.
- As far as possible ECEfS projects should: a) contribute towards intercultural understanding and a wider recognition of mutual interdependency, and, b) involve local collaborations that provide access to, and a greater visibility of, community contributions and cultural heritage.
- Develop a broad-based global alliance and international community of ECEfS practitioners, informal and formal teacher educators, policy-makers and researchers to collaborate in efforts to raising the profile of Early Childhood Education, improve its development and implementation of ECEfS and to build communities of practice.

5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN ESD ACROSS ALL SECTORS

As ECE is foundational for lifelong learning, there is an urgent need for capacity building within practitioners and other members of society to form strong safety nets and communities for young children, including strengthening the capabilities of their primary caregivers in a tradition that embraces sustainability.

ACTION POINTS:

- Explicit professional development in Education for Sustainability for ECE practitioners and those in the extended community who work with young children is needed. Similarly, the broader EfS community needs explicit professional development in ECE.

6. ESD IN CURRICULUM

Early Childhood Education has a tradition of integrated curriculum approaches embedded in children's everyday lives, even if not always fully enacted. Such approaches need to be more widely adopted into the formal curricula of schooling and into informal and non-formal learning approaches.

ACTION POINTS:

- Rework the traditional ECE approaches to better serve the needs of sustainability including stronger support from the implementation of integrated curricula.
- Build collaboration with formal, informal and non-formal educational services and systems *that build on the foundations developed within ECEfS*. These include: primary and secondary schools; higher education; informal learning programmes; local, national and international decision makers and curriculum developers.
- There are challenges in the implementation of ideal ECE curricula. Stronger support for the implementation of integrated curricula still needs to be realized in many contexts.
- Curriculum development and re-orientation should include children as active participants, as well as adults (teachers, parents and others), thus helping to ensure the relevance of content to children's everyday lives and their development as active citizens of sustainability.

7. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE

The group recognises that you live as you teach is very important. Children follow our examples, not just what we say. Early Childhood Education settings and services need to be places where sustainability is practiced. This means that all early childhood education settings should examine their own 'ecological

footprints' and work towards reducing waste in energy, water and materials. They should aim to live out democratic and participatory social practices. They should 'practice what they teach.

ACTION POINTS:

- Support the development of 'whole of settings' approaches to Education for Sustainable Development where the goal is to create a 'culture of sustainability'
- Create new traditions that celebrate good practices in ECEfS, including awards, festivals, exhibitions and prizes.

8. RESEARCH

As an emerging field of practice, Early Childhood Education for Sustainability is seriously under-researched. This must be remedied in order to build the field on an evidence-base of critique, reflection and creativity.

ACTION POINTS:

- Increase the allocation of resources for research in ECEfS.
- Initiate research studies that are participatory and action-centered, through transdisciplinary collaboration with professionals from all sectors and disciplines.
- Enable structures and processes that support ECEfS practitioners to conduct their own research studies.
- Provide greater research mentoring and capacity building. While important everywhere, this is especially important in industrially developing countries where significant portions of research are still conducted by researchers who have no experience in teaching ECE in the sector.

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BULLETIN BOARD

OMEP XXVI WORLD CONGRESS AUGUST 11-13, 2010, GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

August 2010, OMEP welcomes people from around the world to its 26th World Congress. Teachers, researchers and other participants will have the opportunity to learn and share experiences. The three day event offers lectures, workshops, seminars, visits to preschools and primary schools and social activities. What unites the participants is an interest in children's rights and education for sustainable development in a local and global context.

The theme of the congress is "Children - citizens in a challenged world". The foundation for the event rests on UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDG's aim, among other things, is to give all children the right to be in school by 2015, to improve women's situation and to ensure gender equity. The congress provides all participants the unique opportunity to work together on these important issues.

Themes and strands

- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
- Gender equity and equal rights
- Different childhoods

Important dates

October 15, 2009	Call for proposals, possible to submit abstracts
January 15, 2010	Registration opens

For further information

<http://www.omep2010.org/>

See you in Göteborg 2010!

Jan Mellgren

Director
The Center for School Development

Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

World president
OMEP

Ingrid Engdahl

President
OMEP Sweden

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

The *International Journal of Early Childhood* is a blind, peer reviewed journal with a circulation of approximately 2,000 subscribers, represented by individual members, organisations, and libraries in over seventy countries throughout the world. The journal is distributed twice a year and publishes articles in English, French, and Spanish.

AIMS AND CONTENT

IJEC is an international peer reviewed journal and forum for publication of original research on children, childhood and early childhood education across various social and cultural contexts. Its purpose is to contribute to an international and critical scientific debate about research and practice in the field of early childhood with an emphasis on children's rights and general position in society and their education all over the world. The Editors invite theoretical and empirical articles addressing key issues in early childhood on diverse topics, from different disciplines and perspectives, and with various research methodologies, which would be of interest to researchers and practitioners internationally. IJEC also welcomes essays and book reviews on diverse topics in the field of early childhood.

LANGUAGE

The main languages of OMEP are English, French, and Spanish. Articles may be written in any of these three languages, and authors are asked to also submit a short summary (200-300 words) in each language.

FORMAT

Articles should not exceed 8,000 words and should be type-written in Times 14pt. They should be double-spaced with one inch margins, and follow the style of the American Psychological Association (APA). English and Spanish versions of the APA manual are available. For more information, see <http://www.apa.org>.

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Manuscripts are accepted for review with the understanding that they are original and have not been submitted for publication elsewhere. The decision for acceptance and revisions of the submitted manuscripts rests with the Editors, guided by the reviewers' comments. The review process may take four to six months. Rejected manuscripts and disks cannot be returned to the authors. Accepted manuscripts will be published according to timeliness of the subject matter, space availability, and publication schedule. For copyright permission, please contact the Editor.

SUBMISSION

Manuscripts written in English, French or Spanish, should be submitted as email attachments as MS Word documents, or by disk/CD together with hard copy to the Editor, Professor Eva Johansson and the journal secretary, Jonna Larsson.

DIRECTIVES AUX COLLABORATEURS

La *Revue internationale de l'enfance préscolaire* fonctionne par évaluation anonyme de pairs et circule auprès d'environ 2 000 abonnés, dont des membres individuels, des organisations et des bibliothèques de plus de soixante-dix pays à travers le monde. La revue paraît deux fois l'an et publie des articles en français, anglais et espagnol.

OBJECTIFS ET CONTENU

La *Revue internationale de l'enfance préscolaire* est une revue internationale évaluée par les pairs et un forum pour la publication de recherches originales sur les enfants, l'enfance et la petite enfance à travers des contextes sociaux et culturels variés. Son but est de contribuer, au plan international, à un débat scientifique critique sur la recherche et la pratique dans le domaine de l'enfance préscolaire avec un accent sur les droits des enfants et leur position générale dans la société ainsi que leur éducation dans le monde entier. Les rédactrices invitent à soumettre des articles théoriques et empiriques abordant des questions clés en éducation préscolaire sur divers sujets provenant de disciplines et perspectives variées, avec différentes démarches méthodologiques et susceptibles d'intéresser les chercheurs et les praticiens mondialement. La Revue accueille aussi des essais et des critiques de livres sur divers sujets du domaine préscolaire.

LANGUE

Les principales langues de l'OMEP sont l'anglais, le français et l'espagnol. Les articles peuvent être rédigés dans l'une de ces trois langues. On demande aussi aux auteurs de soumettre un bref résumé (200 à 300 mots) dans chaque langue.

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Les articles ne devraient pas dépasser 8 000 mots et devraient être dactylographiés en Times 14 points, à double interligne, avec des marges de un pouce et se conformer au style de l'American Psychological Association (APA). Des versions anglaises et espagnoles du manuel de l'APA sont disponibles. Pour plus d'information, visiter le <http://www.apa.org>.

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INSTRUCCIONES A LOS CONTRIBUYENTES

La Revista Internacional de Educación Preescolar (IJEC), es una revista de artículos inéditos revisados por pares, con una circulación de aproximadamente 2000 suscriptores, representados por miembros individuales, organizaciones y bibliotecas en mas de setenta países alrededor del mundo. La revista se distribuye dos veces al año y publica artículos en inglés, español y Francés.

OBJETIVOS Y CONTENIDOS

IJEC es una revista internacional revisada por pares y que se constituye en un foro para publicaciones de investigaciones originales sobre niños y niñas, la infancia y la educación preescolar en diversos contextos sociales y culturales. Su propósito es contribuir al debate científico internacional y crítico acerca de la investigación y práctica en el campo de la educación preescolar con un énfasis en los derechos de la infancia y su posición general en la sociedad, así como el tema de su educación en el mundo.

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