

An Enlightened Educational Policy? The Scottish early childhood tradition

Aline-Wendy Dunlop

Hopefully.....

- Thinking about early childhood
- Our Scottish early childhood heritage
- Some abiding themes that endure over time
- How we are doing now?
- Commitments

Diary of a Free Kindergarten

“ It will be a long time before our schools can accord with these theories in practice, but we will supplement the schools. Lets us be the pioneers, and, besides benefiting our own children, help on education generally.

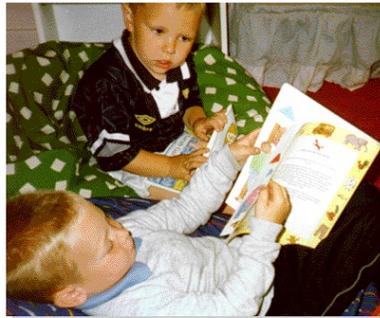
All this is a dream. Well, the Kindergarten was once a dream and now it is a fact.”

Lileen Hardy, July 11th 1910, p146

What can you see?



This child is using the availability of messy play in the nursery environment to the full. She has taken the opportunity to investigate the properties of the paint and the sensation of smearing it over her whole hands and transferring it to paper. This process engrosses the child for a long period of time and an end product is not expected or required.



Books are a vital resource in the nursery. Teachers select according to the children's interests and needs and great care is taken in choosing texts and illustrations. Some children are able to interpret illustrations and simple print. Others use the nursery to extend their experiences, so making books enjoyable and meaningful.



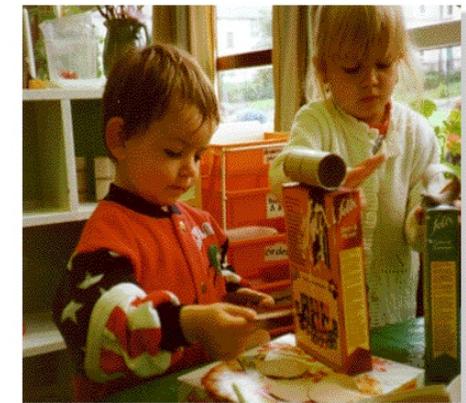
This boy planted the narcissus bulbs in the autumn and has watered and cared for them all winter. He has noticed the changes in the plant, particularly the steady growth over the last few weeks. The teacher has encouraged him to measure and record the growth over time. Here we see him measuring the height of one flower before adding this length of wool to his measurement chart.



Memories are made of this! The size of the trees, the scrunch of the leaves, the smell of the woodland. The nursery gives the children the chance to share these experiences with adults who understand their developing senses and their sheer delight in their interaction with nature.



In the nursery we give children opportunities to use music as a reflecting, quiet, self-absorbing experience. This helps develop the children's confidence and independence giving them ownership of the nursery and enabling them to choose what they need and want to use from the provision.



We may never know what these creations are! Materials are provided with different shapes, textures, colours, sizes, etc., together with glue, "Sellotape" and other joining materials and the children design and make to their own personal satisfaction.

Childhood involves.....

- Companionship
- Capabilities
- Cultures
- Creativity
- Contributions
- Communication
- Research and researching as daily practice
- Balance in interaction
- Joint creation of meaning
- The tools to do a good job that theory provides us with
- The very important skill of 'following ahead' of children
- Paying attention to transitions in that they too can be a tool

Theories as tools

- Vygotsky - play as the child's work in which tools and props are important
- Piaget the child as an explorer of actions, discovering 'scientific' principles as 'schemas' for employing objects
- Bruner - children build narratives of experience in 'communities of learners'
- Donaldson - making 'human sense'
- Trevarthen and companionship

Robert Owen

1781-1858

At no age
is the desire of
knowledge stronger
than in childhood.

Robert Owen
(1771-1858)

Nature requires
its own time to
mature all things,
whether mineral,
vegetable, animal,
or mind and spirit.

Robert Owen
(1771-1858)

The European Heritage

- Scotland - Robert Owen
- Sweden - Ellen Key
- Norway – Henriette Schrader- Breymann
- John Amos Comenius, John Locke, Johann Pestalozzi, Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Dewey, Friedrich Froebel, Maria Montessori
- Austria and Germany- Froebel (Norwegian founder – Inger Grundt Petersen; British Froebel Movement)
- Italy-from Montessori to Reggio
- Froebel, Piaget strongly influenced early childhood in Scotland
- Now Vygotsky’s thinking is influential and Bruner is a regular visitor to Scotland
- *BUT - What is the Scottish early childhood tradition and practice?*

Grassmarket Child Garden 1925



“Our tap at the dressing-room sink was hard worked this summer. In an ordinary year we have to limit strictly the amount of water carried to the sand and elsewhere. The rain does the damping for us, but this summer pails and pails and pails, large grown up pailfuls as well as small pailfuls were needed every morning, and what an interesting exercise in skill and self-control it is for two children old enough, to carry a big pail three quarters’ full. The only tap possible for the children is not a convenient one. It cannot be reached from the floor by any child other than a tall four year old – many and ingenious ladders are erected by those children who need them to reach the water. Standing on top of an engine makes some tall enough, others have to balance the engine on a toddle-trike, a type of ladder whose repeated successful use certainly strengthens the belief of the adult in children’s guardian angels!” (1933 Report)

Observation

“Then too there are quiet spells when an adult has an opportunity of playing the important parts of observer and learner”

(1933)

“The main thing was the actual activity with the children – doing things with the children – with Froebel it wasn’t about brushing teeth – although of course that was done – it was about making and doing together with children. It was a whole different approach – watching children – what they did and wanted to do and encouraging them rather than sitting them down to do something – more providing what they need and much more active child-oriented – not telling them what to do, but talking with them. .discovering. I was at the Grassmarket Child Garden and what they called the Free Kindergarten. We learned about the history of Froebel, his principles, their application to children and how the movement started. The Froebel approach was much more what you felt about children – you sat back a bit in a way and watched, then you took part.” (1937)

Moray House Nursery School 1908



- 1932-The specially designed interior included glazed panels in sliding timber door frames. These south and west glazed walls could be pushed back so that the indoors merged into an 'open air' environment. A verandah led into the school play area which included the small playhouse. The two large classrooms were fitted out with child-size furnishings."

Driving interests



Gordon continued to talk about fishing boats and his holiday in Oban. He said he had a fishing net he'd found that was very big - he was invited to bring it to school - "Its very big I'd like to measure it" - it stretched the whole length of the classroom and out into the hall. "It must have come from a huge boat" the others remarked ... we decided to go to Granton Harbour - imaginative play, drawings, models, stories and book making followed, everything was measured and compared - we talked of fish, bollards, jetties, tugs, trawlers, the sea, the weather and searched for more and more information.....

(Moray House Nursery School 1970)

Reid's Court -1903



1903 Edinburgh Free Kindergarten –Miss Howden, Infant Mistress Milton House School in 1881was concerned that babies came to school with their siblings. Left all her savings so that this free kindergarten could be set up. It began in Galloway's Entry, then moved to Reid's Court in 1906 and finally to Milton House School in the Royal Mile in 1954



Milton House - Royal Mile 1971

Children's Interest	Adult Response	What next?
<p>In the last few days we've heard a lot of fire engines from the Fire Station at Abbeyhill going up and down the Royal Mile and Holyrood Road near Dumbiedykes past where the children live. The boys have been rushing about playing with imaginary hoses. The play became very organized with calls of "There's a fire in the house, get out get out". The children in the house area had to evacuate – they rushed outside and soon the boys started moving the home area furniture out of the area. Before long all the furniture had been carried with the help of most of the other children up the stairs and into the garden. Sam and Billy brought in the water play tubes from outside and a pail of water to put the fire out. This went on for some time until one of the mum's arrived. She was asked to wait until the fire was out so they could bring the furniture back.</p>	<p>Having watched this interest for a few days it seems its now taking off and most of the children are interested.</p> <p>Added stories and Miss B to include some firemen songs at singing time or when children go to music area.</p>	<p>Take interested children out to the school playground for a while to look out for fire engines going up the road.</p>
<p>Thursday - Sam and Billy said there wasn't much point moving the furniture again as the fire was out but they used the big blocks and built a fire engine to play on, going several times to the home area to check the fire was still out. They said to Miss B that the trouble with the blocks was that they couldn't make a big enough fire engine and they would see what they could find outside to add to it. They came back in with a steering wheel but found it too difficult to bring the tyres in so they asked to take the blocks outside. Later Billy made a fire engine from 2 pieces of wood at the woodwork.</p>	<p>Added more fire engine stories into the book corner from upstairs – lots of requests to read these. Plenty of red paint – children to help make it up - and big brushes – see if we can find a large wooden box (maybe at the beach at the weekend – fish crate?)</p> <p>Make sure to pick up some more wood offcuts.</p> <p>Check dressing up and puppets.</p>	<p>Plan a visit to the Fire Station.</p> <p>Look up more songs and rhymes.</p> <p>Check for photos.</p> <p>Make up a book with the children about their play.</p>

Fire Station visit arranged. This interest continued for 3 weeks as the children planned and built a fire engine and continued to play on it.



Westfield Court - A Curriculum for the Early Years -1992

Observations/Source of interest	Context	Process	Extension and resources	Content	Evaluation
C was carrying the cat around in the basket "I'm going to the vet - Pepsi's still lost"	From home into room	Imaginative and recall of own experience	"pets for Children" - discussion of animals that can be pets	Reminder of play. Information about household pets and care of them	Continue to foster this discussion towards pet shop or vet visit?
M was given a tool set for his birthday: "Its got everything in it"	Given the birthday card he left on Thursday	Tool using - range of tools - comparison	Crate of tools form cupboard - hammer, saw, drill familiar - what else?	Understanding use of tools	
Lots of witchy/monster play Use of long blocks as broomsticks		Discussion - imaginative play	On the way home I met a..... and "The Jolly Witch"	Understanding and sharing of what frightens	
Care of dolls	Home area				Not taken up
Talk of snakes		Making Fine motor	Snakes and animal shapes at dough	Qualities of snakes - long, thin, supple	B and K enjoyed the pres moulds - try at clay?
M and J took over the placing of he goldfish tank I the classroom: added stones previously - a problem - how to get these out? J - "Climb up", A "Tip it up"	New Goldfish tank given		"We got a tank but no fish". Read 'a fish out of water'		Lively interest including B. Plan for visit to pet shop/Botanics Record pets? (J mentioned 'fish in my toy box')
C and C with wee pots at gluing. They talked about planting and planting out their seedlings. Discussed what we'd need. C "What's earth, is it like muck? Where's nature?"	Gluing - nature area	Creative, imaginative Observation of growth and change Learning vocab	Plant pots, compost, put out a planting instruction book		This interest captured interest of 6 of the children - talk of seeds and seedlings - extend this
M and J "We'll come to story in a minute, we're just moving house"	Small world	Managing own time - persevering at task	'Moving Molly' into book area or beside small world	Small world toys all unloaded - al furniture 'next door'	c/f

Daily observations of individuals and group recorded on facing sheet, decisions made in team chat at end of day about what to 'draw down' for next day.

The onset of curriculum definition

- Lothian - A Curriculum for the Early Years 3-8, (1992)
- Fife - partnership in Early Education: A continuum (1994)
- Strathclyde - Partners in Learning 0-5 (1994)
- Borders-Right from the Start (1994)
- Grampian - A Framework for the Curriculum (1995)
- Stirling Council - Early Years Curriculum (1996)
- The Pre-School Education Initiative (1996)
- A Draft Curriculum Framework (1996)
- A Curriculum Framework for the Pre-school Year (1997)
- A Curriculum 3-5 (1999)
- A Curriculum for Excellence (2004)
- Building the Curriculum 3-18 (2)- Active Learning in the Early Years 3-6 (2007)

What is distinctive about early childhood services in Scotland?

Four elements:

- structure, curriculum/pedagogy, professional development and parental focus.
- the enthusiasm of this sector for continuing professional development, the importance of teamwork, the desire to collaborate with the next stage of education and the need to develop the confidence to do so, and the importance of participative approaches with parents both in terms of the present early experience of their children and also in terms of the opportunity to promote parental engagement in their children's education in the long term.

Principles and Subjects: 3-18

4 Capacities

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

7 Principles

- *challenge and enjoyment*
- *breadth*
- *progression*
- *depth*
- *personalisation and choice*
- *coherence*
- *relevance*

8 Subjects

- *Expressive Arts*
- *Language and literacy*
- *Health and Wellbeing*
- *Mathematics and numeracy*
- *Religious and moral education*
- *Science*
- *Social studies*
- *Technologies*

Abiding themes

- The innate capacity of children
- The importance not just of educational culture but primarily of home culture
- Well educated staff
- The tools to do a good job that theory provides us with
- The importance of observation to inform learning and teaching
- The curiosity, motivation and drive of nearly all children to find out, experience and learn so driving their development
- The central importance of children's interests and curiosities and how to capture the interest children who are less able to focus and delve deep into exciting and interesting discoveries
- The very important skill of 'following ahead' of children, and of paying attention to transitions
- Moving from paper to practice
- Asking who curriculum is for?



THE CHILD'S CURRICULUM
"What is the Value of Early Childhood Education and Care?"