THEORY INTO PRACTICE
No. 1, 2018

THEME:
Constructing Early Childhood Cultures of Peace, Rights, Play, and Participation
About us

OMEP is a voluntary, international, non-governmental and non-profit organization focusing on children aged birth to 8. Founded in 1948, it defends and promotes the rights of the child to education and care worldwide and supports activities which improve accessibility to high quality education and care.

OMEP has achieved Special Consultative Status at ECOSOC of United Nations and it has partnerships with all World and International Organizations focusing on children’s education and well-being. It is currently established in over 70 countries and it is one of the two International Focal Points of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA) of UNESCO.

Permissions

No written permission is necessary to reproduce an excerpt, or to make photocopies for academic or individual use. Copies must include a full acknowledgement and accurate bibliographical citation.

Cover Photo: Hong Kong and previous World President, Maggie Koong.

Find us online

You can read the articles in this issue on www.worldomep.com

Congratulatory Remark

It’s my pleasure to welcome and congratulate the publication of the first issue of Theory into Practice. Its contents are filled with the active participation of members from all over the world. I extend my best wishes for great success in the future of Theory into Practice.

J’ai le plaisir d’accueillir et de féliciter la publication du premier numéro de Theory into Practice. Son contenu est rempli avec la participation active des membres du monde entier. Je présente mes meilleurs vœux de succès dans l’avenir de la théorie en pratique.

Me complace dar la bienvenida y felicitar la publicación del primer número de Theory into Practice. Sus contenidos están llenos de la participación activa de miembros de todo el mundo. Extiendo mis mejores deseos de gran éxito en el futuro de la teoría en la práctica.
Inaugural Issue

Constructing Early Childhood Cultures of Peace, Rights, Play, and Participation

2018 World Assembly and Conference: Prague, Czech Republic
In Celebration of OMEP’s 70th Anniversary
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nektarios Stellakis</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Wagner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMEP Russia</td>
<td>Educational Project: New Year Art History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewha Institute of Early Childhood Education and Care South Korea</td>
<td>A Study on Snack/Meal Time Guidance for Improving Young Children’s Self-Help Skills</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inessa Filippova Ukraine</td>
<td>The Role of the Social Environment in Development of Personality</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapera Card, Pania Kawana New Zealand</td>
<td>Te Tuakiri o Te Tangata - Beyond the Skin of Man</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzannie K. Y. Leung Hong Kong China</td>
<td>No More Crafts: When Student Teachers Bring Visual Arts into Hong Kong Kindergartens</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela Etchebehere Uruguay</td>
<td>Quality and Warmth in Early Childhood Care and Education</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elida Lucila Campos Alba Mexico</td>
<td>Our Ludoteca: Peace Construction Space</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athanasia Iliopoulou, Nektarios Stellakis Greece</td>
<td>Reading OMEP’s Logo</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The idea for a new OMEP publication blossomed in June 2017 during a meeting of the World Executive Committee. The vision was to create an on-line publication that would complement the organization’s flagship publication, the *International Journal of Early Childhood*, by focusing on best practices, grounded in early childhood theory and research, and by creating possibilities for practitioners and new scholars to share their work.

In celebration of OMEP’s 70th anniversary, this inaugural issue of *Theory into Practice* illustrates both the shared commitments and the diversity of OMEP’s membership. The reviewers received many interesting manuscripts from various regions of the world and ultimately selected eight articles for this issue. The topics are wide-ranging: activities in celebration of traditions and holidays as an essential part preschool children’s moral education (Russia), improving children’s self-help skills during meal times (South Korea), the key role of the social environment in personality development, Māori perspectives on children’s spiritual makeup (New Zealand), moving from crafts to visual arts in preschool (Hong Kong), characteristics of quality and warmth in early childhood settings (Uruguay), peace building in toy libraries and public gardens (Mexico), and activities to provide preschoolers with opportunities to express own ideas about OMEP’s global work for children (Greece).

It should be noted (and deeply appreciated) that all of the authors wrote in English, which is, for most of them, not their primary language. The editors endeavored to retain the authenticity of each author’s voice, while, at the same time, recommending revisions to enhance clarity and accessibility for readers.

If this new publication proves valuable to OMEP members and others in the global early childhood community, we intend to develop more comprehensive submission and review guidelines for future issues. Meantime, we invite you to read the articles in this inaugural issue with minds and hearts open to the ideas expressed by the authors, each of whom we sincerely thank for their contributions.

*Nektarios Stellakis (Greece) and Judith Wagner (United States), Editors*

NOTE: The information, citations, authorizations, and representations in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent World OMEP’s endorsement, recommendations, or policies.
Educational Project: New Year Art History

OMEP Russia

This pedagogical project focused on the theme of acquaintance with traditions and holidays of the native country as part preschool children’s moral education. Traditional holidays are an important part of any country’s culture. One of the favorite and long-awaited holidays for Russians, especially children, is New Year. This holiday, having a 300-year history, is rich in traditions that create a magical atmosphere. The most important “magician” on the New Year’s Eve holiday is Santa Claus (called Ded Moroz in Russian), who leaves gifts under the Christmas tree, decorated on an earlier holiday by children and their families. In this season, a Christmas tree decorated with colorful balls and garlands stands in every house and every kindergarten. Snowflakes cut from paper or foil also decorate windows in homes, schools, and kindergartens throughout the country.

As an example, teachers and children in Mir Detstva (World of Childhood) Autonomous Non-
Commercial Organization kindergartens have created a tradition of decorating New Year’s Eve trees using an unusual material: modeling clay (plasticine).

In our article we share plans for a workshop for young children called “New Year Toy - Fox”.

Materials you will need:
1. Clay of two-three colors (orange, white, black)
2. Modelling stick (plastic knife for splitting clay)
3. Thread to hang the toy
4. Board for modeling

Content of the workshop:
1. Roll a ball from a small portion of orange clay.
2. Gently stretch out one part of the ball to form the head of a fox.
3. Add sharp ears from orange clay and a snout from white clay. Add black eyes and a black nose.
4. Body of the fox should be graceful; therefore it is necessary to mold a thin “sausage” from orange clay.
5. To mold the fox’s paws, form thin “sausages” from orange clay and fix them on the body of the animal.
6. Join the body and the head of the fox.
7. Mold a tail from orange and white clay. Fix it on the body.
8. Now tie thread on the toy fox and decorate a Christmas tree.

Every child can create a similar figure of the fox. In the process of such work, children definitely enjoy a lot of rewarding experiences.

According to the teachers, modeling of plasticine is a fascinating and useful experience, that has a positive affect on the mental and physical development of children. Modeling activities promote the development of imagination, spatial and figurative thinking, memory and creative abilities. Teachers and psychologists around the world have shown that the development of logical thinking, communication, memory and attention is closely related to the development of fine motor skills and coordination of finger movements. V. A. Sukhomlynsky\(^1\) said that “the origins of children’s abilities and talents are at the fingertips. Figuratively speaking, the finest brooks flow from the fingers, that nourish the source of creative thought.” Therefore, we used this method as the basis for creation of the “New Year ART history” creative project.

Every child could come up with his or her New Year’s idea and bring it to life with the help of clay. In the process moving from idea to product, children pondered the content of their work, how to perform it and what it needed. The children created amazing and unique pieces of work succeed, illustrating the success of this development of the project.

\(^1\) V. A. Sukhomlynsky (1918-1970) was a humanistic educator who viewed the production of a truly humane human being as the most fundamental and important aim of education.
Names of creative works:

- «Kremlin New Year Show»
- «Nutcracker: winter fairy tale»
- «Hello, Ded Moroz»
- «Even alien is waiting for gifts in the New year’s eve»
- «The Twelve Months»
- «New Year Dog Show»
- «Nutcracker: winter fairy tale»
- «Magic New Year Ball»
- «Bullfinches are like red apples on branches»
- «Firebird»
A Study on Snack/Meal Time Guidance for Improving Young Children’s Self-Help Skills

Ewha Institute of Early Childhood Education and Care

A snack/meal time is not an uncommon site at an early childhood institute anymore. Most early childhood institutes are providing snack/meal time, and now it has become a natural part children’s education. Since ‘eating’ is a very important part of our daily lives, snack/meal time guidance in early childhood needs to be approached with more gravitas than simple teaching the children to “eat well.”

Eating incorporates a variety of complex self-help skills. For instance, it requires proper selection and use of specific tools for the child to successfully eat his/her food without dropping or spilling it. Such self-help skills are not innate for humans and needs to be acquired through education. An early childhood institute is an environment designed for education during infancy and early childhood, making it an optimal place for children to learn self-help skills related to eating.

At an early childhood institute, snack/meal time includes the following steps: preparation, eating, cleaning. Children should be encouraged to participate in these steps based on their developmental stage and guided to feel accomplished, not stressed, at the end of the activity.

Preparation

Preparation before snack/meal time includes cleaning the table, setting up the seats, and serving the food. Normally, the teachers are in charge of cleaning the table, but children older than 5 years of age may participate in this process. If such is the case, the children should be shown how to become more efficient as they gain experience.

When setting up the seats, infants/toddlers are recommended to be seated within arm’s reach of the teachers so that she/he can assist them if needed. Teacher’s assistance needs to be gradually decreased, and children should be able to set up the seats by themselves and be given a chance to do so by the age of 5.

It is better to serve food before infants are seated, since they do not fully understand that they should not eat until the table is ready. Once they grasp this concept, they can be seated before the table is fully made. The degree of participation again depends on children’s age. Teachers should determine how much food each child initially receives, but children can complete simple tasks, such as getting more food, water, and utensils, by themselves. They can take on...
more responsibility as they become more comfortable to a point where they can fully prepare their plate. However, this process should still be supervised since children do not know how much food is appropriate, especially at the beginning of the learning process. In cases with high children to teacher ratio, it may be difficult for the teachers to watch over each child for the entire process. In such cases, children can take different steps of the preparation stage and rotate their responsibilities after a certain period in order to reduce the burden on the teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Participation in dining preparation by infants/young children according to age

**Eating**

“Eating” officially starts when utensils are used to consume food. Similar to preparation, children should be assisted based on their developmental level. Infants who mainly use their hands to eat should be fed by the teachers via forks and spoons. Gradually, teachers can begin to hand them forks and spoons with food on them as a step toward their being able to pick up food using different utensils. Infants often have hard time using spoons since, unlike a fork, angling of the spoon is critical to its use. They first need to be taught how to hold a spoon. By age two, they will have enough fine muscle control to properly hold and use a spoon.

Infants often have difficulty finishing the last bits of food on their plates even after learning how to use different utensils. Help from the teachers again provides necessary guidance for the children to learn how to finish their plates. Providing the right type of utensil for the right age is crucial for proper development. For example, difficult utensils like chopsticks needs to be introduced slowly; one can lengthen the snack/meal time and provide practice chopsticks, or use them in an alternative setting to show how chopsticks can be used to move various objects.

However, education must not end at teaching “eating skills.” Eating is important part of our culture and there are etiquettes that are associated with it. For example, it is courteous for individuals to finish their plates, to chew with their mouths closed, to eat at one sitting, to not have food all over their face, and talk at an appropriate volume. In regard to finishing one’s plate, children need to learn how to serve themselves with the appropriate amount of food. If they have problems with eating at one sitting, eating specifically at the dinner table can help. Using chair with armrests can make it difficult for infants to turn around, forcing them to focus on the task of eating.
**Cleaning**

“Cleaning” refers both cleaning the dishes as well as themselves after eating. In case of infants, cleaning is generally done by the teacher. However, as infants become more familiar with the cleaning process, they can gradually begin to participate in taking off their bibs or organizing plates, trays, and utensils by type. They can also remove food from their clothes or pickup 1-2 kinds of food from the floor. Through this process, infants gradually recognize that cleaning is a necessary step after finishing a meal.

With experience, children come to learn how to clean trays and seats and themselves after eating. Three-year-olds, however, still need some guidance and observation from teachers, since they have yet to fully grasp the concept of cleaning. Repeatedly teaching them to push the chairs in or to clean themselves will eventually make such process a natural part of eating by the age of 5. Furthermore, around this age, children tend to become sensitive to hygiene, so it is possible to teach them to clean the table and floor too.

Learning how to eat is more than simply learning the practical skills associated with ingesting food. In the process of learning to eat properly, as defined by their culture, children learn about expectations associated with eating; gradually they learn to take responsibility for performing various tasks associated with snack or meal times. As they learn to eat without adult help, they also develop a sense of self and ultimately become more independent children.

---

*Figure 6* In the early infancy, infants may want to eat the meal with their hands but are guided to eat using tools. When they become familiar with using tools, the teacher can guide them to use tools properly. For the use of chopsticks, young children can be helped with training chopsticks.

*Figure 7* Infants can arrange a tray and seat and keep their body clean for themselves. In particular, 5-year-olds may be sensitive to hygiene so it is possible to guide them to clean the top of a table and floor too.
The main tasks of education in Ukraine are the education of the individual in the formation of a socially mature, hard-working, creative person. It is important that they be characterized by a sense of dignity, respect for human rights and freedoms, a conscious attitude to the duties of a person and a citizen, and pride for their homeland. In the development of social competences the child occupies an important place in everything that surrounds them from birth to the end of life, starting from the family, the school environment and completing the social environment in which they are born and which create the conditions for development in the educational process.

The interconnection of education and socialization of personality and the relation of subjective and objective development, as well as individual and social growth is delegated in the legislative acts of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine.

Preschool establishments successfully implement the Basic State Program “I am in the world” and the experimental program—“Sure Start”. The content of these programs is based on the concepts of Early Childhood Education. The role of out-of-school educational institutions have been increased to create conditions for the creative self-realization of the child in extra-curricular activities and to involve the child in forms of leisure learning and development.

The concept of civic education and upbringing involves the successful socialization of the child which characterizes readiness to perform social roles such as:

a) I am a successful student, and in my adult life I am a successful worker;

b) I develop a system of civil competencies, and in adult life become a responsible citizen;

c) I develop a system of values and attitudes and in an adult life become a successful family partner.

Thus, at the conceptual level, the state has identified a socially important task for teachers and psychologists in the education system - to ensure the development of such an educational space, in which a person from an early age would be aware of their social significance and through a system of values and attitudes acquired experience a positive interaction with society.

The interest in the problem of socialization of the person is highlighted in the studies of L. Vygotsky, L. Bueva, I. Kon, A. Makarenko, V. Sukhomlinsky, L. Rubinstein, I. Beh, whose work indicates the importance of the interdependence between the conditions of the social environment and the development of the personality and notes the need for active mediation in personal development.

Circumstances, and conditions prompt a person to activity, and are referred as factors of socialization. In domestic and western science there are different classifications of the factors of socialization. The most logical and productive for psychological and pedagogical science in our opinion is the classification proposed by Mudrik A.V., where the main factors of socialization are grouped into three groups: macro-factors, meso-factors, and micro-factors.

Macro-factors (macros - large, large-sized) - space,
planet, world, country, society, state - affect the socialization of all the inhabitants of the planet or very large groups of people living in certain countries.

Meso-factors (mesos - medium, intermediate) - the conditions of socialization of large groups of people, which are allocated on a national basis (ethnos as a factor of socialization) by place and type of settlement in which they live (region, village, city, settlement); for belonging to the audience of a certain mass media (radio, television, cinema, etc.).

Micro-factors (mikros - small) social groups directly affecting specific people (family, group of peers, microcosm, organizations in which social education is carried out - educational, professional, public, etc.).

Socialization is not a one-way process. We learn from our parents and peers. Under the influence of these people, we develop the intellectual, social and physical skills that are required to fulfill our social roles. To a degree, they also learn from us.

Agents of primary socialization are parents, close and distant relatives, peers, teachers, doctors, leaders of youth groups. Agents of secondary socialization are representatives of the administration of school, university, enterprise, army, state, and media.

During the socialization of the child the main influence of their social adaptation (adaptation to the social environment) is the internalization of structures of the psyche, the transformation of the elements of the external world into the inner self of the person which plays the main role for the socialization of the young and even socially mature person. The result of this internalization is the development of the personality.

Each of the levels in this hierarchy effects others who are experiencing these influences. The most important, in our opinion, are the social structures and the environment for the development of the child of preschool age which are the family representatives of their younger (parent) and older generations (grandparents).

The purpose of our research was to investigate the influence of family values on the general knowledge and competences of preschoolers. Their mental and spiritual development in their process of primary socialization and acculturation; to discover the system of social and cultural values of children and their parents, as well as representatives of the older generation i.e. Grandparents. The study involved: 200 children aged 5-6, 102 young people aged 25-35 years, 100 older people, 45-60 years in total 402 people.

Our research methods included testing materials namely: The “Tree” by Shelby; the following tests: “My Family” by Chomientauskas; the “Steps” by Ziller, the work of M. Rokicha on values, and unstructured interviews with children on the knowledge of family values, interests and understanding of the symbols as presented by the World Organization OMEP.

In the use of the materials from the “Tree”, we used 4 groups of children:

- **Group 1** – children are self-confident, energetic, independent, observant, creative, able to care for themselves in stressful situations - total 64 children.
- **Group 2** – children capable of critical thinking, with a developed sense of responsibility - 30 children;
- **Group 3** – children who lack confidence and express uncertainty, who are emotionally unbalanced or vulnerable - 50 people;

Ziller’s method showed that 65% of children have adequate self-esteem, 35% - lack self-esteem and confidence is undervalued. These are precisely the pre-school children from problematic/disruptive families and single-parent families.

Children from the first and second groups were more knowledgeable about different children's games, read a lot of fairy tales at home, showed good knowledge of tales and riddles, had more general information about their hometown, their country Ukraine and the world.

According to the results of the “My Family” technique, 65% of children were raised in full and harmonious families, 10% - children from disruptive
families, 18% - from incomplete families, 7% - children who experienced having a sense of isolation, loneliness and rejection in their families.

During the interview, preschoolers named the values that are relevant to them: the most important were “games and toys” valued by 47% of the children; “One of the family members” in 45% of children; “Peace” and “friendly family” - for 40% of children; “Money” - 30% of children; “Nature, walks and communication with animals” - 25% of children; “Domestic animals” - 15% of children.

During the interview the symbols of Ukraine were asked of both children and adults.

Preschoolers identified: Ukrainian flag, Ukrainian embroidered shawls, embroidered shirts, garland headdress (wreathes), poppies, Pysanky (colored/patterned Easter eggs) etc.

Symbols of Ukrainian-born families: (answers of young children’s parents): flag, embroidery, shawls, weddings, birthdays, Ukrainian borsch, kalina (cranberry bush as national symbol), Easter celebrations etc.

Spiritual symbols of Ukraine (answers of grandparents and grandfathers): coat of arms, flag, embroidered shawls, vyshyvanka/embroidered shirt, hopak (Ukrainian dance), Easter egg (Pysanka), paternal village hut, family orchard, salo (pork fat), Ukrainian traditional/folk songs, Ukrainian language, flowers such as hollyhock, poppies, and black-eyed susan.

An analysis of the results among the young parents and the older generations in the family tested by M. Rokich showed that the most important values and system of beliefs are “health” - 95%, “freedom” - 72%, “money” - 71%, “Happy family” - 47%, “to be a good friend” - 35%, self-confidence - 32%. Minimal values were determined in families with varied status.

The instrumental values or values of most importance were “independence”, “optimism”, “responsibility”, “education”, “parenting”, “organization in affairs” - in harmonious families (77%), but in single parent families, the most important values were: “well-being”, “money”, “power”, “physical force” ie control of situation-(23%). Harmonious families were focused on dialogue, ability to control their own emotions, and to accept others as they are.

At home most of the time children's time is spent with their mother 52%, brother and sister 25%, father 22%, grandmother or grandfather 15%, and 9% of children are single/ spend most time alone at home.

During the research, we were interested in the interaction of children with a family member or with relatives: in nature settings such as: parks, forest, sea, lake, river chose of 6.2% of children; sharing of games and toys at home - 19.5%; family holidays - 56%; help for grandparents at home - 5.4%; reading books with parents - only 3.7%.

In the study on the understanding of symbols of the World Organization OMEP, in the process of an individual unstructured interview in which 120 children took part. Each child got a picture - a letter with an OMEP symbol. A kindergarten psychologist wrote answers for the child and asked their association to this symbol. All the children gladly answered the picture they saw. According to the results of the content analysis of children's stories the researchers formed seven groups of responses:

1) Earth, Space, Globe, Planet, Ukraine
2) People
3) Children/friends
4) Adults
5) Activity
6) Mood and emotions
7) The image of the picture.

Answers were distributed as follows:
To the first group “Earth, Space...” there were 103 associations.
The second group “People” - 67 associations.
To the third group “Children -friends” - 105 associations.
To the fourth group “Adults” - 29 associations.
To the fifth group “Activity” - 173 associations.
To the sixth group “Mood, emotions” - 82 associations.
The seventh group “Image of the Picture” - 181 associations.
What kind of images were the most interesting pictures for preschoolers? The children talked about their dreams and desires, namely: the sea, plenty of toys; they pictured/imagined a picture the birthday of the Planet Earth, in which they love to see the Festival of the Earth, our planet as round and colorful, beautiful and sweet.

Children want to protect the Earth and Ukraine and not pollute or dirty the environment and to plant flowers. They were prepared to sing karaoke together; even imagined that the OMEP symbol is a great and delicious cake or pumpkin.

What activity is most popular in children 5 years of age? The following were most popular: dancing, singing, love of play, jumping, running, walking, and dancing in a circle.

Conclusions and proposals

Different generations of Ukrainians in Western Ukraine characterize an orientation towards other nations through positive social orientation, family dialogue and intercultural interaction, and a general understanding of the need to protect our planet, which is multi-ethnic and inhabited by various races of people. The prospect for further research can lead to the study of this problem both throughout Ukraine and other countries.

References

Abstract

Throughout this article we will look at the kaupapa Māori health model Te tuakiri o te tangata (Beyond the skin of man). Having an understanding that the spiritual makeup of the child is as vital as the physical makeup of the child is important to Māori kaupapa (Māori understandings). Te tuakiri o te tangata identifies the culture of peace, safety and harmonious growth of children particularly as we describe what is the makeup of the wairua (spiritual essence) of the child. How do we keep the wairua (spirit) and tinana (body) evenly balanced? Social media today is plastered with suggestions of how to keep your body healthy and strong with the right dietary plans, healthy living and eating, regular exercise, good sleep habits, rest and relaxation. But, there is not so much to suggest how one needs to take care of their wairua. Ministry of Education (2009) support that children have an environment where their ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing are valued and encouraged to ensure their holistic development in their early years. The model, was developed by Māori academics the late Dame Katerina Mataira and the late Petiwaea Manawaiti who were dearly respected and loved leaders of the Te Ataarangi movement. Te Ataarangi were instrumental in the revitalization of te reo Māori (Māori language). This article will discuss the model as was explained and taught by these beautiful ladies who will never be forgotten.

Introduction

Te Tuakiri o te Tangata literally translated is – Beyond the skin of man. This translation may imply that we may have an interest in human biology as we consider what is literally beyond the skin of man; blood, bones, sinews, muscles etc. However as it is with te reo Māori (Māori language), a more lateral view must be taken in its translation which will provide a more in depth explanation of this title. Tua - has one searching beyond what the physical eye can see. Tua also when used in the context of ‘kei tua o te ārai’, refers to ‘beyond the veil of death’, therefore indicating a spiritual existence. Ministry of Education (2009, p. 47), recognizes that kiri (skin) is not about the skin in a physical sense but that of a spiritual sense. Accordingly, Te Tuakiri o te Tangata is referring to beyond the physical and into a spiritual realm. “All things within a Māori world view are understood to have spiritual origins and direct connections to Ngā Atua (The Māori Gods) from whence all things were created and have since been developed” (Berryman, 2008, p. 244).

Te Tuakiri o te Tangata aligns to the Māori epistemological beliefs that all mankind need a balance of their wairua (spiritual) wellbeing with their taha tinana (physical) wellbeing. Pere, (1991) states that everything has a wairua, everything has a positive and negative stream. She expresses that it is a matter of keeping a balance between your spiritual and physical wellbeing.

Māori believe that maintaining a solid spiritual wellbeing requires a sound understanding of te wairua. Durie (1994) believes that nurturing the wairua is an essential requirement for wellbeing and health. He further states “without a spiritual awareness and a mauri (spiritual essence), an individual cannot be healthy” (p. 70). Ka’ai, Moorfield, Reilly & Mosley (2004) describe wairua to be “a spiritual life principle of a person and the relationship they have with the
world around them” (p. 18). It is believed that each newborn child possesses these spiritual attributes and further believed that it is the physical body that allows the child to develop its personality and spiritual attributes to learn and grow.

The late Dame Katerina Te Heikoko Mataira expressed what she described to be the ‘absolute beauty’ of wairua: **Waitau:** Innocent, not knowing right from wrong. When a child is born into this world it comes in innocence not knowing right from wrong. **Mahea:** No negative influences. The child has not been subjected to negative influences and is therefore said to be pure in thought, and only learns negativity through experience. **Ihi rangaranga:** Strong desire to learn. From the pureness of the child it desires to learn, become strong and an aura of anticipated learning is noticeable. (Te Ataarangi Educational Trust, 2000. p. 2)

**Te tuakiri o te tangata – Beyond the skin of man**

This model identifies nine elements which combined together formulates the essence of wairua and is demonstrated in the following framework:

![Diagram of the model](image)

Each of the elements described will provide a short explanation of what each element means and also how these may be identified in the child’s play and participation in their day.

**MAURI: (LIFE PRINCIPLE, SPECIAL CHARACTER)**

He mauri to ngā mea katoa (All things possess mauri). Every living thing has a life force/essence from the grass that grows in the fields to the trees in the forests.

**TE IHO MATUA: (THE UMBILICAL CORD)**

According to the online Māori Dictionary, there are three portions of the umbilical cord. The attachment to the mother is the rauru; the end fixed to the child is called the pito; and the middle is the iho. The iho matua is symbolic of the physical and spiritual connection of the new born child, that the cord literally was the connection to both the spiritual world they left to enter the physical world. (http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&prove.rb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=umbilical+cord)

**TE IHI: (POWER/ESSENTIAL/FORCE/EXCITED/AWE INSPIRING)**

Ihi is recognized when our children are performing in their kapa haka (Māori culture groups) and the feeling of excitement that builds within a parent to see their child participating in the haka (war dance), or a waiata (song) and fills a parent with a feeling of awe and excitement. Ihi is also described as the sense one feels as having your hairs stand up on your arms or on the back of your neck.

**TAPU: (SACRED/FORBIDDEN/CONFIDENTIAL)**

These qualities are directly from Io Matua (Supreme Being). The qualities of tapu are all creations along with that which comes from the child’s tūpuna (ancestors). When a child participates entirely in a haka (war dance) the ihi and tapu of that performance is evident as they strongly feel of the influence of their tūpuna (ancestors).
**MANA: (INTEGRITY/PRESTIGE/CHARISMA)**

From te ihi and tapu naturally comes the glimmer of mana and wehi. Both mana and wehi increase in the adult person or decrease along with their individual works or communications.

**WEHI: (FEAR/AWE/FORMIDABLE)**

**NGAKAU: (HEART/SENTIMENTS)**

The ngakau is the window to the soul. When the child is happy, or sad displaying these emotions openly it is evident that the ngakau is in a happy or sad state. These emotions may also enter into the whatumanawa, which will be explained below.

**TE WHATUMANAWA: (EMOTIONS/FEELINGS)**

The whatumanawa is the sense of wanting to achieve, wanting to accomplish, wanting to stand out. It is here that the deeper emotions are housed, the memory spring or also known as the subconscious. Feelings of aroha/love, manaaki/blessings, tautoko/support also move into the whatumanawa. A caution for teachers is to understand that should these emotions enter into the whatumanawa from the ngakau it is difficult to move it. This is good if those emotions are those of joy and happiness however it would not be so good if they are emotions of sadness, anger, or resentment.

**TE HINENGARO: (INTELLECT/MIND)**

All intellectual knowledge, it is here that the child decides whether the doors of opportunity will be opened or shut to them.

**TE PŪMANAWA: (INGENIOUS/SKILLS/TALENTS)**

The child’s natural talents reside here. These talents are inherited from our tūpuna/ancestors. Mead, (2003) also expresses that the pūmanawa are creative talents that are more attributed to a kin group rather than an individual’s own merits and he clearly states that “no one can argue that the pūmanawa was unique to the individual” (p. 254).

**TE PUNA WAIHANGA: (SPRING OF CONSTRUCTION, CREATIVITY)**

It is here the child instigates their creativity side and applies necessary equipment, tools and apparatus to formulate that creativity. This trait also assists in developing their pūmanawa further. Rather (2004), explains that waihanga, creativity abilities of man is not the “property of the elite only, it is found in every person, the only difference being that in some it manifests more than others”.

**TE AO (THE WORLD):** The child’s world, surrounds and elements within the child’s world. These surroundings can quite simply be the weather and the differences that the weather is in different parts of the world, such as snow, cyclones, tornados, summers that have temperatures of up to 30.0 C, winters of −0.0C for obvious reasons, the child who grows up in the tropical islands will not experience snow, and that aspect alone will influence the wairua of the child simply by the child being prepared and settled and happy in tropical weather throughout the entire year, and similar emotions for the child who grows up in the −0.0C weather and is happy in their world and their wairua is happy and settled. Their experiences of their world will be absolutely different to each other, but their wairua will not be influenced by the extreme differences of the child on the other side of the world.

The surrounds and the environment that the child grows will influence their wairua. Other surroundings can also be things such as, animals, climates, including the stars, moon, sun, solar system and many many more.

**TE HUNGA TANGATA (People):** All man/people that are within the child’s ao (world) will have an influence on the child’s wairua. In the whānau (family), mum, dad, brothers, sisters, cousins, nana, poppa, aunties, uncles, hapū (sub tribes), iwi (tribes), will be different in every child’s world. If the child attends a childcare centre or a kōhanga reo (language nest), their wairua will be influenced by the centre supervisor, teachers, cook, cleaner, bus driver, the relievers. The child’s community will also have people that will influence their wairua differently, shopkeeper
on the corner dairy, fire brigade, police, the gym instructor, guitar lessons teacher so many more people in the child’s life. All these people have an influence on the child’s development and their wairua. We would hope that these people will have a positive influence on the child to encourage the child’s full potential to be achieved and their wairua to flourish. Sadly however, if these influences are not positive this could impact severely on the child’s development and damage part of the child’s wairua.

The last element that surrounds the wairua of the child is **TE PUNA WAIORA (The spring of spiritual well-being):** This puna (spring) is where all the knowledge of things spiritual, Christian and spiritual within te ao Māori are housed. The content of the Puna Waiora provides information that is of the spiritual existence. For many children this component of te tuakiri o te tangata does not exist at all. Durie (1994), says that in order for the child to learn and develop in their world, Te tuakiri o te tangata must be kept intact, if all components of a child’s wairua is not kept intact the child’s wairua is immediately affected.

### The culture of peace, play, participation - wairua

Te tuakiri o te tangata provides information that when shared within the early childhood sector places a responsibility upon all educators to ensure that all tamariki (children) are in a learning environment that nurtures and cares for their taha kikokiko (physical wellbeing) and their taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) equally. The model also provides an environment that ensures all children enjoy a culture of peace in their play environment, that they are valued as individuals in their play and that they are also confident in their ability to be heard as they join in the wonderful learning and development for each of them.

*Kia kaha tātou katoa ki te manaaki i a tātou tamariki kia tupu, kia kaha, kia tū rangatira ai.*

*Let us be strong to nurture our children so they will grow to be strong leaders for the future.*

### References


Historically, due to conventional authoritarian approach to education (Efland, 1990), kindergarten teachers provided instruction that closely shaped children’s artistic output; those children—as young as two to six years old—whose art did not conform to that instruction were very often labelled “incompetent learners.” Even in modern day Hong Kong, where most kindergartens operate three-hour programmes emphasizing academic and school readiness, craft-making has focused on finding the fastest way for children to reproduce representational objects assigned by the teacher. However, when Howard Gardner studied creativity development among human beings in the early 80s, he found the most creative children are those who always have unusual ideas in mind and dare to cross boundaries. Accordingly, the development of children’s creativity has since then been a focus of early childhood education (Gardner, 1983).

Therefore, it is inadequate for teacher education institutions to provide only skills-based art training to student teachers who soon will become teachers in kindergartens. In the past, craft-making was the emphasis of teachers’ visual arts training, and student teachers learnt many techniques—e.g., how to cut and fold papers, stick materials, use clay—they could pass on to their students; sometimes drawing skills were also important for teachers to develop to help children outline their works. Student teachers usually learnt the steps needed to produce a craft (e.g., a basket of fruit made from clay) by rote, then broke them down the steps and taught the children to repeat them. Nurturing creative children requires creative teachers, and student teachers should thus be trained in a creative way.

Student teachers in early childhood education have to pursue a bachelor’s degree, with visual arts being one of the topics covered. Teacher education in visual arts is based on the ideas of discipline-based art education (Dobbs, 1992), which consists of four core areas: (1) art production; (2) art history; (3) art criticism; and (4) aesthetics. Student teachers not only learn skills and techniques to create their own works during studio periods, they also study art history—from cave drawings to contemporary masterpieces—to learn artists’ techniques and styles, and their art reflected contemporaneous cultural, political, social, religious, and economic events and movements. They learn to describe, interpret, evaluate, and judge the elements and qualities of the visual form, to understand and appreciate different works of art. Moreover, they connect visual arts to their daily life by considering the nature, meaning, impact, and value of art to people and events in their surrounding environment.

We have tried to integrate four components in our teacher visual arts education classes, with the goal of transforming the activities they learn into kindergarten children’s art classes. Art history was an important part of the class framework. For example, one of our classes—“Salute to Andy Warhol’s pop art”—delved into the history of pop art to help student teachers understand how this late-1950s art movement influenced popular culture, and was critical to contemporary art in the United States. We showed the student teachers numerous works by Andy Warhol to explain how he used colors and screen printing techniques, and then invited each to select one of Warhol’s works, apply Feldman’s
model of art criticism (Feldman, 1994) to describe its visual qualities and analyze its artistic elements, and interpret it based on Warhol’s statements and the philosophy of pop art.

However, it would not be very helpful to student teachers if we emphasized art appreciation alone. To appreciate masterpieces, pre-service teachers must grasp the artists’ styles and the techniques they used to create those masterpieces, not simply copy them exactly. By offering them discipline-based training, we hoped the student teachers would come to see themselves as artists. As ideas often come from practice, art production is absolutely indispensable to students who study the visual arts. Therefore, after the student teachers discussed features of Warhol’s work in groups, they started to create works of their own style. Rather than simply copying Warhol’s screen printing techniques, they drew a portrait of the student teacher next to them using a marker pen, and collaged it with colored papers of different textures.

Enacted in a kindergarten setting, this visual arts activity can transform children’s understanding of art. Children aged four to six appreciate aesthetics by observing details of their daily life with their family, friends, and relatives in the community. In this case, the children are asked to observe a friend’s eyes, nose, mouth, and face; outline and draw those features using marker pens; and then create collages by combining their portraits with papers of mixed colors and textures. After, the children are invited to share their works and ideas… and will be amazed to see there is a great artist, named Andy Warhol, who produced art in a style similar to theirs. This masterpiece appreciation class integrates discipline-based nurturing of children, while respecting their autonomy.

Acknowledgement

Thank you for the generous support of Ms. Stephanie Sin in the visual arts module of Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education, Hong Kong Baptist University.


Uruguay is currently in the process of expanding the coverage of early childhood care and education (ECCE) centers within the National System of care and the expansion of coverage and consolidation of state ECCE, raised in the definition of public policy for the next five years of the new government. However, there are certain gaps when defining quality criteria, which is a problem for the design, implementation and evaluation of ECCE policies, and therefore in the proposals of each center. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to provide knowledge that contributes to build quality criteria from a multidimensional, integrated concept and a human rights approach. With that purpose, systematization and development of major conceptual frameworks on the subject are made; and experiences to illustrate the quality and warmth in ECCE are described with emphasis on the teacher-child bond and paying strong importance to labor welfare of those working in ECCE.

**Keywords**: quality - warmth - ECCE

**Epigraph**: “A society can be judged by its attitude towards the smallest ones, not only in what is said about them, but in how much this attitude is expressed in what it’s offered to them” Elinor Goldschimied, 2006

1. **Introduction**

This article is based on the poster presented in the OMEP World Conference in Seoul, Korea (2016), contributing to the debate and exchange related to the necessary transformation of Early Childhood attention systems for future generations. It is framed within the academic work of the Early Childhood Program and Early Education of the School of Psychology – University of the Republic of Uruguay, which objectives are:

- Promoting the development of research, the extension and college teaching of Psychology in Early Childhood and Early Education.
- Contribute to the integral development of the children in the evolutionary state from 0 to 6 years old, from the conception of rights, in educational and community contexts.

At the same time in the context of Uruguay of changes and transformations in the policies directed towards the attention and education of the first childhood, which leads to rethinking the criteria for the quality of services.

From the specific discipline of Psychology it is remarked in this article the importance of the quality to go hand-in-hand with educational warmth.

2. **Justification**

Currently our country (Uruguay) is in the process of expanding of the coverage of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centers, within the framework of the construction of a National Integrated Care System and the expansion of coverage and consolidation of ECCE state programs, as proposed in the definition of public policies for the five-year period of the current government.

However, empty spaces are found in the definition of the quality criteria agreed from the inter-institutionality, which constitutes a problem of the design, implementation and evaluation of the ECCE policies, which translates into the Centers proposals. In this sense, there has been reediting of strong
debates related to the care and education in the first years, which appeal to the role and to the bond of adults in charge of this attention.

Being able to center the subject of educational quality in relation to the warmth of the bonds that are established in this area, becomes a crucial contribution for the transformations in the ECCE programs to guarantee the Children’s Rights.

3. Objective

Provide knowledge that contributes to the construction of quality criteria from a multidimensional, integral concept and focused on rights.

4. Methodology

A bibliographical review was realized that allowed to systematize and develop some key concepts related to the proposed subject.

5. Development

The approach to the subject is realized based on two base dimensions, the quality and the educational warmth, from which other concepts emerge.

5.1. Educational Quality

While there is some variety of literature related to educational quality, for this work it will be approached from the framework of three points: the ECCE, caring is educating and educating is caring, and Children’s Rights.

5.1.1. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

In 2007 UNESCO starts talking about the Early Childhood Care and Education, defining its objective as “Lending support to the survival, growth, development and learning of the child-which includes taking care of its health, nutrition and hygiene, as well as its cognitive, social, physical and affection development- from its birth to their entry to elementary school, in formal and informal contexts.” (UNESCO, 2007)

Later, on 2010 the ECCE World Conference is realized: “Build the gifts of the nations” with 193 participants of the UNESCO Member States with the objective of reassure ECCE globally as a right and its importance for development.

Currently, the global education agenda (Education 2030) is part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations, which compose the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is the SDG Nº4 E2030 Education to transform lives that aims to: “Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning” (UN, 2015)

Within this framework UNESCO defines specific goals for the ECCE to accomplish such goal, being Goal 2 to look after children to have access to quality services. As one of the strategies UNESCO “supports all national, regional and international efforts to broaden and improve ECCE services in an equitable way in order to provide all children a better start in their lives” (UNESCO, 2016)

5.1.2. Caring is educating and educating is caring.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) includes caring and education, given that they are considered inseparable. “Dichotomy is not such anymore, and as said by Ingrid Pramiling, OMEP World President, the caring and education of children are two sides of the same coin. There does not exist caring without education and there is no education without attention and caring” (Mara, 2009, p. 21)

This is the result of a path that started when from inside the UNESCO of Education For All (EFA, 1990) it is defined that “learning starts from birth” and therefore caring and education are inseparable concepts, parting from an integral concept of Child Welfare.
In the history of attention in the early childhood, caring was the most involved to welfare practices, focused on covering the basic needs of children, and takes us back to the emergence of the first “nurseries” around factories when women had a greater entry to the work market. Since its denomination these implied a concept of childhood as an object of care that had to be “stored” under protection, to avoid that they stayed on the streets while their mothers worked. (Etchebehere et al., 2008).

As education in the early childhood is starting to be recognized as a stage itself and different from other educational stages, with objectives and goals of its own, practices acquire a pedagogical nature. Also being supported on a conception of childhood that place the child as a subject with rights. It is recognized as active and the main role of its development, being social, capable of transforming into interaction with the environment and to transform it (Etchebehere et al., 2008). This defines educational intentionality of the actions of caring directed towards this stage, being why caring is educating and educating is caring.

Deepening into the word *caring*, from the definitions that we may find in a common dictionary there is one that refers to the «Interested and constant attention for something or someone» (Savio, 2017, p.9). This idea reinforces the necessary active and constant interest of who’s caring after.

Caring from a psychological attitude implies communicating a requested interest, engaging, compromise and attention from the caretaker (Savio, 2014). From other meanings *caring* may imply an intervention over the body from a physical and biological point of view, without the previously mentioned psychological attitude. Therefore it is possible to care after without caring. (Savio, 2014). In this way it is convenient to repair in the so called routinary moments of caring as changing diapers or bottle-feeding. The fact that these are very repetitive can disturb the caring attitude, and that the body is treated with hurries and only in its physiological needs. This implies an important risk as such hands and looks that care after without caring can hinder the emerging of the person (Savio, 2014).

On the other hand, if these imply the development of significant and rewarding exchanges that facilitate communication between the child and its caretakers, this has a positive impact in the emotional and cognitive development.

For this, it is necessary to make it more of a ritual and less routinary, in the sense of activities carried on just for simple obligation, without enthusiasm. Said in another way, it is necessary to distance from such activities that are practiced in a utilitarian and mechanical way, without emotions or affections. Following Evans and Myers 1994 (based on Ilfed, 1992):

[…] a routine is more than just knowing at what time the child has to be fed, rest, or be bathed: it has to do also with the way things are done […]. You are knitting bonds between the child and its caretakers. These experiences that are had on a regular basis with the child are raw material for its growing, development and learning (Cerutti, 2013).

Another aspect to have into account is that these daily care actions of the needs of feeding, rest and hygiene, are being configured on predictable moments. This contributes to the incorporation of the child to the notion of time, of before and after, which generates at the same time confidence and trust (Cerutti, 2013).

5. 1. 3. Children’s Rights.

Educational quality is related also to interventions that guarantee children’s rights, that is to say that ensures the exercise of the right of integral development of small children.

Parting from the functions of integral protection, referent adults are the ones who have the daily responsibilities of providing care of children in their early childhood, contributing to ensuring their rights. It is required that adults guarantee the satisfaction of the needs of children, being necessary that these are thoroughly satisfied for the child’s development to occur. This brings certain demands for the adult, which are closely related to the needs of the child
in this stage. Taking care of children in their early childhood implies taking charge of children’s needs, expressed through their demands of affection, attention, contention and care. At the same time this requires the capability to provide answers according to the situation described. (Etchebehere et al, 2008).

In its interaction with the environment, the child needs to find adequate answers to survive and grow physically as well as mentally, to progress in its action, in the construction of itself and the structuration of the world that surround it. It’s in this sense that adults become the guarantors of rights, favoring the evolution of its faculties. (Etchebehere, 2012).

This implies to recognize and situate children as experts in matters related to their own lives and that they are skilled communicators from their different expressive languages (“the hundred child languages”), constructors of meaning that elaborate and interpret the meaning of its existence. They are active agents as well that influence the world that surrounds it and interacts with it.

5. 2. Educational Warmth

Educational warmth implies that «Professionalism and respect must be present in every educational situation in every context » (Hoyuelos, 2010 en Vincze, 2012)

But there is mutual respect every day. This demands to warn the child what we are going to do with it, attend the active cooperation of the child, from interaction moments without hurry, with regularity in the experience, from a continuity that provides confidence and trust.

It also requires the presence of sensitive adults, capable of perceiving the child’s signals and interpret them soon and adequately (Mary Ainsworth, 1978), that develop an empathetic attitude, that allows to comprehend the situation from the child’s point of view.

Having this into account, educational quality can be approached from two concepts: the cooperation and the Solid Foundation for Early Education.

5.2.1. The cooperation.

In this sense we will go through an experience that relates about care and respect for the times of the baby. It is about the perspectives that María Vincze, Pediatrist from the Pickler Institute in Budapest, about cooperation. From the proposal of attention to the early childhood promoted by this institute it is known to emphasize in activities of personal attention, giving that those minutes of intimacy is when the relation between the educator and the baby deepens. But in this text it is questioned and proposes that delicate and affectuous attention is not enough: “The child has to perceive that the words are directed towards it, that the person leaned over it expects an answer with its gaze, its hands, its words; that it is aware of its gaze, its attention, its smile, its voice” (Vincze, 2012, pp. 9-10).

A baby that does not receive attention in these common and concrete situations, ends up being treated as an object of care and not as a subject. This way the notion of “cooperation” is introduced as an instrument of an authentic relation. This leads to being able to differentiate the obedient baby that knows what it is expected of it and acts accordingly to the baby that cooperates.

“The baby that really cooperates with its educator, helps for its own pleasure. It allows itself to react in an according way to the demands of the educator, but also to deviate from them from time to time when playing or getting out of the personal relationship to focus attention on something else, this way making an effort to get the attention from the educator” (Vincze, 2012, p. 10).

In this way the baby’s right to participation is guaranteed, marking waiting times. The role of guarantor of the educator, from its cooperation attitude, allows this type of manifestations.

Se garantiza así el derecho a la participación del bebé marcando tiempos de espera. El rol de garante de la educadora, desde su actitud de cooperación, permite este tipo de manifestaciones.
5.2.2. «Solid Foundation for Early Education»

Parting from the theory of bonding, in 2013 Fernando Salinas-Quiroz proposed the construct of Solid Foundations for Early Education (SFEE, EIBS in Spanish). Using the term professional secondary caretaker (PSC, CSP in Spanish) to refer to the staff in charge of the attention and education of children.

The Attachment Theory results in an excellent reference framework to study the psychological aspects of the caring environment, as in, the sensitivity of the PSC and the bond that create with the infants, being that they can be considered indicators of the service quality (Carbonell, Posada, Plata & Méndez, 2005, quoted by Salinas-Quiroz, 2015, p.5)

Even if the main attachment figure is the mother, others caretakers can become secondary attachment figures. Continuous interaction between the child and the PSC allow for the establishment of an attachment bond that constitutes on a solid foundation if it provides protection in front of dangerous situations and ensures its survival (Bowlby, 1969, cited by Salinas-Quiroz, 2015). In the way that it creates trust in the availability and responsivity of the caretaker, the child feels confident of its own interactions with the world.

On the other hand, the contributions of Mary Ainsworth (1978) are also considered, relating to the maternal sensitivity as a mother’s skill to be aware of the infant’s signs, interpret them correctly and respond fast and adequately. This also allows to define the PSC sensitivity, in the way that it is capable of developing this skill.

Therefrom Salinas-Quiroz (2015) conducts many researches to evaluate the relation between the PSC sensitivity and the behavior of the solid foundation for infants with its own social and cognitive development. In relation to the construct of Solid Foundation for Early Education proposes that this way defines the

Protecting network of relations with sensitive, available and responsive PSC that offers infants a variety of opportunities of exploratory interactions with objects and persons. The SFEE (EIBS in Spanish) implies a shared responsibility between the family and the CEI, making sure the infants will be attended, even if certain members are not available in a temporary way –for a few hours a day-. The collaboration capability between the caring family members and non-family members becomes a crucial feature for the Early Education quality, being that it joins the attachment relationships into a functional network.

Therefore SFEE (EIBS in Spanish) provides children a variety of learning opportunities with sensitive PSC, with the objective of promoting and enrich the early child development, constituting into a valuable indicator of quality and educational warmth for the early childhood.
References


In April 2013 the Public Children’s Garden “Elvia Carrillo Puerto,” located in San Mateo Atenco State of Mexico with the advice and support of OMEP inaugurated the first game library or toy library ludoteca for the improvement of learning in a federalized preschool campus. In this article we want to briefly share information about the history of these institutions as well as the results we have experienced.

Brief history of the toy libraries.

The first toy library was founded in 1934 in Los Angeles, California by Mrs. Infield, a citizen of the United States of America of Danish origin. The idea was launched in European countries mainly through UNESCO and in some Latin American countries by interested people or organizations.

By the 25th anniversary of the first toy library, 700,000 children had visited toy libraries and had taken nearly 9,000,000 toys on loan in the United States alone.

The neologism (newly-created word) “ludoteca” designates a game center where it is possible to borrow, or take out on loan, games and toys. Sometimes the general word “toy is used to signify all materials available in the ludoteca.

Apparently, the first toy library that worked in the countries of the north of Europe specialized in toys for the reeducation of handicapped and their services covered a restricted public. Nowadays most of them have an organizational structure and precise working methods. More than 50 are registered in France and more than 20 in Belgium and Switzerland, with several others in other European countries and North America.

The creators of some toy libraries believe that toys have great value beyond the fun they provide. They recognize toys as useful educational tools that provide information and promote competence in much the way way as music and books during free time. Playrooms are located in neighborhoods, educational centers, hospitals, and other socially relevant situations. They represent a response to a context with limited possibilities for play. They are inserted into the picture as an “animation” of the children, as well as an extension and democratization of the culture of free time.

Some toy libraries arise to address the need for a specific experience or activity. For example, the aim of the playroom in a building in Versailles, the “Grand Siécle,” was to create a space for meetings and exchanges for children. A particular goal was to provide a place of welcome and integration for newcomers, who were often disoriented by their change of residence and the consequent loss of friends. This playroom promoted the child’s adaptation to the new home by creating a climate of friendship and camaraderie around them.

Such toy libraries do not consider the toy as an object with an end in itself, but rather as a means to foster positive relationships between children, children and parents, and the whole community. To accomplish their goals, toy libraries require a large assortment of toys; they must be able to face the competition of shops and toy stores; and they must stay abreast of innovations that are introduced in the market.

The experience as teachers.

When we opened our toy library as a school space four years ago, we did not know at all how we were going to use it during the “normal” working day. We have experimented with several strategies - some have worked and others have not - but the important thing has been that now neither the teachers nor the children can imagine our school without the playroom.

At the beginning, we decided that each group would enter the playroom One hour on a particular
day each week. However, this did not work since the
the children would have fun. However now we can
groups are very large, with approximately 30 children,
testify that the benefits are many and in several areas
making it difficult to create an atmosphere of respect
of the personality of the individual. One of the most
and trust that would give children the option to play
and respect they must maintain in the playroom and
alone or in small teams. Another challenge was that,
and that these improved behaviors then transfer to the rest
initially, we teachers did not change our authoritative
of the school spaces. In fact, we dare to hope that these
role as teachers so we could become play companions
improvements in behavior will transfer to other aspects
as required for the successful operation of these spaces.
required for the successful operation of these spaces.
So, working together, we created another way to use
of their daily lives. We have noticed that they boys
the playroom, this time concentrating on the children
become calm, cooperative, kind, respectful among
who were falling behind and those with special
themselves, negotiators and mediators. Therefore, we
educational needs, such as language delays or behavior
have concluded that the toy libraries can be spaces for
problems. This new approach included support by the
the construction of a culture of peace.
special education psychologist who worked with the
The toy libraries are generally designed to meet
children either individually or in small teams.
the needs of children whose parents do not play with
The children who participated in this new
them and children who have problems socializing
organizational approach began to make significant
with peers. However, we have observed that, the
progress. However, the rest of the children asked us
relationships established by parents and children in
(almost begged us) to enter the playroom, so we had
the playroom create or strengthen the affective bonds
stall them by telling them that the playroom teacher
between them.
was busy or that they might have a turn “when they
For most of the students, the games and toys
behaved good.” As a result, we teachers felt very bad
in the toy library are not within the reach of the
and dissatisfied for not providing equal opportunities
purchasing power of their family. The toys in the
all the children.
library, then, represent a unique opportunity that the
Finally, we find a form of organization that
children value for themselves and learn to care for and
suited our reality: Once a week a different team of
conserve so that other children may use them too. In
students from each group comes in for an “extra”
the toy library, the children create new toys and new
schedule, that is, after class. Each teacher donates that
ways to play with existing toys, thereby contributing
time voluntarily, which is not part of her contract,
to the experience for themselves as well as their peers.
because she is convinced of its benefits it has for
Our playroom is far from becoming a
children and for herself. For instance, she feels calmer
supplementary “prosthesis” of a society that creates
and can enjoy playing with the children during this
to objects to remedy its own shortcomings. Instead it
Sometimes, the same teacher does not come
experience for themselves as well as their peers.
with their team, but they rotate so that the children
Our playroom is far from becoming a
also know and enjoy the company of different teachers.
supplementary “prosthesis” of a society that creates
Two or three times a year, mothers and fathers are
objects to remedy its own shortcomings. Instead it
invited to share games with their children. During
aims to improve the quality of life and knit human
the week, children who require support with the
ties within a community.
psychologist continue to enter the playroom and now
Benefits for school children.
the entire community wants to enroll their children
to our school because it has this wonderful play space.

When we started the Ludoteca project, we did

Reference

It has been 70 years since Lady Allen of Hurtwood (United Kingdom) and Alva Myrdal (Sweden) founded OMEP in Prague in 1948. To honor this important anniversary for children around the world, two kindergartens and one primary school Grade A’ class decided to perform some special educational activities, led by the preschoolers themselves. The kindergartens and primary school are located in Patras, the regional capital of western Greece.

The main idea was to give children the chance to express and communicate their own ideas about what they believe OMEP can offer to children globally. Other goals were to provide children opportunities to recognize and explain OMEP’s logo and to make suggestions about what should be done to help young children and also to ensure their well-being.

Before starting the activities, the teachers explained to the children what OMEP represents and why the organization is important for both teachers and students. Teachers told the children that OMEP helps early childhood teachers by providing them scientific knowledge so they can improve education for children on every corner of the Earth. They also introduced OMEP’s logo and asked the children to unfold their thoughts about its meaning.

Headed by Principal Ms. Magda Tsiotsiou, the 53rd Kindergarten of Patras, has 48 children, aged between 4-6 years old, in two groups. During the conversation about the organization, its importance, and the worth of celebrating its foundation, teachers asked children about ways adults can help young people all over the world. The children suggested that adults can provide them not only toys and books, but also financial support.

When they were asked their opinions about the logo and what it might represent, the children answered that it reminded them of a Greek song called, *If all the children of the world*, with lyrics by Giannis Ritsos and musical composition by Mimis Plessas.

The song is about children dancing around the Earth holding hands and singing loudly about their wishes for happiness and unity among children all over the world. After singing the song, they decided to paint pictures of little children, flowers and birds, which they used to create a poster (image 1).

They also used OMEP’s capital letters to create an acrostic with the following meaning:

- Ομόνοια (Ormonía - Conc. Harmony, Friendship)
- Μουσική (Mousiki - Music)
- Ευτυχία (Efthia - Happiness)
- Παιδί (Pedi - Child)

They wrote these words on a “ladder” that reaches a 3D – Earth they also made themselves (image 2).

Children in the 42nd Kindergarten of Patras worked with their teacher, Vasiliki Mpakalarou on the
project. During an initial discussion, children were shown OMEP’s logo and asked about its meaning. Here are some of their ideas:

- It is the Earth’s flag.
- It represents Earth’s school. This school is like all the other schools, full of teachers, desks, toys and children from all around the world, speaking their own languages.
- It shows all the children of the Earth, who dance around her, in order to protect her and make her laugh. Their purpose is to take care of her in order to be safe, warm, strong, rich and unbreakable, especially when people’s hearts are full of hard feelings.
- The children who are dancing around the Earth are happy, because they simply like dancing, playing by the sea, pretending that they are mermaids, fairies, doctors and engineers, and because they love going to school with their friends.
- They can be safe and happy, only when there are no earthquakes and wars and since everything is in its place: houses, oceans, animals, people, boys and girls, trees and flowers.

When their teacher asked them why they believed that children should protect the Earth, they answered that hearts that tell them to do so. They also mentioned that the painter created the logo in this way because he loves children and because adults didn’t want to be part of the painting because they didn’t want to leave their offices.

Apart from expressing their thoughts, the children also tried to describe the meaning of the logo by participating in dramatic play. They used their hands to:

- Make a shield to protect the Earth, (image 3)
- Build hospitals: (image 4)
- And schools: (image 5)
- Finally they danced around the Earth. (image 6)

When Photini Stathopoulou, a teacher in the third school, showed her Grade A (7 years old pupils) students the logo and asked them about their thoughts
onit, they said it reminded them of dancing or playing traditional games. Most of them said that they liked it because it shows a group of friends embracing and protecting the Earth they love and care about.

Then, the children tried to connect dancing with other aspects of our daily life. They said that dancing is a way to have fun and express our happiness when we celebrate our name day and our birthday, as well as when people get married and during carnival and national holidays.

When their encouraged the children to dance, they discovered several different ways to do it, such as dancing in a circle, in line, in pairs or even by themselves. Some children continued to share their thoughts about OMEP and the logo while dancing with classmates. They said they enjoyed dancing a great deal because it made them smile and feel happy and because it filled them with a sense of unity. In this way they managed to connect the dance with the logo and the ideas it reflects.

The children completed their educational activities by:

- Painting themselves in motion. (image 7)
- Painting children dancing in a traditional way: (image 8)
- Depicting the OMEP logo in the schoolyard in an amazing way—with their own bodies. (image 9)

Children’s imaginations, creativity and critical minds continue to amaze us, and also illustrate that things that seem difficult or complicated to adults have the simplest and, at the same time, the most accurate explanations in their minds. Don’t you agree?