

December Newsletter 2009 – Time to Celebrate

Dear Parents and Friends of Cowgate,

This newsletter brings exciting news of celebrations, I have included the presentation on pedagogy from a course Julie and Donna attended in Glasgow in November, I have chosen to show you, what I hope are significant slides and the paper on pedagogy. A brief explanation of our Christmas Plans. An invitation to join our eco-committee. Remember a view this newsletter in print layout...red and green...of course ☺

As mentioned above, we have enjoyed many exciting celebrations here at Cowgate...

One of the most significant celebrations has been the birth of baby Ben. Emily from the Salle de Jeux has a new baby brother. Everyone is doing very well and Emily is very much enjoying being, as we would have expected a very caring sister. Emily is, rightly so, feeling very important in her playroom. Here is a little story of finding the right place for the baby's beginning days:

'Where would be the very best place in all the world for a new baby to begin its life?' 'Well, we want the baby to begin its life in our nest', said the birds.

'No', said all those who had gathered to search for the right place. 'Why, the wind might blow the nest down and the baby would topple to the ground.'

'We want the baby here', said the rabbits. 'We have a lovely place under the ground near the old fir tree.'

'Oh, no, that would never do. There would be too much company,' said the others. 'The baby must have a place that is warm and cosy, plenty of food, a little hot tub, and music. Your place will never do.'

So they searched for a long time. Finally they found just the right place near the mother's heart. Here there was music, there was a little hot tub, there was plenty of food, and there was a place that would be warm and cosy (A story by Betty Peck).

Since beginning this newsletter two other beautiful babies have been born, Angela (La Camera dei Bambini) has given birth to twin girls!

We are still glowing from winning three awards this month...

- The Staff won an award for their work here at Cowgate. Staff who give so fully and richly of themselves so deserve this award. Thank you for all your kind comments of support.*
- Quality of Life Award – ‘Free, Joyful, Sensory, and Rich Play in the Natural World’ Here is the little quote entered in the brochure...*

“Children at Cowgate under 5’s Centre have enthusiastically embraced the Forest School experience and both the children and their families have expressed how this experience has enriched their lives. One of the principles of Forest School is that is ‘builds on an individual’s innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering children the opportunity to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves’. The nursery’s philosophy is to trust the child to make their own decisions. The Forest School experience supports this belief by developing the child’s confidence and self-esteem.”

Jane (Garven) is a wonderful Forest School Leader – we have all learnt so much from her. Thank you Jane for sharing your knowledge and skills with everyone, we owe this award to your leadership.

- Nursery of the Year – Please check our website for full details of this exciting award. Just click on the logo and it should open the page for you,*

<http://www.cowgateunder5s.co.uk/nurseryworld.html>

Another very exciting event is...

Liz and Donna ventured to London this month to begin their Froebelian training. Both Liz and Donna have come back inspired by the introductory conference. As Cowgate under 5’s Centre is a Froebelian centre, for all our

new friends and families I have added some information on Froebel at the end of this newsletter.

Care Commission

We are due to have a visit from Care Commission anytime soon. Thank you to everyone who has completed a questionnaire.

Calling all parents...

Many of our parents who were involved in the eco-committee moved on when their child moved on to school. We would very much like our parents involved in this fundamental part of Cowgate's philosophy. The idea behind our eco-school committee, pure and simple, is to involve more children and their families in our eco work. For example, one of goals has been to develop our school kitchen with vegetables and salad. We have enjoyed small triumphs in our garden, with lovely fruit and vegetables being enjoyed. Our aim is to have afternoon snack all year round from our garden. Only one of our ideas...please do come and share any of your ideas. Lorraine would love to note your interest. We meet three times each year.

Christmas

The celebration of Christmas comes in many forms in the centre...

Our Nativity Play

Our Christmas Nativity Play is due to take place on 16th December @ 2pm. Exciting.

Christmas Outing

Our Christmas Outing is on 19th December. Please collect a letter from reception highlighting the details.

Sponsoring Kadi

Our contribution of £144 for the support of our sponsored child Kadi Moussa in Niger is due.

It is at this time of year we ask that if you are wishing to give the staff a little gift that you instead insert a small donation in Kadi's box (on reception).

We greatly value your generosity that you express in many, many, ways and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support throughout the year.

May I wish you all a joyful and peaceful Christmas from all of us...

I will leave you with this little poem...

There are many gifts.

But a true gift is something you make,

Because you make it with your imagination,

Your time, your money,

Your hands,

Your brain, your best wishes.

You are really wrapping yourself up

And giving yourself away.

Of course, that means there is more of you everywhere.

And when you bump into pieces of your good old wonderful self,

Sparkles fill the air.

(Poetry from the Kindergarten floor, B.P).

Friedrich Froebel - 1782-1852

His life and influence on education

Miriam LeBlanc



What was life like before kindergarten, before 'childhood' existed? Children worked in mines and factories; nobody celebrated birthdays, and by the age of seven, children were considered adults. Then along came Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), and invented the kindergarten...perhaps as a result of being raised by the proverbial 'wicked' stepmother of fairytales, who gave him little love or attention.

*"Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul."
Friedrich Froebel*

It's 2005, and we've passed the high-water mark for childhood. Our children may not be coal mining, but they deal with the pressures of television, advertising, and loss of outdoor play. This discussion of Froebel is more important than ever.

Froebel grew up in the beautiful forests of Thuringia, Germany, with a keen love of nature (the same countryside inspired his famous contemporary, Goethe, to make it his home for decades). This closeness to creation, along with a firm Christian faith, were key to Froebel's educationist ideas, which were centred in the unity and inner connectedness of all life.

Froebel arrived at his involvement in early childhood education via an unlikely *mélange* of experiences. Weak in language and writing skills as a child, he grew to excel at visually comprehended disciplines such as geometry and mapmaking. A two-year apprenticeship to a Thuringian forester inspired the enthusiastic fifteen-year-old, who had a natural bent for self-education. He gathered local plants for classification, and avidly consumed books on a variety of subjects. By 1805, after studies in the university town of Jena including surveying and architecture, Froebel had settled on architecture as a career.

But unexpectedly, Froebel switched paths. A friend--possibly someone who understood this highly gifted youth-- counselled him to abandon architecture for teaching, and this seemed to bring on a revelation of sorts. The would-be architect dropped his plans and decided to pursue education as a profession. He accepted an invitation to teach at a Frankfurt school—one of the first schools based on the educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's progressive ideals. Pestalozzi (1746-1827) saw the child as a being with enormous latent possibility and an innate desire to learn. Teachers encouraged the children's natural curiosity and exploration: new and daring pedagogy for turn-of-the-century Europe, where young children were expected to endure interminable lectures and waste hour upon hour in rote recitation.

After two years of teaching in Frankfurt, Froebel spent the years 1808 through 1810 under Pestalozzi at his Yverdon School, and was deeply influenced by him. Pestalozzi's ideas are reflected throughout Froebel's first important work, *The Education of Man*, as in his well-known motto, 'Kommt lasst uns unsern Kindern leben!' (Literally translated as 'Come, let us live with our children!'. One interpretation suggests, 'Let us live in an exemplary fashion for our children.'). Froebel believed humans are by nature creative beings. He observed that play was a necessary developmental phase in educating the 'whole' child, enlisting all his imaginative powers and physical movements in exploring his interests. Though widespread today, this insight

was revolutionary in the early nineteenth century, when play was viewed as idle, and children as miniature adults to be moulded as rapidly as possible into economically productive members of society.

After more studies at the University of Goettingen, and a tour of duty (1812-1814) in the Napoleonic wars, Froebel supported himself as an assistant at the University of Berlin's mineralogical museum. There for the next two years he sorted and classified its huge crystal collection, attending lectures on crystallography and mineralogy in between. His observations of the geometrically shaped surface planes of crystals bolstered his belief that fixed laws govern the natural world, and that these same laws guide the development of the child, the adult, and even whole societies. Hence the logic of creation could be illumined through the guided manipulation of forms.

In 1816 Froebel declined an offer of a professorship of mineralogy in Stockholm, and instead launched his dream of founding a school where he might test his observations as they related to the educating of children. He opened the Universal German Educational Institute in Gieshelm that year, relocating in 1817 to the nearby village of Keilhau. Froebel ran the Institute himself until 1830, then went on to found schools using his techniques in Switzerland. He later opened his first Kindergarten in 1840 at Blankenburg, Germany. Until this time there had been no educational system for children under seven years of age, nor recognition that young children were capable of learning social and intellectual skills that might serve as a foundation for their whole life.

Froebel challenged other conventions in education. In his day, intricate and decorated toys for children were the norm; he found them completely inappropriate. As he formulated his curriculum for young children, Froebel designed open-ended instructional materials called the Gifts, with complementary Occupations. These were for use both in kindergarten and school, and gave children hands-on involvement in practical learning experiences through play.

A frequent misconception today is that the Gifts were designed primarily for use as math manipulatives. As Froebel's insights from his categorization of crystals suggest, they represent in fact much more than that, opening a

window to the child's inner self and leading him to a deepening knowledge of the world and the interrelationships of things.

Foundational to the development of the Gifts was the recognition of the value of block play. Froebel believed that playing with blocks gives fundamental expression to a child's soul and to the unity of life. Blocks represent the actual building blocks of the universe. The symmetry of the soul is symbolized as a child constructs with blocks, bringing them together to form a whole. Through proper use of the Gifts, the child progresses from the material to the abstract: from the volumetric lessons offered by blocks, through the two-dimensional planar ones elucidated by play with parquetry tiles (flat, geometrically-patterned wooden shapes), to deductions of a linear nature drawn from stick laying, to use of the point in pin-prick drawings. Points, in turn, describe a line, and the child completes the logic by returning from 2-D to the 3-D realm of volume through peas work (joining small malleable balls with short sticks) and on to solid three-dimensional work in clay.

Froebel did not live to see the flowering of his concept of a 'garden for children.' A ban on kindergartens was issued in 1851, a year before his death, by the suspicious and conservative Prussian court. (Why did the autocratic Prussian state feel threatened by kindergarteners? Was it because kindergarteners were becoming free-thinkers rather than a homogenous mass or entry-level workers?) But the great educator's legacy did eventually become widespread through the untiring persistence of his co-workers. Johann Arnold Barop, who married Froebel's niece, was one of many of these. While some of Froebel's protégés would go on to promote the kindergarten internationally, Barop assumed leadership of the fledgling Keilhau School in 1833, and is credited with its survival under persecution from the Prussian authorities. Keilhau and a host of later institutions embodied Froebel's vision—represented most truly in the first kindergartens of the later 1800s, but with influence extending through the twentieth century and beyond.

Interestingly, Barop's great granddaughter Annemarie, educated in the Keilhau Froebel School where her father was principal, ended up joining the intentional community behind Community Playthings in 1932. Here, where family and school life are inseparably twined, she found an environment in harmony with Froebel's philosophy of life as an undivided whole. She soon

became involved with our community nursery, greatly influencing its future development. Community Playthings eventually emerged as a supporting business to the community, meshing with its educational ethos.

The Froebel School at Keilhau is still in operation today. Tabea Manke, one of our nursery teachers, recently visited the site with colleagues. She encountered much reminiscent of the educational philosophy that has profoundly influenced our community childcare and business to the present day.

Links

For more information, have a look at [Froebel Web](#)

Froebel image from <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-froeb.htm>

Research evidence on teachers' role in the early years

*A paper prepared by
Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford,
President of Early Education,
for a meeting with TDA*

July 2008

Glasgow, November 8th, 2008

**Good practice in the Early
Years for lasting outcomes for
children: EvidenceResearch**

Institute of Education, University of London
Glasgow, November 8th, 2008

Quality

Good quality and better cognitive outcomes for children are associated with higher qualifications in staff- especially trained teachers



Quality

Things for parents to look for in a good quality setting include:

- ❖ Adults have warm, responsive relationships with children.
- ❖ Setting has clear educational goals.
- ❖ Staff have recognised early years qualifications.
- ❖ Trained teachers are amongst the staff.
- ❖ Parents are supported in involvement in children's learning.

Home learning before 3 years

What parents and carers do is most important and makes a real difference to development. Activities for parents which help children's development include:

- ❖ reading to children;
- ❖ teaching children songs and nursery rhymes;
- ❖ playing with letters and numbers;
- ❖ painting and drawing;
- ❖ taking children to libraries;
- ❖ (for social outcomes) creating regular opportunities for play with friends.

Pedagogy- the key findings are in the following areas:

- Management and staff**
- Ethos and climate of the settings**
- Adult-child verbal Interactions**
- Differentiation and formative assessment**
- Discipline and adult support in talking through conflicts**
- Parental partnership with settings and the home education environment**
- Pedagogy**
- Knowledge of the curriculum and child development**

Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years

Sustained shared thinking: An episode in which two or more individuals “work together” in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend.

EPPE Case Studies

- ❖ The individual case studies show how diverse early years settings are. It shows that there is not a ‘level playing field’ in terms of training of staff, ratios, resources, salaries and accommodation.
- ❖ The most effective settings provide both teacher-initiated group work and freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities
- ❖ Excellent settings tend to achieve an equal balance between adult-led and child-initiated interactions and activities

EPPE Case Studies

- ❖ Cognitive outcomes relate to teacher/adult planned and initiated focused group work and the amount of sustained shared thinking between adults and children
- ❖ The curriculum is being differentiated according to age, but is uneven in coverage
- ❖ Effective pedagogy is both 'teaching', and the provision of instructive learning environments and routines

EPPE Case Studies

- ❖ Effective practitioners assess children's performance to ensure the provision of challenging yet achievable experiences
- ❖ Effective practitioners model appropriate language, values and practices, encourage socio-dramatic play, praise, encourage, ask questions, interact verbally with children
- ❖ Early Years staff and parents normally prioritise social development, but our evidence suggests that those who see cognitive and social development as complementary achieve the best profile in terms of child outcomes.

EPPE Case Studies

- ❖ Our analysis has shown that practitioners knowledge and understanding of the particular curriculum area being addressed could not be taken for granted or DAP.
- ❖ The most highly qualified staff provide the most instruction, but also the kind of interactions which guide but do not dominate children's thinking.
- ❖ Less qualified staff were better pedagogues when they worked alongside qualified teachers.

EPPE Case Studies

- ❖ We have found that the most effective early years settings in these terms adopt discipline/ behaviour policies that involve staff in supporting children in rationalising and talking through their conflicts.
- ❖ Where a special relationship in terms of shared educational aims had been developed *with* parents, and pedagogic efforts were made at home to support the children, we found better child outcomes
- ❖ There is some evidence that sending children to pre-school frees parents to seek employment and further study, and that parents are frustrated by the inflexibility of centre opening times and the length of sessions.

Main Findings

- ❖ Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances intellectual and social development in all children.
- ❖ Good quality pre-school experiences support better cognitive and social-behavioural development for children.
- ❖ Good quality can be found across all types of early years settings, but the state sector has more good quality.
- ❖ For all children good early HLE helps cognitive and social development.
- ❖ Disadvantaged children in particular can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences.

The role of the pedagogue: Enquiry Questions

Questions can often be started with 'I wonder...what, if, why, how, when, where...'

Exploration & Investigation


Investigating
Finding out
Identifying
Observing
Looking closely
Asking questions

How could you find out?
What do you think is happening?
Why do you think this happens?
What do you think is happening?
What can you see?
What do you think?
What would you like to ask?

**For further information about EPPE
visit the EPPE website at:
<http://www.ioe.ac.uk/projects/epe/>**

**A series of EPPE Technical Papers
provides details of research methods and
findings.**

**Technical Papers 8a, 8b and 10 provide all the
findings from the pre-school period**



*Understanding the Relationship between Curriculum, Pedagogy and
Progression in Learning in Early Childhood*

To be published in the Hong Kong Journal of ECE December 2008

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Abstract

This paper provides mutually reinforcing definitions for the terms 'Curriculum' and 'Pedagogy' are applied in an attempt to provide further clarification of the

learning processes involved in 'Co-construction' and 'Sustained Shared Thinking'. The implications for pedagogic progression and for understanding early childhood practices are also identified. The theoretical model is then applied in support of the English Early Years Foundation Stage against charges of inappropriate 'schoolification'. The paper also provides in outline a new typology of early childhood educational practices.

Defining 'Pedagogy' and 'Curriculum'

Different definitions of the term 'pedagogy' and 'curriculum' have often been applied throughout the world and this has at times led to confusion. At times pedagogy and curriculum are even applied synonymously or appear indistinguishable. The easiest way to understand the concept of 'pedagogy' may therefore be to start by differentiating it from what is generally understood by the term 'curriculum'.

In New Zealand the Te Whāriki curriculum guidance and framework defines curriculum broadly as; "the sum total of the experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10). Such a broad definition seems particularly apt in the case of early childhood education and care although it may sometimes be important to recognise that some sort of learning and development happens whether we consciously design the environment for that purpose or not. Young children are learning all the time, and however implicit or hidden it may be in some

settings, the content of this learning (the 'curriculum') is nearly always determined by the adults who care for them. The notion of a totally 'free' play environment may therefore be considered either an ideal or a myth. The material resources (toys, furniture, props), the activities, the social interactions, and the environments that we offer children, define both the opportunities and the limitations for their learning. The linguistic and cultural context that they are immersed in, even more fundamentally, influences what it is that they learn. Practitioners are therefore faced with the option of simply acknowledging all of these influences or making the choice of actively managing them. In the UK today, most professional early childhood educators choose the latter option, they apply their knowledge and skill to the best of their ability in passing on all those capabilities, knowledge, understandings, and attitudes that they consider to be especially shared and valued by our multicultural society.

The definition of pedagogy that we adopted in the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) project (Siraj-Blatchford, et al, 2003,) was based on the work of Gage (1985), who argued for a 'scientific basis for the art of teaching'. Gage argued that we should distinguish between knowledge that is general (nomothetic knowledge), and knowledge that applies to the understanding of particular events or individuals (ideographic knowledge). He argued that teachers creatively apply their nomothetic knowledge to the ideographic problems posed by the unique groups of children

that they are faced with; with all of their specific needs, socio-cultural status and cognitive and affective demands. Pedagogy was therefore defined broadly to refer to the full set of instructional techniques and strategies that enabled learning to take place in early childhood settings, that provided opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions. This definition was considered wide enough to take in such indirect teacher behaviours as the provision of constructivist 'discovery' learning environments, and the encouragement of parents providing educational support at home.

Pedagogy and 'Sustained Shared Thinking'

Sustained Shared Thinking (SST) was first identified in a qualitative analysis carried out in association with the EPPE research project (Siraj-Blatchford et al 2002; 2003). The qualitative case studies provided detailed accounts of the learning and teaching that was observed (400 hours of adult observations and 254 episodes of child observations) in the most effective settings, and the transcriptions of episodes of SST were subsequently found to provide valuable (concrete) examples of the kind of effective pedagogies that were needed to develop practice. Sustained Shared thinking featured in the Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP) (DfES, 2005) that was distributed to all English pre-schools settings, and it has now been included in the national Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) a curriculum framework and guidance for England (DfES, 2007).

The qualitative analysis revealed a general pattern of high child achievement associated with sustained adult-child verbal interactions along with a paucity of such interactions in settings achieving less well. 'Sustained shared thinking' came to be defined as:

"...an effective pedagogic interaction, where two or more individuals work (often playfully) together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or extend a narrative¹. (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2003)

In so far as adults consciously engage in SST it can be considered a form of 'pedagogy' in the sense that it is something adults consciously do to support and engage children's learning. But it is also important to recognise that sustained shared thinking involves some curriculum content as well, it always has a contextual object or objective, deals with a particular problem, a concept or activity. Learning has content as well as form, and whenever learning takes place we can say that a 'curriculum' is involved (however implicit or hidden that it might be). Pedagogy and curriculum may therefore be considered two sides of the same coin, every learning episode has both.

¹ 'Sustained shared thinking' was subsequently found to most commonly occur in 1:1 adult/child, child/child interactions. An early association was also recognised between sustained shared thinking and open-questioning (see Siraj-Blatchford & Manni, 2008).

So what is it that children are learning in the early years? - What is the curriculum? In infancy, in the earliest years, the most significant learning tends to be about the body, safety, and about affection and aggression. In the school curriculum, more formal literacy and numeracy, and any other National Curriculum subjects will be emphasised, and much later the learning will be concerned with the world of employment and citizenship. Curriculum progression here is about initially developing strong foundations and a breadth (of knowledge and understanding), and later introducing a degree of specialisation. In a recent paper I applied Vygotsky (2004) to elaborate upon this and clarify the relationship between pedagogic and curriculum progression further (see Siraj-Blatchford, 2007).

In terms of pedagogy, in the earliest years the child's individual needs and concerns dominate the curriculum as they first exchange 'significant gestures' with others. This is a form of sustained shared thinking/communication that provides a means by which the child develops a conscious awareness of 'others' and of the 'self'.

This is further extended in sustained shared thinking associated with improvised play with others; collaboration in increasingly structured activities and games; and then later in life in disciplined collaborations (with strongly defined subjects). In terms of competence, progression goes from at first mastering in the early years the very informal and strongly improvised

interactions to later developing capability in the more highly structured and much more formal interactions demanded by adult life.

The adult educators role in sustained shared thinking, is to 'co-construct' the curriculum, as both the adult and the child collaborate or take 'turns' in influencing its direction. Arguably, in SST the question of who (adult or child) 'initiates' any particular activity of dialogue may therefore be considered less important than in other pedagogic contexts as long as the adult doesn't dominate the process too early and that it is based on experiential and play oriented activity.

Alongside these developments in social interaction young children learn, in their pretend play, to manipulate objects symbolically; to let them 'stand in' for each other. This object substitution is extended to objectify the behaviour (and roles) of other people (or animals etc), and supports the child in learning to control their own behaviour in response to these roles. It also ultimately provides the foundations for learning the more sophisticated symbolic systems of literacy and numeracy.

Whenever play partners communicate they do so building upon their own prior learning, which includes their understanding of the perspective of themselves constructed by the other participant in the communication. Forman and Cazdan's (1998) research shows that children's problem solving improves in collaboration, as the partners alternately provide scaffolding for each other

within what Vygotsky referred to as the partner's 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). That is, the 'zone of capability' that extends beyond what the partner is capable of doing on their own to include those activities they may successfully do with the support of their peer.

The development of more sophisticated levels of abstraction (and self consciousness) also facilitate the development of a wider metacognition (the knowledge and awareness that children come to develop of their own learning). This metacognition is important in learning to be a more effective learner (or learning to learn), and develops as the child finds it necessary to describe, explain and justify their thinking about different aspects of the world to others through actions and language. As the child's conceptual knowledge and understanding of the 'other', and of the 'self', continue to develop, learning 'dispositions' become more significant (most graphically illustrated in studies of gendered subject preferences).

Common confusions regarding curriculum and pedagogy

One of the most significant implications of the loose application of the terms curriculum and pedagogy in Europe may have been that they have supported an erroneous view that there are essentially two fundamentally different 'approaches' to early childhood education that are applied across Europe; a 'social pedagogy' approach where the curriculum is developed at a centre level, and an 'infant school' approach where the curriculum is provided by a central

authority (Bennett, 2004, Bennett and Tayler, 2006). But as previously suggested it should be recognised that every early childhood interaction does (inevitably) include curriculum content (however inexplicit or hidden it may be), and all children grow up at some point to take an interest (mostly with great enthusiasm) in school curriculum subjects. What should be recognised as important here is not the curriculum content itself but rather the pedagogic differences between settings where some may be seen to offer curriculum co-construction through SST and others either dominate in their interaction with children, or leave them much more free and to their own devices. The evidence that we gained through the REPEY study suggest the need for a balanced approach (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002; 2003).

Rather than specifying any pre-defined knowledge, skills or attitudes that children would require to achieve success in everyday life, the central aim of social pedagogy has been to empower children as active citizens, so that they can act to change their own lives. In practice this has generally been seen to focus attention on the nurture of children's identity and self-esteem. But these objectives actually say nothing at all about the curriculum content that is involved. The adults may take either a more, or a less, dominant role in determining the content and these may be influenced either more or less by school subjects and national frameworks. Children are not taught the psychology of identity and self-esteem, even if the pursuit of these wider objectives does lead many practitioners to adopt less dominant or co-constructive approaches.

Similar confusions have arisen in the UK where a diverse range of approaches has historically been developed to satisfy perceived needs for either 'care' or for 'education' in early childhood. In fact this has been a dichotomy encouraged by the development of separate state pre-school provisions administered by the social services 'care' sector, and by education departments. It has also stimulated ongoing controversies over the relative merits of 'child centred' and 'progressive' or 'traditional' methods of teaching in primary education. But recent years have seen a significant moderation of these extreme positions and a growing consensus regarding the need to adopt a more balanced approach (often expressed in terms of a commitment to 'educare' or a version of education that includes care).

Yet in Starting Strong II (Bennett and Taylor, 2006), Bennett contrasts the English early years Foundation Stage (FS) with the social pedagogical approach, he argues that it provides an example of an 'early education' approach (also referred to by Bennett, 2004, as an 'infant school', and in Moss and Bennett, 2006 as a 'schoolification' approach), because it has a central specification of curriculum, it underplays the role of parents and the community, and because it focuses upon cognitive development, and school readiness². In terms of the English FS this might always have been an exaggeration but in terms of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that is being introduced throughout England in 2008 it may be considered

²

demonstrably incorrect. The EYFS is organised around four broad principles related to: the Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments, and Learning and Development. While the EYFS does include 69 Early Learning Goals (the New Zealand curriculum guidance includes over 120), only 30 (43%) actually relate to knowledge content, and only 7 (10%) are concretely specified, the rest being of a very general nature e.g. “Extend their vocabulary, exploring the meanings and sounds of new words” – “Begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.” Even where the goals do define very specific knowledge content it is often clear that they would in any event be prioritised in most emergent literacy or numeracy curriculum contexts e.g. “Know(ing) that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom” - “Use language such as ‘greater’, ‘smaller’, ‘heavier’ or ‘lighter’ to compare quantities.” In fact it could be argued that it would be hard to imagine any (socio-pedagogic) early childhood curriculum failing to include most or even all the learning goals directly specifying content e.g. “Recognise the importance of keeping healthy, and those things which contribute to this”.

These Early Learning Goals may also be seen as, in many respects, similar to the objectives (for basic competencies and five broad learning areas) identified by Bennett in the Norwegian national curriculum, and those included in the six areas of the Danish 2004 curriculum. In any event, as Bennett accepts; “Research suggests that a more unified approach to learning should be adopted in both the early childhood education and the primary school systems, and that

attention should be given to transition challenges faced by young children as they enter school” (Bennett and Taylor, 2006 p13).

The challenge for early childhood is therefore to provide a transition that stimulates learning and development while avoiding any risk of regression or failure. This is in fact widely recognised by researchers and by policy makers. Efforts are being made throughout Europe to develop better curriculum progression and transition between nurseries, kindergartens and schools. According to Oberhuemer (2004) in Germany, following the publication of disappointing results in the 2001 OECD-PISA International Student Assessment of 15-year-olds, there has been wide recognition that the ‘long tradition of social pedagogy’ in kindergarten must be reconciled with emerging demands for school readiness.

Similarly, in Denmark, according to Brostrom (2006), an Act on Educational Curricula was passed in August, 2004. This requires each preschool to implement six dimensions of aims and content which are expressed as general themes: (a) Personal competencies, (b) social competencies, (c) language, (d) body and movement, (e) nature and nature phenomena, and (f) cultural ways of expression and values (Socialministeriet, 2004):

“... the introduction of the concept of learning and the six curriculum themes are understood as a signal to move away from an extreme child-centered

practice towards a practice where the child-care workers play a more active role". (p393)

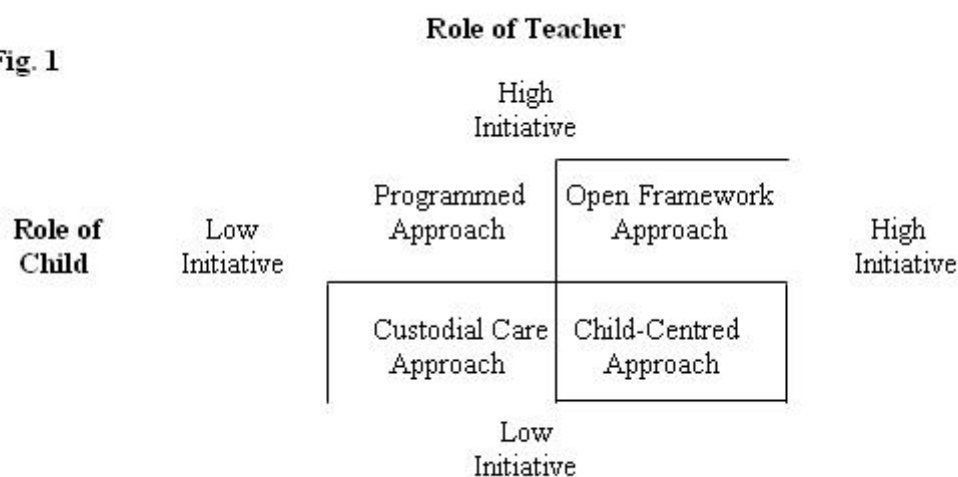
In focusing equally upon cognitive and affective socio-behavioural outcomes, the REPEY project may be seen as entirely consistent with a main stream social-pedagogic position strengthened by an awareness and concern for transition which has been emerging throughout Europe.

Understanding the relationship between pedagogy and curriculum

A typology of the most commonly applied models of early childhood education has been provided by Weikart (2000) and is shown in Figure 1. The categories that are applied are broadly consistent with others developed by Weikart (1972), Kohlberg & Mayer, (1972) and Baumrind, (1971) and recent research carried out in the UK by the Effective Practice in Preschool Education (EPPE) project suggests that as 'ideal types' they are applied just as much in the UK early childhood context as in the US context where they were first developed (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 1999).

The analytical difficulty with the typology is in the definition of curriculum

Fig. 1



that is applied and the way the term

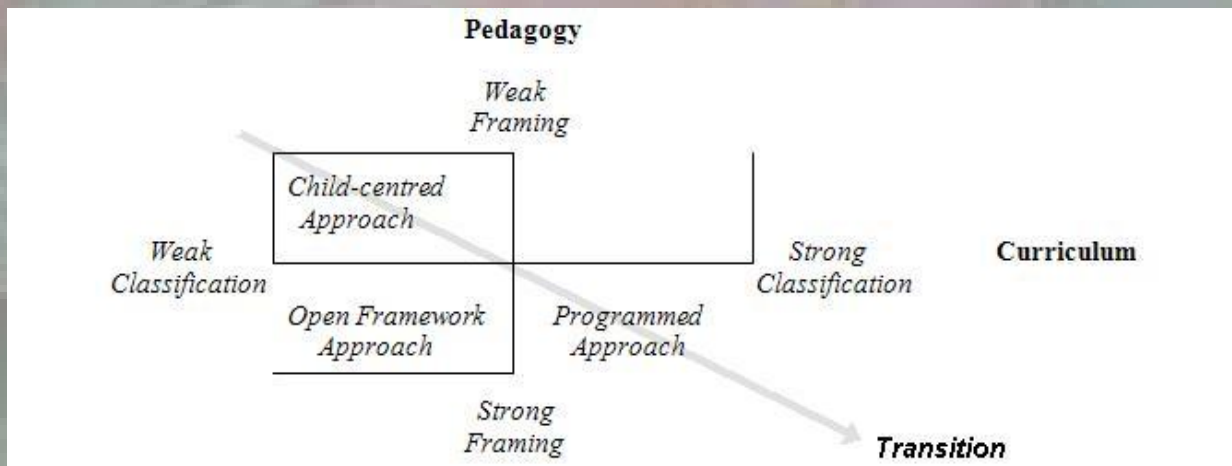
'initiative' is used. According to Weikart the major organising principle to be considered is the role of either high or low curriculum 'initiation' on the part of the teacher/adult and the child (Weikart, 2000, p58). But in his subsequent elaboration of the various categories of 'educational approach', high teacher initiative is described predominantly in terms of the highly structured pedagogy, and high child initiative in terms of their control over the curriculum.

The major organising principles might therefore be better conceived in terms of pedagogy and curriculum (Figure 2). This would also be consistent with Bernstein's (1981) elaborate analysis of pedagogic codes and their modalities of practice. While a comprehensive structural analysis of the various coding principles employed in early education lies beyond the scope of this paper, we can employ Bernstein's (1981) formulation of classification and frame to distinguish between the different forms of early childhood practice. As Bernstein himself has noted, while this more limited use of the terms may not have been intended when he first coined them, it does demonstrate their analytical value (Bernstein, 1996, p3).

Classification refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between curriculum subject contents. Where the curriculum content is clearly defined in terms of subjects we can therefore refer to that as strong classification. Framing is about whom controls what; who selects, sequences, paces etc. the learning. When framing is weak the child (or parent) has more apparent

control, when strong it is the educator/professional who is most clearly in control. So for example, a collaborative, progressive and permissive classroom illustrates weak framing and a traditional didactic one strong framing.

Fig. 2



In Figure 2 the model is inverted to reflect the common transition towards more structured teaching and learning contexts that children experience as they get older. The custodial (or basic care) approach described by Weikart (2000) has also been omitted because no specified curriculum is usually intended in these programmes. In fact, for this reason, they might not be considered to provide an 'educational' approach at all.

As suggested earlier, the challenge for early childhood is to provide a gradual and supportive transition that stimulates learning and development while avoiding any risk of regression or failure. In the most extreme applications of the Child-centred approach the teacher responds entirely to the individual child's interests and activities. More often, topic or project themes are adopted

that have been chosen especially to appeal to the children's interests. The curriculum emphasis is on encouraging children's independence, their social and emotional growth, creativity and self-expression. The classroom/playroom environment is often rich in stimuli, permissive and provides for open-ended exploration and discovery.

The Open-framework approach provides the teacher with a strong pedagogic structure (or framework) that supports the child in their explorations and interactions with, and reflections upon, the learning environment. In this model, the curriculum classification is weaker as the child has a good deal of freedom to make choices between the various learning environments that are on offer. But the optional environments (e.g. sand, water, block play, puzzles etc.) are often provided to achieve particular (usually cognitive or conceptual) curriculum aims, these may be more or less identified by the setting. In some settings children's choices are carefully monitored and a broad and balanced curriculum is encouraged over the medium or long term.

The Programmed approach is highly teacher directed providing for little initiative on the part of the child. The rationale for this method is drawn significantly from theories of learning. This pedagogy is usually applied where curriculum objectives may be clearly (and objectively) classified and is likely to be most effective where learning involves the development of simple skills or memorisation. The curriculum content is often highly structured.

Of course each of these approaches remain 'ideal types' and the practices in many settings will still involve a combination of all three. However, it might be an interesting exercise for the reader to consider which approach/es dominate their own early childhood settings.

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