



Competence Building Networks for Early Childhood Education for Southern and East Africa

Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Norway, Tanzania and Swaziland



“International Cooperation in Early Childhood Teacher Training – for the Best Interest of the Child”

**The 11th
International Network meeting**
27th to 29th of September 2010
At Queen Maud University College (QMUC), Trondheim, Norway

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Competence Building Networks for Early Childhood Education for Southern and East Africa

The Competence Building Networks for Early Childhood Education for Southern and East Africa, which initially was called Network for Preschool Teacher Training and Preschool Development in Southern Africa, was started in 1999. The main aim is to:

Collect, share and further develop knowledge, skills and experience in Early Childhood Education in order to create a solid foundation for early childhood Teacher Training and Preschool Development in the region.

The Network Started with Preschool Teacher Training Institutions from Zambia, Swaziland and Namibia. Later institutions from Tanzania, Botswana and Mozambique and more recently Kenya joined.

Activities

The main activities of The Network is to meet every second year, now, for a conference to share experience and knowledge in the field, discuss and further develop our understanding, then spread the information as much as possible to all the countries. The conference rotates among the member countries and the host country invites representatives from relevant Ministries, Preschool Trainings and other educational institutions in addition to the international participants. The main presentations from the meeting are printed in a report that is made available. The year when there is no international conference through local initiatives members hold a national conference, with some support from the Network.

Among other network activities are staff and student exchange programmes from Norway to Africa and vice versa. The Network also has a home page <http://africanet.dmmh.no> where more information and professional contributions are found. Some of the colleges are in contact with Queen Maud's College for consultations on relevant matters such as staff development, curriculum development and examinations. Lecturers have also undertaken cross cultural research projects.

Queen Maud's College has been running a Masters Degree Programme for selected staff members from Preschool institutions in the member countries.

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Welcoming Address to the Conference for International Cooperation in Early Childhood Teacher Training, for the best interest of the Child

By Mrs. Hilde Opoku, Trondheim City Council, Norway

Countries: Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Nepal and Norway

Good morning! On behalf of the City Council of Trondheim I warmly welcome you to our City. I am glad to hear that you have already been here for a few days, and seen some of the spectacular sceneries of the country - *before* the temperatures went below zero. With the warm-hearted welcoming and the good atmosphere here this morning I am, however, confident that this will be a warm experience for all of you – regardless the outdoor environment. In my introduction I would like to highlight three features of our City that we like to highlight; that is its international focus, the emphasis on children and environmental issues – and how they all come into play in our kindergartens.

All though this is fully a result of the work of Mr and Mrs Gunnestad and DMMH, Trondheim is pleased to be invited to this opening as the work of the net and the congress itself is according to the values we appreciate; the best interest of *our* children. As the well-known African proverb reads; *it takes a whole village to raise a child*. As the world has grown global, the best interest of the children is also a global matter. The fact that so many far away countries are gathered here this week to explore, learn and discuss around this most important issue of all - shows indeed that the village also has grown global!

However, interaction between far away people is not new. And Trondheim has a long history in this regard. As we speak we are not far away from the seat of our Viking kings, known for their impressive boats used for international trade as well as their fearful raids to conquer people and land as far as New Found land in Canada, Turkey and Russia some thousand years ago. Later in history we were colonized by our neighbours, and as part of the Danish kingdom, men from Trondheim were engaged as Governors during the slave trade on the African west coast (probably to take the burden off the Danes in the warfare with the Malaria infected mosquitoes). A sign of this interaction is the Christiansen Castle in town built by the Danish King Christian XII, it's twin castle with the same name stands in Accra, the capital of Ghana, currently hosting the President. Fortunately, we do also have a broader international reputation. Our glorious Cathedral has for hundreds of years attracted pilgrims from all over the world. And the Norwegian University of Science and Technology is probably the largest international melting pot in Scandinavia with students, fellows and professors

from all over the world. The International Student Festival in Trondheim (ISFIT) has become the largest of its kind, and attracts Nobel laureates, former presidents and other celebrities to participate.

The foreigners at the university together with new immigrants have made Trondheim an international city. Today about 70 languages, including a number of African, are taught in our schools and kindergarten. Not necessarily because we see it as our obligation to teach the kids their mother tongue, but because research has taught us that the mother tongue is the key to learning a new language and a new culture – given that you know your mother tongue well. For this reason we have a special offer at our preschools for kids of foreign parents, to make sure that all children have learned the Norwegian language before starting 1st grade. I would not be surprised if this is a relevant issue for debate where you are coming from as well, as many African countries have a number of local languages, while often a colonial language is taught in the schools and kindergartens.

I would also like to mention that Trondheim has a unique program for children from asylum seeking families. As we believe that even though you might not get asylum in our country, it is our responsibility to make sure that the time spend here should be as positive as possible. Again, the village is global, and if you have to go back to Kurdistan, Somalia or Kosovo, it is important that you do so with dignity, strength and knowledge that enables one to live constructive lives. Therefore no children live in asylum camps in our community. The municipality provides for the kids and their families in ordinary flats, and with proper access to schools and kindergartens while their application is evaluated – sometimes that takes years.

In addition to being an international city Trondheim is also the number one pre-school city in the country. In 2006, as the first larger city in the country we met the target of having kindergartens available for all children. That involved building 34 new kindergartens from 2003 to 2006, giving room for 1568 children – as well as a huge number of new pre-school teachers and child and youth workers. All together we have now 108 kindergartens in the municipality, and 1901 people working there. 507 of them hold a diploma as a pre-school teacher. The kindergarten reform is the most important social reform in Norway perhaps since the introduction of the welfare state. For women it makes gender equality more realistic, as the costs of having your kid in the kindergarten also decreased it gave families an improved economical situation, and more importantly the children are now getting high quality, legal, nursing and educating care. Building all these new kindergartens has been an exciting experience. On one hand it has been a conscious process of changing a paradigm where kindergartens were seen as a “home away from home” to a nursing and educating institution. If you get a chance to visit some of the new buildings you will see that the child perspective penetrates all aspects of the architectural design form height of windows to furniture and room qualities. Also, the architecture and art work indicates and reflects that these are important institutions, as they are built in quality with often outstanding designs. It is however, not so that we can rest on having met the

target of kindergartens for all, as the needs in society change, the knowledge on the effect of the kindergartens reform expands we will have to be in a continuous evaluating and adjusting process to make sure that we develop and run our nurseries in the best interest of the children. In this regard it is a tremendous benefit to have DMMH in our midst, as a constructive collaborator, participant and contributor to the development of methods and teachers for our institutions.

One of the programs that we are introducing to all our preschools is the environmental education certification system of the international Eco Schools, or Green flag as we call it in Norway. This gives a wonderful pedagogical platform, which allows our young ones to start reflecting on their relationship to the world around them as well as their through energy saving, waste management and composting contribute directly to the environmental targets of the municipality. It is a program that I will recommend you to look into, as my own experience as a mother of two that has been exposed to African schools and kindergartens, has seen that it in particular can help lever the activities in context with fewer economical resources than we have access to. In fact we had a delegation of students and teachers visiting from Africa in June to learn more about the program, and I know there is already established organizations in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Ghana that can help out on this matter.

I have heard African teachers, like yourselves, coming to Norway at times find it rather depressing: “You have come so far, while we have such a long way to go”. Do not let yourselves overwhelmed. If you think of it, Norway has developed from a poor peasant nation to the top of the UN list of well-developed countries in less than a life span. – And the basic institutions of the welfare state were in place before we started to extract oil. The journey is possible for all nations, if the forces in the country pull in the right direction. You, as teachers of the children, have the most important position in this regard; you are in a unique situation to develop the potential of the next generation of leaders, workers and parents. Use that advantage. And also, you are here for mutual interaction, please let us benefit from that as well – you have so much that we need to learn as well, like we saw this morning for example; impulsivity, rhythms, dance, smiles – quality of life!

So I will like to end this opening speech by welcoming you as well as thanking you for coming to Trondheim and sharing your time and experience with us, and good luck with the implementation of what you decide to take home from here as well!

International Cooperation in Early Childhood Teacher Training, for the best interest of the Child

Key note address by Professor Arve Gunnestad, Queen Maud University College, Trondheim, Norway

Dear Colleagues,

The theme of this year's network conference – International Cooperation in Early Childhood Education – for the best interest of the Child – fills me with excitement. It is a theme that can include a lot, but with a focal point at the best interest of the child.

The Best Interest of the Child

The best interest of the child is one of the basic ideas in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 says: "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration." We note here that 'the best interest of the child' is not the only concern, but it is a primary concern, it should come before we consider other concerns.

What is 'The Best Interest of the Child?'

The best interest of the child is a basic and challenging principle. It sounds good, but since it is so general. It is a danger that we as adults might overlook it; especially when our own needs are at stake. For example, in Norway we are now proud of having given children from the age of one year the right to attend kindergarten. And most of the one year children stay 8 ½ hour a day. Politically this has been promoted in order for women to have a career outside the home and for the state to have a bigger work force. I am, however, asking myself, "Is this policy developed with the best interest of the child as a primary concern? When should the younger children start preschool and how long should they stay if the best of children was the primary concern?" Another example is a law that was passed in Norway that gives women the right to artificial insemination without a relation to a man. My question is, "Is it to the best interest of the child to grow up without a father? Or is it the interest of adults that has been the primary concern here? We could have given more examples where the question of whose concern has been primary is questionable.

The right to be heard

Article 3 must also be understood in relation to article 12 which states that a child should have the right to express its views in all matters affecting the child, and that the views of the child should be given due weight. To get the true view of the child is a challenge in relation to research methods as well as to research ethics. It can be easy for adult researchers to find what he is looking for instead of the opinion and feeling of the child. While some years back there was a lot of scepticism towards children as informants. One thought they were not reliable or able to give true answers. Newer research has shown that children can give very relevant answers if we are able to ask questions that are clear and relevant to them. Because of article 3 we have seen more willingness to use children as informants, and more methodological development of how to get the true view of children in research.

In Early Childhood Teacher Training we need to meditate on this principle. Do we really promote the idea among our teacher students that children have rights, that they should be heard? Are our teacher-training institutions isolated intellectual castles away from children, or do we as teachers and students work with preschools and children in a close relationship? Are we able to take the best interest of the child as a primary concern when we plan preschool curriculum or are we more interested in pleasing the parents or the public? I cannot go deep into this; we are looking forward to listening to Mr. Josephat Semkiwa from Tanzania who is introducing the UN Convention as a tool for the best interest of the child. Thereafter Mrs. Anne Trine Kjørholt, Director of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research is going to continue by looking at Children's rights with a cultural sensitive approach. I hope we are going to get new insights and also good discussions around the vital principle of the best interest of the child.

Teacher Trainers – a strategic job

I want to congratulate us; we, the **teacher trainers!** We have a very strategic job. We train those who educate the coming generation! When we train one student, next year she is going to teach 25 children in her class. If we have 25 students graduating in a year and these go on working for 30 years with a new class every year, it means this class alone will be teaching 18 000 children. Then maybe we graduate one or more classes every year. What values are we bringing forward, what attitudes towards children, learning and education are we promoting? Will our students after studying in our institutions be able to work with the best interest of the child in mind?

Not only are we teacher trainers, - we are **early childhood teacher trainers!** We are training teachers for children in their most formative years; where the foundation for development in all areas of a human being is laid. In early childhood, play is a vital activity. Play is the natural activity of children. We believe children develop and learn in so many ways through play. They learn socially – to share and take turns, to cooperate and plan, to help and be helpful, they learn to solve problems, to make things, to master new activities, learn to talk, exchange ideas and listen to others, they can learn to express feelings and comfort others, they learn moral through following rules and fair play etc. We as teachers can let children play and also give input to develop children's play.

Children of Special Concern

As teacher trainers in a critical time of history when so many parents are dying of AIDS, especially in Southern Africa, we need to consider how we as trainers and teachers can relate to the situation and what our contribution can be. I am happy that Mrs. S'lungile Thwala, leader from FEA Preschool Teacher Training College in Swaziland, will share with us on 'The use of play as a psycho-social support for traumatized children – for the best interest of the child.' Tomorrow our leader from Bokamoso in Botswana will share about the use of play in relation to marginalized indigenous or minority children. We know that more than 200 countries around the world have a significant minority and that minorities often are discriminated against and have less access to essential services such as health, education and protection (Gunnestad, Larsen and Nguluka 2010). Vulnerable children need play just as other children, but we know that it can have important additional effect to counteract risk factors in vulnerable children.

Risky Play – is it to the best interest of the child?

Mrs. Ellen Beate Sandseter is going to look at play from a different perspective: “Risky play – why should we risk it?” Children seem to seek excitement; they want to push boundaries and see what they are able to do. They want to run faster, to climb higher, to slide faster. We as teachers are between over-protection and carelessness. How do we relate to children’s risky play? What is the best interest of the child, with regards to play? Mrs. Sandseter may open some new perspectives in our attitude to children’s play!

One of the most important working areas within Early Childhood Education is cooperation with parents. The famous Russian-American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner, who founded the Ecological System Theory, says that the relation between different Microsystems – such as preschool, home and community – is more important than what happens in each of them. The relation between the preschool and the home is more important than how we teach in the school. A very strong statement! We will then be very interested to take part in the presentations from Mrs Magnaem Haufiku from Namibia and Mr. Patrick Kang’anga from Tanzania on ‘Meaningful parental and community involvement for child development, care and learning’.

International Cooperation in Early Childhood Teacher Training – for the Best Interest of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child underlines in many of its articles the necessity of international cooperation to make children’s rights come true. We are an International competence building network. A network consists of knots with strings between them like in fishing nets. The knots are teacher training institutions and their personnel. The strings are interaction between the institutions. Our network runs an international conference every other year, then we support formation of national network and we support national conferences in each member country every other year as well. Representatives from other network countries can participate in the national conferences as resource people. We have internet pages for exchange of information and news; we have staff and students exchange, some joint research projects, exam consultations etc. International cooperation is a growing enterprise all over the world today. We have seen how one can exchange ideas, knowledge and experiences; one can learn from what others have done. When we meet we can discuss curriculums, finances and fundraising, recruitment of students, teaching methods etc. We can do research and share research. We are from different countries with different cultures, and we become rich when we share. In Southern Africa I have seen how you are able to include the spiritual upbringing in a natural and positive way, and how you use songs in a joyful manner! When you come here you may see how we appreciate free play and outdoor activities all through the year in all types of weather. We can learn from each other. Since this year we are in Norway, you will have some presentations on how we do within three areas: The approach to Maths in preschool education by Mrs. Anne Nakken, “Selfmade outdoor playground” by Mr. Rune Storli and “To tell with colours”, an art project with Mrs. Mari Ann Letnes and Ingvild Olaussen.

Innovative projects and research – a way to professional renewal

Another field that we want to follow up from Zambia this year is about Innovative projects in ECE. [Innovative research projects are a way of renewing our knowledge and increase the competence in each institution. This year we want to encourage cross cultural research projects where members from 3 or 4 countries do the same research and then compare the result and write a report together. We have started with some small initiatives already. Stella and Anne-Mari did a study comparing the San

of Botswana and Travellers in Norway. I joined them and we wrote an article on Resilience in Minorities. It was published in Journal of Intercultural Communication (www.immi.se/intercultural). Of late, Mrs. Thwala and I have combined data I collected in a study with students in Zambia and Swaziland with that in interviews that Mrs. Thwala has done with orphans in Swaziland. We have written an article on Religion and Resilience that we will present on Wednesday. Cooperation in research is a possibility that we want to encourage! The leader of QMUC research department, Mr. Ingar Pareliussen, will present on how we work with innovative projects at Queen Maud University College. Some of our colleagues will follow him by telling about some projects they have been doing. We hope this session also will spur a lot of interest and creativity in relation to research activities in the network!

Good leadership makes staff blossom

Most of us here are leaders for preschool teacher trainings, or leaders for departments or preschools. My wife is a headmistress of a primary and lower secondary school here in town. She used to say, "My job is to make all the teachers successful and happy. When they are successful, I am successful." A good leader is a person who makes his subordinates to feel appreciated, to feel they do a good job. In a Christian perspective a leader is a servant. Jesus is our example: He washed the feet of the disciples. We should also see ourselves as serving others and make them feel happy. Then the school will blossom! Good leadership is the key to successful school development. I have been lucky to get hold of a psychologist and management consultant to share her experiences about different models of leadership.

An international network

A network consists of knots and strings between. The knots symbolize the institutions and the strings the interaction. If there is no interaction between the representatives in the network, it is like having a hole in the net. If it was the fishing net, we would not catch any fish in such a net. The fish will escape. If people are not interacting, we do not get anything. We need to make use of the opportunities and also invest in it in order to get something out of it. This applies here during our network conference, and between the conferences. Make sure there is no hole in the net!

International cooperation is interesting. In our conference this time we have extended our network to Asia, more precisely to Nepal. This has come because QMUC is cooperating with another University College in the Western part of Norway, the NLA University College. They are involved in preschool teacher training in Nepal. I want also to especially welcome our representatives from Early Childhood Education Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal and representatives from NLA University College. We hope you will find friends here and also insights that can be useful in your very interesting work in Nepal. We will hear from this project during our conference.

In this conference we meet from different countries. We have put a lot of themes on the agenda. It is going to be interesting and useful if we all participate. Give your points of view after the presentations, if you agree or disagree, if you have questions or comments. It will make our understanding deeper and more interesting.

Some of us have been to many of these conferences through the years; some are here for the first time. Share also fellowship. Make it a commitment to meet and share also with somebody you do not know. Good Conference!

UN Convention, A Tool For The Best Interest Of The Child

By Josephat M. Semkiwa, Sebastian Kolowa University College, Tanzania

Introduction

The Convention

Since its adoption in 1989 after more than 60 years of advocacy, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified more quickly and by more governments (all except Somalia and the US) than any other human rights instrument.

This Convention is also the only international human rights treaty that expressly gives non-governmental organisations (NGOs) a role in monitoring its implementation (under Article 45a) [www.crin.org]

The basic premise of the Convention is that children (all human beings below the age of 18) are born with fundamental freedoms and the inherent rights of all human beings. Many governments have enacted legislation, created mechanisms and put into place a range of creative measures to ensure the protection and realisation of the rights of those under the age of 18.

We have been meeting for the last ten years for nothing and nobody else but the child! We are here because as I would tend to believe, of our love, care, cherish, and concern to the child.

The Convention directs in its preamble that for the full and harmonious development of the child's personality should be nurtured in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Moreover, if we take this into consideration, then the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity, (Preamble UN Convention, 1989) therefore, ***in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*** (Article 3 section 1)

Definitions

Convention refers to a way in which something is to be done; general consent or something established by it; precedent; custom specifically rule; principle; form or technique in conduct or art; a conventionality

A tool means a simple mechanism or implement used chiefly for moving, shaping or transforming of material

Interest is regarded as:

- 1) Attention with a sense of concern; lively sympathy or curiosity.
- 2) That which is of advantage or profit, benefit or private advantage.

A child as a human creature in the stage of development towards adulthood can be viewed in various ways by different societies. There has been a mixture of ideas and concepts among scholars for centuries about the concept of a child and childhood. For example Jenks, (1997) says that:

“There is a continuous paradox expressed in a variety of forms, that the child is familiar to us and yet strange, he or she inhabits our world and yet seems to answer to another, he or she is essentially of ourselves yet appears to display a systematic different order of being”

To substantiate this paradox a child is conceptualised as a person having no intelligence, small, weak frail, no ability for decision- making, unhappy and miserable, dependent and clean (morally). He is also taken as tabula rasa, bestial, corrupt, pure, innocent etc. Each one of us according to his cultural background may have a different concept of a child.

However, the Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary (2003), defines a child as a young person of either sex at any age less than maturity, but most commonly one between infancy and youth; while UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989) considers a child as every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child.

In order to expound the concept of who is a child, I am of the opinion that it is necessary to talk about childhood.

On one hand, childhood is taken as the state or time of being a child (Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary, 2003). But on the other, Speir, in Jenks (1977), considers childhood in a sociological point of view as:

“A stage of life that builds preparatory mechanisms into the child’s behaviour so that he is gradually equipped with the competency to participate in the everyday activities of his cultural partners and eventually as bona-fide adult member himself.”

In this respect, Speir, takes childhood as an initiation stage where a child is being prepared to grow up and become an acceptable and good fitting member of his society. It is a socialisation stage where the child’s behaviour should be oriented toward the culture of the people around her so that he may at last become a real member himself.

Contrary to this, the then Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs in its Frame Work Plan for Day Care Institutions (1995) defines childhood as:

“A phase of life with its own intrinsic value... Infancy does not merely involve acquiring sufficient knowledge and skills to be able to participate in adult community as rapidly as possible. It entails growth based on the child’s own premises.”

This definition considers childhood as a transition period, yet with its own internalised values and autonomy. That childhood is not only a period of acquiring knowledge and skills as exposed to them by adults so that they may be acceptable members of their communities (initiation period), but also a period whereby a child creates his own destiny. That children are not only guided and assisted by adults to grow up in acceptable Norwegian ethics and values, but also are given opportunities to explore their own world, to show their talents and their inner feelings by their involvement in various activities whether programmed by teachers or not.

Guiding principles of the Convention

Definition of the child (Article 1)

The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18.

Best interests of the child (Article 3)

This article is the heart of this paper and everything to be discussed here aims at meeting the best interest of the child. Section one of the article states that

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.”

The best interests of the child must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is the best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy, curriculum, and law making. Others include health programmes such as `maternal health, nutrition, school systems, ethnicity (whether the child is from the minority or majority group), race, social class, ability versus disability, family background, social status and the like.

Non-discrimination (Article 2)

The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It does not matter where children live, what language

they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Some children may be discriminated because of their background such as from the minority group, disabled, colour, ethnicity and the like. It is the duty of stake holders to make sure that there is no such a practice in all areas of service provision. It is our duty to make sure that at the base of the various motivations and objectives of a child, whether they are conditioned or not; there is the search for the assertion and respect of one's dignity. No one (much less a child) accepts to obey to be punished, mocked, rebuked, or humiliated. We all desire to feel important, to feel that we are of value. We should be grounded in the awareness and consciousness of the child's own 'value' as a human being, of her own dignity and personality. For example, article 23 (1) stipulates that States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

While social dignity is acquired during life and depends on the social, cultural and political context, human dignity as a value of life is inborn and untouchable, has an endless value, cannot be traded or sold, is not subject to limitations in time and space, cannot be reduced or increased. Therefore, it is the duty of parents, teachers and everyone coming near a child to love and respect him for his human dignity. A child who always feels loved and respected will develop a self-esteem based on his potentialities and will be able to develop the will to verify the consequences of his actions and to continuously improve, without fearing to be wrong or to be judged and without having to depend on the approval of others.

Minority groups

In the same line, children from the minority groups have the right to enjoy his own culture, practice his own religion or to use his own language (Article 30). To comply to this article the Norwegian Frame work Plan for Day Care Institutions (1995) directs that:

“Day care institutions for Sami children in Sami districts shall be based on the Sami language and culture.”

The same consideration is given to the minority groups in Tanzania. For example in areas inhabited by mainly Maasais (Nomadic pastoralists), as it is in Norway, the language of instructions for pre- and lower primary school children, grade one to three is in their language. Kiswahili as a national language and a medium of instructions in primary schools is introduced slowly due to the fact that one of the objectives in the Education and Training Policy (1995) is:

“To provide opportunity and enable every child to acquire, appreciate and effectively use Kiswahili and to respect the language as a symbol of national unity, identity and pride”

Despite the fact that this group sends more children to school nowadays compared to the past; it has been realized that there are more boys attending school than girls. Following this situation some non-governmental organisations such as Pastoral Women’s Council have launched a campaign to encourage more girls to go to school. In order to meet this objective they have built and are running a number of pre-, primary and secondary schools for pastoralists’ children especially girls. In the same respect more girls are sponsored sent to teacher training for both pre- and primary education in order to serve in these schools.

Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)

Children have the right to live. Governments and other stakeholders should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

The survival of a child starts at the point when the mother becomes pregnant. The survival of the unborn child depends on the health and nutritional status of the mother and the environment in which she lives. After birth, her survival depends on receiving all basic needs, which are food, health, protection and development from his/ her parents, the community and the government.

Respect for the views of the child (Article 12)

When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now dictate to their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making not give children authority over adults. Moreover, this article does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children; but the Convention recognises that the level of a child’s participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers’ greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions.

However, respect for the right of the child to be listened to and taken seriously is a commitment to valuing children as people now. Young children, as Clark and Moss in Lansdown put it, are:

“ experts in their lives with a competence to communicate a unique insight into their experiences and perspectives; skilful communicators, employing a huge range of languages with which to articulate their views and experience; active agents, influencing and interacting with the world around them; meaning makers, constructing and interpreting meaning in their lives.”

Development

The development of a child is related to her physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual growth. In order for a child to grow well, she needs to be cared for, given guidance, and brought up in accordance with the norms of the community. For a holistic child development kindergartens play a major role to this. Apart from other curriculum activities, play is a vital, dominant and right activity in the world of the child.

Play in young children, promotes development in all areas: intellectual, linguistic, physical, social and emotional (Norwegian Frame work Plan, 1995). Play creates a sense of identity and self-esteem. Through play, children make friendship, learn to share things, control their temper, gain vocabulary, enjoy (leisure) builds their muscles both, big and small. During play children use their intellect to solve, to create, to build, to manoeuvre, to balance and so forth. In so doing they experience a sense of humour and joy. Play should not be taken as a waste of time in our training programmes and pre-schools.

For ***physical development*** of the child, that is height and weight in relation to age, the child needs adequate nutrition, health and clean environment.

The child's ***mental development*** is reflected in her increased capacity for vision, understanding, imagination and curiosity about the environment in which she lives and she grows older. This depends on nutrition, health, the environment in which she lives, toys, games independence and the teaching she is given.

The ***moral growth*** of a child involves enabling the child to develop healthy relationships between himself and other children together with other members of the community in which he lives, this depends on love, care, concern, guidance and counselling he receives from parents, guardians, relatives and other community members.

Spiritual development entails the child's ability to understand his relationship with the basic tenets of her/ his faith so that he may live in accordance with the guidelines laid down by parents, guardians and religious denominations.

Child social development is an important aspect of your child's healthy growth and development. Children need to learn to interact with their peers and with adults in a socially acceptable way, which allows them to eventually form healthy relationships and fit into social situations comfortably. Interactions with your young child establish the building blocks for healthy social development. By giving your baby lots of love and by attending to his needs you establish a bond with your baby, which allows him to grow in a comfortable, confident and socially healthy atmosphere.

As a preschool child develops improved language skills, social development plays an important role in his life, as he becomes more involved with the people around him. At this stage of social

development friendships become more important. Companionship, attention and approval become more important to a preschool child.

But preschoolers at this stage of social development often still need an adult close by to get materials or settle disputes. Child social development skills can be a challenge at this age as children are often required to compromise, take turns and share for the first time in their lives.

Media

Right to be exposed to reliable information from the mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, books, internet and others, is stipulated in the article seventeen of the Convention on the Rights of Children. It States that Parties shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. Our media should be a source of liberation to our children than being a source of corruption. Mass media should be geared towards moral construction than moral destruction and decay. The media should be aimed at creating a new “electronic generation” that is more open, more democratic and more socially aware than their parents’ generations.

It is therefore our duty to encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29; (Article 17 a)

Protection

Children need protection in order for them to grow well physically, intellectually, socially, spiritually, and morally. They need to be protected at all stages of their growth, before and after birth. Therefore, children need to be protected against things such as abortion, murder, suicide, abandonment, exploitation, tasks incompatible with their age, deprivation, oppression and neglect (Tanzania Child Development Policy, 1996).

Children also need to be protected against all forms of abuse such as gender abuse, bad practices and cruelty, such as forced early marriages, drug abuse and child labour as stipulated in article 34 section 4 of the Convention that:

“States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices”

For example, there is in Tanzania a non-governmental organization called Kiota Women's Health and Education Development Organization (KIWOHEDE) whose main duty is the elimination of all forms of abuse, sexual violence, and exploitation through policy and community engagement, reproductive health and institutionalization of prevention, withdrawal, rehabilitation and integration mechanisms for vulnerable and affected children, youth and women. To ensure that the best interest of the child is achieved KIWOHEDE's focus and concern has been on vulnerability of children, youth and women on different forms of abuse, sexual violence, child trafficking and exploitations which jeopardize their health and dignity. They also promote and support community mechanisms for prevention and rescue of children, youth and women vulnerable to worst forms of abuse, sexual violence and exploitation through education and awareness raising, undertake environmental, health and development activities to improve lives of children and youth trafficked, working in prostitution and those working in hazardous domestic works.(www.kiwohede.org)Moreover, their target is to, “ maintain and strengthen psychosocial counselling for children who have been rescued and are in their centres and also advocate and lobby for children's rights targeting children in domestic work, trafficked, in commercial sex, orphans and those living with HIV/AIDS at the age of 9 -18 years.”

Children also need to be protected against some harmful cultural practices such child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys. It is our duty as directed by the convention to take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child; and those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status. (Child Development Policy, 1996)

Protection also concerns children in difficult circumstances such as orphans, children with disabilities, street children, refugee children; children affected by natural disasters, children in prison, those in single parent house hold, children in minority groups and adolescent mothers and those involved in sexual exploitation. In order to combat this, in Tanzania there a number of orphanages owned by government and non-governmental organizations; rehabilitation centres for street children and those living in difficult and hazardous situations. There are also national campaigns in media, political rallies; in schools and the like to denounce and castigate all acts of rape defilement and exploitation of children. Moreover, Tanzania has a strong punishment with regard to the above which ranges from serving 30 years in prison to life imprisonment.

Participation

States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. Participating in discussions and in information sharing about their experiences and what they learn at school, enhances children's self- esteem and confidence, promotes their overall capacities, produces better outcomes, strengthens understanding of and

commitment to democratic processes. Participation provides the opportunity for developing a sense of autonomy, independence, heightened social competence and resilience. The benefits are therefore significant. Every one, whether young or adult, is entitled to be a participant in his or her own life, to influence what happens to him or her, to be involved in creating his or her own environment, to exercise choices and to have his own views respected and valued.

Since our nations are members of United Nations and have signed different charters regarding the rights of children such as UN conventions on the Rights of the Child; then directives have been issued to whomever claims to involve him or herself with children's affairs should first and foremost give the best interest of the child a priority. As a response to the convention, most states have issued different policies and guidelines to be followed by both, government and non-governmental institutions and organizations for proper implementation of the convention to the best interest of the child. For example in Tanzania we have Education and Training Policy, 1995; Child Development Policy, 1996, National Policy on Disability, 2004 and plans are underway to be issued by the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children to issue another policy called National Policy on Raising Children and Youth just to mention a few whose aim and purpose it to see the best interest of the child is fulfilled.

Education

Access to education and schooling is another fundamental right of a child. As articles 28 and 29 directs, all children have the right to education and that the education of the child shall be directed to: making primary education compulsory and free for all. It also should be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living. In order to best the interest of the child in kindergartens, different guidelines have being issued by states and other organizations in order to suit children in their cultural context. For example in Tanzania most Roman Catholic kindergartens follow Montessori system, the Aga Khan Foundation follow the system suitable to their community, the Madrassa Pre-Schools, follow Islamic culture.

What is the role of a pre-school to best meet the interest of the child?

Let us take the Norwegian Framework Plan, 2006 as guide for the purpose of this paper. The framework plan provides guidelines on the values, content and tasks of kindergartens. All kindergartens are supposed to base their activities on the values established in the Kindergarten Act, and on the international conventions to which Norway is a signatory, including the ILO's Convention no. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The framework Plan directs that in all actions concerning children undertaken by authorities and organisations, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. The aim of the framework plan is to give head teachers of kindergartens, pedagogical leaders, and other staff a binding framework for the planning, implementation and assessment of the activities of kindergartens. The framework plan also provides information to parents, owners and supervisory authorities. It generally describes the societal role of kindergartens: that kindergarten' programmes shall be built on a holistic pedagogical philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Social and linguistic skills, as well as seven learning areas, are also important to the pedagogical environment provided by kindergartens; cf. Chapter 3.

The plan emphasises the importance of adults' attitudes, knowledge and ability to relate to and understand children, so that they can bring up children to participate actively in a democratic society. The plan focuses both on the present and on the future. The framework plan underlines the unique nature of the educational activities of kindergartens.

CONCLUSION

Kindergartens shall give children basic knowledge of central and topical fields. Kindergartens shall nurture children's curiosity, creativity and desire to learn and offer challenges based on the children's interests, knowledge and skills (Mohamed, Asha, 2005)

Therefore this network, as it continues to build the capacity of all the member institutions, in collaboration with relevant authorities in their governments, should ensure that institutions, stake holders, services and facilities providers responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform to the standards established by competent authorities,(including resolutions made in this network), particularly in the areas of safety, health, curricular, in the number of children in class, the availability of teaching and learning materials, the number, suitability and competence of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

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Children's rights in early childhood, a cultural sensitive approach

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Introduction

During the last decade we have witnessed an increasing concern about early childhood in international politics. In Europe the importance of lifelong learning, and early childhood as an important period for investment in education has been highlighted (see Kjørholt and Qvortrup 2010). UN and other international bodies, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, have to an increasing degree underlined the need for education and care in early childhood also for children living in countries in the South.

In 1995, the anthropologist Sharon Stephens argued that there is a dynamic relationship between children's everyday lives, national policies and global politics. She addressed the following overall question:

“How do new forms of international and local politics affect children? And how do children themselves experience, understand, and perhaps resist and reshape the complex, frequently contradictory cultural politics that inform their lives?” (Stephens 1995, 3)

Rights discourses – which can be seen as an important part of global politics - have been increasingly powerful worldwide since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. The convention, including the constructing of children as competent social actors with rights to be listened to and to have a say in matters that affect their lives, represents an important tool to improve children's well-being and everyday lives in different parts of the world. Young children's rights, and research, policies and practices regarding early childhood are also part of these global discourses. Participation rights as specifically formulated in articles 12 and 13 in CRC have been described as revolutionary compared to rights in earlier children's rights declarations. Based on these participation rights, it has been argued that children are social actors, also having rights as citizens, and that this view represents a new perspective on children. This view is reflected in the comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in their responses to the individual country reports regarding the implementation of the CRC related to early childhood. The Committee on the Rights of the Child argues that:

“There has been a shift away from traditional beliefs that regard early childhood mainly as a period for the socialization of the immature human being towards mature adult status is required. The Convention requires that children, including the very youngest children, be

respected as persons in their own right. Young children should be recognized as active members of families, communities and societies, with their own concerns, interests and points of view.”(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006: 2-3)

It is interesting to note that the Committee in the quote above refers to a change with regard to notions of young children and persuades the states to create a positive agenda for implementing rights in early childhood. However, what does this actually mean? It obviously represents a recognition of and respect for the youngest children from the moment they are born. However, provocatively we may ask: to what extent does a right based approach also represent a change of ‘traditional’ social practices related to family life and parenting in different parts of the world? Furthermore, does it imply an exportation of particular images of what it means to be a child developed in modern western societies? The implementation of CRC requires an interpretation of the different articles within the convention, as well as an overall assessment. There is a dynamic interconnectedness between universal rights and local social (cultural) policies and practices. It is therefore timely to ask: How are notions of (the good) childhood and the ‘good life’ (re)presented and constituted in policy, everyday life and practices (family-life, early childhood education, in public society) in different parts of the world? In this article I will present some reflections and challenges related to a right based approach to promote children’s well-being in early childhood in different parts of the world. Both the CRC and the African Charter on Children’s rights will be included in the presentation. I will in particular focus on participation rights and the principle of the ‘best interest of the child’ in the two conventions. As part of the concluding discussion I want to argue for the need of applying a critical and cultural sensitive approach to the implementation of rights.

‘The universal child?’ Individualisation and autonomy

The rights in the CRC are anchored in the recognition of children as individuals and competent social subjects. This implies a process of individualisation of children in the way that they are increasingly removed from being defined within the framework of the family and are instead connected to the state by being treated as individuals in their own right (Näsman 1994, Mortier 2002). Historically human rights, including rights for children, have had a central place in the welfare policies in Nordic countries (Bartley 1998).

Studies of how young children’s rights to participation is interpreted and practiced within early childhood services in a Nordic context indicate that participation is linked to autonomy, self-determination and individual rights to freedom of choice. It has been argued that this is connected to a particular notion of what it means to be a human being, anchored in the ideal of the mature human being as autonomous, rational and capable of formulating his or her needs and interest (Kjørholt 2005). This notion of the human subject, which can be traced back to the tradition of Emmanuel Kant,

has been criticized for representing a particularistic notion of the human being, overlooking the fact that human beings, whether it be adults or children, are dependent in the sense that they are constituted within a web of social relationships to others (Kjørholt 2005). Furthermore, this connection of agency to individual autonomy and self-determination is particularly problematic in many countries in the majority South, because it represents a break with ‘traditional’ practices and local notions of the human being, seen as part of an extended family and community in complex ways. In spite of a growing interest in the field in recent decades, there is still a lack of empirical studies of the implementation of CRC in different cultural contexts, as well as a lack of theorising regarding what it means to give young children rights to participation within early childhood education and care.

The implementation of the different articles in the CRC is dependent on culturally based values and interpretation influenced by the context in which they are implemented. In that sense the practices related to early childhood education and care (ECEC) to a certain extent reflect cultural and political norms. This in itself is not problematic, what is difficult however, is the fact that these values are often taken for granted and not explicitly discussed. Pertinent questions to be addressed are: What does it mean to give young children rights to participation within early childhood education and care services? How are children allowed to express their views, and in regard to what? The rights in the CRC are formulated as universal statements. However, these rights as well as the principle of ‘the best interests of the child’ are not neutral, but refer to standards with different meanings across cultures, and due to class, ethnicity, and gender and so on. Philip Alston points out that, whereas a child’s individuality and autonomy will be valued as being in line with the principle of the ‘best interests of the child’ in modern western societies, this may contradict traditions and values in other societies in the world (Alston 1994). It has been argued, and rightly so, that the lack of specific standards connected to the principle of the ‘best interests of the child’ makes it possible to use this principle to legitimize a practice in one culture that in another would be seen as hurting children (Alston 1994). Following from this, notions of ‘the best interests of the child’ and participation rights are closely intertwined with cultural notions of a (good) childhood in a particular local context. What does the principle of the ‘best interest of the child’ and participation rights mean to children living in countries in Africa? I will take a closer look at the particular charter for children’s rights in Africa.

The African Charter on Children’s Rights and Welfare

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC or Children's Charter) was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990, and came into force in 1999. (Wikipedia December 2010). The charter has many similarities with the CRC. Whereas all countries in Africa apart from Somalia have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 45 out of 53 African countries have ratified the African Charter. The charter contains many of the same articles

and principles as the CRC, such as the principle of non-discrimination, the right to life, survival and development, and the overall principle of 'the best interest of the child'. The overall aim of the African Charter was formulated as follows:

- To improve the situation of African children through raising awareness of children's rights in diverse African contexts,
- To base awareness and use of CRC and African Charter to create intellectual debate about children's rights in African contexts, and
- To examine problematic concepts such as 'positive' and 'negative' African values practices, and the 'best interest of the child' in CRC and the African Charter.

As a background for the establishment of the African Charter it is argued that:

"...the situation of most African children remains critical due to the unique factors of their socio-economic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger, and on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity he/she needs special safeguard and care" (ACRWC).

As we see from this text, children in African countries are first and foremost presented as being 'in risk', suffering from a variety of different threats to their well-being. There is no explicit reference to the value of 'traditional' practices regarding upbringing, children and family life. However, as in the CRC, the Children's charter underlines the place of children in the society, and the importance of the family in more general terms. The quote above reveals to a certain degree ideas and notions of a 'proper' childhood and the 'best interest of the child' attached to the charter:

"Recognizing that the child occupies a unique and privileged position in the African society and that for the full and harmonious development of his personality, the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of love, happiness and understanding"(ACRWC).

When it comes to participation rights that so frequently have been highlighted in the CRC, we see many similarities in the African Charter. Article 7: Freedom of expression, is formulated like this:

"Every child who is capable of communicating his or her own views shall be assured the rights to express his opinions freely in all matters and to disseminate his opinions subject to such restrictions as are prescribed by law".

Article 8: Freedom of Association is formulated like this:

"Every child shall have the right to free association and freedom of peaceful assembly in conformity with the law".

In addition to these two articles, article 9 states rights regarding freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

In spite of many similarities between the CRC and the ACRWC, there are some interesting differences, reflecting different images of what it means to be a child, and of children's place in African societies compared to countries in the North.

Children's rights and responsibilities

First and foremost the difference relates to the inclusion of and emphasis on children's *responsibilities* in the African charter. In contrast to the CRC the promotion and protection of rights and welfare of the child in ACRWC also implies the performance of obligations and duties on the part of everyone, including children.

1. Obligations of State Parties
2. Obligations of parents (art 20)
3. Children's responsibilities

Article 31, which is entitled 'Responsibility of the Child', is formulated as follows:

“Every child shall have the responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognised communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability is obliged:

- a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need,
- b) to serve his national community by placing his physical and intellectual ability at its service,
- c) to preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity
- e) to preserve and strengthen the independence and integrity of his country
- f) to contribute to the best of his abilities, at all times and all levels, to the promotion and achievement of African Unity” (ACRWC).

As we see, the notion of the child in the ACRWC, as a human being with a lot of obligations and responsibilities in the family, local community and nation is in sharp contrast with the images of the child in CRC. The ACRWC reflects the fact that in African countries, children from an early age are active participants in economic and social (re)production in everyday life. They are seen as the assets of their families who are fully dependant of their contribution in work for their survival and subsistence. Based on research in Ethiopia, Tatek Abebe argues that: “Growing up in rural and urban contexts is governed by varying forms of reciprocity and care in which the relative flow of resources

(material and social) between children and adults is embedded in mutual expectations and support” (Abebe 2008). The picture below, of a boy herding the cattle in southern Ethiopia illustrates one out of many different forms of responsibilities children have in their families from an early age.



Boy herding the cattle in southern Ethiopia [Photo Tatek Abebe]

Children in African countries are through their active participation in and responsibilities in different working activities, part of an intergenerational social contract contributing to their families’ survival. Furthermore they are active members of local communities. Though they are constituted as human beings with participation rights as in the CRC, they are at the same time obliged to respect and obey their parents and the elders in society. We can see that there is a potential inherent tension here between the child’s right to have a say, and the child’s obligation to respect the elderly in the family and community in the African charter. Furthermore, there is a limit for the exercise of individual participation rights and autonomy in the AFCRC when we take into consideration other articles and the emphasis on children’s obligations and responsibilities in the charter. An overall assessment of the charter reveals that notions of a ‘proper childhood’ and ‘the best interest of the child’ is seen as connected to responsibilities and working activities within an intergenerational social order. The following proverb from Ethiopia confirms this view: “A childhood without work is not a happy childhood” (Abebe 2008). The emphasis on belonging and connectedness to an extended family network and wider social community also represents a certain difference with regard to what it means

to be a human being and a child in African societies compared to countries in the North, (or modern western societies). It is clear that individuality and autonomy is connected to the construction of the human being in the CRC, reflecting particular notions of the human being in a modern western societies, whereas the construction of the human being in African countries first and foremost are connected to interdependencies, responsibilities and connectedness. The picture below of a girl doing care work mirrors this:



A girl engaged in care work in the family in southern Ethiopia.

It is important to note that children in African countries through their active participation and responsibilities in different working activities are deriving various forms of local knowledge, and by this, learning how to be a human being within the particular local cultural context.

To me this point underlines the need to consider values and practices in the local cultural context when applying a rights based approach to improve children's everyday life and welfare.

Early childhood and the interrelatedness of rights

However, turning attention to the CRC again, this convention reflects slightly different notions of a proper childhood and 'the best interest of the child'. Jo Boyden argues that children in CRC are demarcated from adults by a series of biological and psychological characteristics that are seen to be universally valid. Furthermore, she contests this universality and states that:

“This is a particular image of childhood developed in a particular time in history, at a particular place, emphasising childhood as a life phase characterised by innocence, play and formal education – cfr Aries,” (Jo Boyden 1990).

However, by ratifying the CRC almost all the countries in the world are obliged to use the CRC as a tool to improve children's lives. 45 of the African countries have also ratified the African charter. In the following I want to argue for that a holistic approach to the different articles in the CRC is important. This also makes it easier to connect to principles in the ACWRC.

The quotation from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the introduction of my presentation indicates that there are two opposing and dichotomous notions of young children, as either vulnerable and in need of socialisation, or as competent human beings. This shift is supposed to be universal or global. The Committee speaks about a: 'shift away from traditional beliefs that regard early childhood mainly as a period for the socialization of the immature human being'. However, when The Committee on the Rights of the Child further persuades states to create a positive agenda for implementing rights in early childhood, they recommend the parties to:

“...encourage recognition of young children as social actors from the beginning of life, with particular interests, capacities and vulnerabilities, and of requirements for protection, guidance and support in the exercise of their rights.”

(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006: 2)

At the same time as they are referring to a shift with regard to notions of young children, the quotation above reflects an emphasis on children's agency not in opposition to, but in compliance with children's vulnerability. This is interesting and indicates a perspective where the different rights are seen as interrelated. Furthermore, it is possible to see it more in compliance with principles in the African charter. In The General Comment from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which was published in 2006, a holistic approach to rights is underlined, also pointing to the importance of play to ensure health and development:

“The Committee reminds States parties (and others concerned) that the right to survival and development can only be implemented in a holistic manner, through the enforcement of all the other provisions of the Convention, including rights to health, adequate nutrition, social security, an adequate standard of living, a healthy and safe environment, education and play (arts. 24, 27, 28, 29 and 31,” UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006: 4).

An interrelated approach to rights in early childhood also implies openness for a variety of different perspectives and practices related to the implementation of participation rights, and to what it means to be a competent social actor within early childhood education services. Young children’s rights to play are among other things connected to adults’ responsibilities to support children, to nurture them and provide them with emotional care and sensitive guidance. Moreover, the parties’ responsibilities to identify factors that prevent children from excitement, joy and play are highlighted. Poverty is mentioned as one important factor in this regard. That the Committee in their comments also connects the implementation of participation rights in article 12 to rights to play in article 31, is of particular interest:

“Planning for towns and leisure and play facilities should take account of children’s right to express their views (art. 12), through appropriate consultations. In all these respects, States parties are encouraged to pay greater attention and allocate adequate resources (human and financial) to the implementation of the right to rest, leisure and play.”

(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006: 15)

The implementation of the CRC requires reflection on questions related to childhood and children’s everyday lives in different contexts, including ideological, cultural and ethical evaluation of what it means to be a child and how a ‘good’ childhood is constituted. This point is also taken into account by the UN Committee, stating that variations regarding cultural expectations and treatment of children should be respected.

In the CRC, children are not constituted with responsibilities, nor with rights to work. In the African charter, responsibilities are important part of children’s lives. Also with regard to early childhood this fact must be taken into consideration when applying a child rights approach. A broad definition of the concept of participation seems useful, including the meaningful activities in every day life.

In rights discourses there is also a danger of excluding the embodied subject and thus the embodied expressions that are vital in order to understand and recognise children as human beings. It is pertinent to pay attention to the ‘unspoken words’, the huge complexity of bodily movements and emotional expressions, by which children construct their identities and social practices in everyday life.

Working with children in early childhood, it is also important to develop a differentiated approach, covering a wide range of diverse 'styles' from storytelling as sources of inspiration for dialogue and reflection, the expressive activities such as drawing, painting, musical performances and others, to participant observation with groups of children as a way to learn to understand everyday life the way children experience and perceive it. Philosophy for young children, stimulating and nourishing children's thoughts, questions and reflections about life and being in the world, represent an additional and exciting approach in relation to early childhood education and care services, embracing children's rights to autonomy and connectedness as closely intertwined processes. This approach is also connected to the argument made by Peter Moss, asserting that dependency is un-theorized, and that there is a need for re-conceptualisation of the relationship between dependency, autonomy, respect and democracy (Moss 2009).

A cultural sensitive approach - concluding remarks

A culture sensitive approach to children's rights means being aware of, and connecting to local cultural practices, upbringing and parental practices in the context children live. However, this does not mean uncritically acknowledging and adopting every practice because it is 'traditional'. Local 'culture' is not static – but in a continuous and dynamic process of change.

A cultural sensitive approach underlines the importance of recognising children's, as well as adults', dependency, not only with reference to social relations, but also to dependency of a particular social (cultural) context. Constructing early childhood education and care services as democratic and social spaces for autonomy, belonging and connectedness, should also mean connecting to the local social and cultural context in which the institution is placed. Still there is a lack of knowledge related to childhood and children's everyday lives in non-western contexts, as these are conceptualised and practiced. Based on research in South-Asia it has been argued that respect for young children and their views do not lead to lack of respect for parents (George 2009). Local knowledge and social practices regarding notions of child care, generational relations, family life, emotions and embodied language, including music and other forms of art, the meaning of rituals, religious beliefs and practices etc, can be seen as a source of knowledge to be reflected in the daily life in the institution. By this early childhood services can be connected to community development and dialogue. Aspects of local knowledge, such as oral tradition, transmitted from older generations to the younger are key factors in local sustainable development.

If we can get beyond – though not reject – the rights-based discourse of listening, we can open up to listening as a concept of many possibilities which applies not just to young children, but to older children and adults of all ages (Moss et al. 2005). These approaches open for a vision of early

childhood education and care services not only as a resource centre and social space for young children, but as social and inclusive spaces for belonging and connectedness embracing different age-groups.

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The use of play as a psycho-social support for traumatized children for the best interest of the child

By DR S'lungile K. Thwala

Background

This article arose from the reflections of the author on the provisions of orphans and vulnerable children in Swaziland. It focuses mainly on activities that address the physical development and the psychosocial development of the children.

Article 39 of the UN convention on the rights of the child deals with the child's right to psychological recovery and social integration after destructive events. It is on this ground that this article focuses on play as an important aspect of child development.

In recent years emphasis has increasingly been on providing activities for children to create a safe and normal environment, rather than focusing on psychological analysis and treatment. There is a need to build an environment which is conducive to child's development. This includes providing education for children and also organizing other forms of activities including play and other artistic activities. Today we understand protection as a broader concept; we are not necessarily speaking of physical protection. Protection encompasses activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual.

We all know that child development is a complex and dynamic process that involves growth and change at many levels. One of the avenues that have been found to be extremely successful is the use of play.

What is play?

- Inner motivated and voluntary activity
- Suspension of reality. A quality of "as if" or make belief.
- Inner locus of control

Play is a universal language for the world of children. It is a natural child directed way for children to learn new concepts and to develop new skills that will provide basis for success in future settings. In play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults.

The psychosocial development and wellbeing of children

Psychosocial development and well-being is when one performs well, when one feels good about himself whether at home, school or with friends. Assurance that one feels loved provides one with a solid foundation that will facilitate his or her psychosocial development. For the school-age child, three important areas that contribute to psychosocial development are family, school, and peers. To develop at an optimal level, children need a good self-image in order to feel that they belong. Children also need positive discipline (training and teaching) that establishes boundaries to provide a loving and secure environment (Mallmann 2003:3).

By giving children psychosocial support, we can lead them onto the journey of life. Life is often described as a journey starting from birth and ending in death. On the journey of life a person develops and grows, takes different paths, and have various experiences. Sometimes they are good, and sometimes they are bad. Some things have a big impact on our lives and can change them forever (UNICEF 2005:1). To lead children onto a journey of life all their needs should be considered, that is: emotional, physical, mental, social and spiritual needs.

The Role of Play in psychosocial development and wellbeing for traumatized children

Many researchers have documented that play has a crucial role in the optimal growth, learning and development of children from infancy through adolescence, yet this need is being challenged and so children's right to play must be defended by all adults especially educators. This is the time as educators that we must advocate strongly in support of play for all children.

The role of play in psychosocial development and well being for traumatized children can never be underestimated.

1. Play allows the child to remove himself from the spotlight of the situation (through activities children are offered means to mediate their own emotions and feelings)

Some feelings that children undergo after losing their parents include; separation anxiety, depression and anger (Thwala, 2008).

Separation Anxiety

It is a natural developmental experience for pre-school children who have lost their parents to have separation anxiety. The child may be afraid that his mother will not return to pick him/her up from school and consequently becomes filled up with panic and fear. Foster (2005) remarked that symptoms of general anxiety include excessive worry, fear of going to new places or meeting new people, clinging to parents, unusual dependency, fear of separation from the parent, inability to sit still and a range of somatic symptoms such as stomach pains, sweating, loss of appetite, sleep problems, nightmares and hand tremors. Anxiety is particularly likely among children who are worried about their parent's health, fear of leaving them alone, or fear of being abandoned.

Separation difficulties show themselves at each transitional phase of a child's life. The transition from primary school to secondary/high school and into tertiary institution and finally into the world of work, are all periods of anxiety to the maturing individual. The teacher can work with the child by engaging the child in play.

The Depressed Child

There seems to be no joy or spontaneity in the life of a depressed child. Most often such a child is depressed because of a loss-which could be that of a friend, a sibling, parents (through death or divorce, separation or desertion) and /or sexual abuse

The teacher can help deal with the child's feelings of loss or abuse through counselling.

Angry child

The angry child hits other children and occasionally has been known to hit a teacher. He rarely smiles. He does not sit quietly. The teacher's intervention is to contact the parents and share observations in an effort to enlist parental help and support. In the classroom, the teacher can help the angry child by asking him to verbalize his angry feelings, because he might be sad or angry due to his neglect by his peers or for not doing well in his school work. At the same time play can be an effective way to uneasy such feelings.

2. It allows children to deal with their present.

Another symptom and manifestation of psychosocial problems is bereavement and grief in children. According to Germann (2005:32) children's bereavement and grief differ from that of adults and their grief can vary widely by developmental status. Their reactions include shock, denial of loss, feelings of guilt (for instance the child feels responsible for the death) and anger (which may be targeted at the dead parent, God or others). There comes a time where a child has to accept the death of his parents. Play can be used as a means to help the child go through the process of grief.

3. It allows children to deal with their future. The activities open up closed doors within the child unleashing emotions which they have failed to hold back. Psychosocial activities instil in children a sense of hope for themselves thus, it allows the child to continue life and start looking positively at the future.
4. It provides a way for sensitive issues to be addressed in a way which is affirmative and easily accessible by children. Issues like HIV/AIDS are very sensitive for a child to come out and tell others that his parents died of HIV/AIDS. It is very difficult to do because it has a stigma.

5. Through the use of play it is possible to reach children on their level, since play can be whatever the spectator/performer wants it to be.
6. It allows children to express themselves and to articulate their feelings- feelings that would otherwise be internalized for reasons such as fear and confusion concerning their situation.

Concluding remarks

Play is about new ways of thinking, expressions, new direction, it is thought, fun, it is feeling and form. It is on those grounds that as educators we should use play to cater for psychological needs of children. Learning as well as play is an autonomous activity for children as it can be seen in psychosocial development and wellbeing of children this implies that the importance of play has to be realized if children are to develop psychosocially to their full potential.

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Risky play- why should we risk it?

By Mrs. Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter, Department for Physical Education Queen Maud University College for Early Childhood Education, Norway

Introduction

This presentation is based on my PhD work on children's risky play in preschool. The presentation will focus on:

- What is risky play?
- What do Children experience when they engage in risky play?
- What benefits can risky play have in children's development?

Risky play in this study is defined as thrilling and exciting forms of play that involve a risk of physical injury (Sandseter, 2007) – I am aware that there are also other forms of risks, for instance emotional and social risks exist; but in this study the focus has been on the physical forms of risk.

My interest in the subject lies in the awareness that risk-taking seems to be a natural part of children's play – they seek and prefer this kind of play. Children intentionally seek out challenges on the border of their own mastery and on the border of risk and fear in their play. This is documented by several researchers (Aldis, 1975; Little, 2006; Smith, 1998; Stephenson, 2003).

In a developmental perspective it is argued that this search for challenges and new experiences is based on the child's process of "becoming at home in the world". Children discover what is safe and what is not. They learn risk assessment and how to master risk situations. Ultimately they develop a sound sense of risk.

Still, risk-taking includes exposing oneself to hazard and in several western countries this has led to an increased focus on child safety and a discussion on safety on the one hand, and children's freedom to play and explore on the other hand. One needs to focus on the balance between safety, risk and the opportunities for children to play and develop. For instance one could ask if 100 % risk free is possible or even exist in the environments where children live and play?

What is risky play?

Although there has been a debate about risky play and child safety, I started out my work unable to find a definition of risky play or a description of what kinds of children's play this is.

The first step in my research was therefore to explore this by observing children in play, and interviewing children and preschool staff about what they thought was risky in children's play

The result from these observations and interviews was the development of six categories of risky play (Sandseter, 2007).

1. Play with **Great Heights** - danger of injury from falling, such as:
 - Climbing in trees, on rocks, on fences, in hillsides, or on buildings
 - Jumping from still or flexible surfaces
 - Balancing on high objects

- Hanging/swinging at great heights
2. Play with **High Speed**– uncontrolled speed and pace that can lead to collision with something (or someone), such as:
 - Swinging at high speed
 - Sliding and sledging at high speed
 - Running uncontrollably at high speed
 - Bicycling at high speed
 - Skating and skiing at high speed
 3. Play with **Dangerous Tools** – that can lead to injuries, such as:

Children playing with

 - Cutting tools: Knives, saws, axes
 - Strangling tools: Ropes, etc.
 4. Play near **Dangerous Elements** – where you can fall into or from something, such as:
 - Cliffs
 - Deep water or icy water
 - Fire pit
 5. **Rough-and -Tumble** play– where the children can harm each other, such as in:
 - Wrestling
 - Fencing with sticks, etc.
 - Play fighting
 6. Play where the children can **”Disappear” / Get lost**, such as:
 - Play where children go exploring alone out in the woods or other environments where there are no fences, and they could practically walk away for long distances – not finding their way back home. Many Norwegian kindergartens do not have fences, or they quite frequently visit places where there are no fences – such as nature areas

What do Children experience when they engage in risky play?

When talking to the children about why they enjoy engaging in risky play, they very strongly emphasize the ambiguous emotions evoked by taking risks in play. Most of the children talk about having both pleasant and unpleasant emotions at the same time when engaging in risky play (Sandseter, 2010). Such as five year old Martin trying to explain this:

It's very fun and very scary and all sorts of things...and then I feel both excited and really scared at the same time! (Martin, 5 years)

The children seem to balance on the edge between excitement and fear, - where the excitement is depending on the closeness to the feeling of fear. As such, one of the main aims for the children to engage in risky play is to draw closer to the feeling of fear and anxiety, and by this experiencing a stronger pleasant exhilaration.

The children describe this ambivalent experience very bodily, by the expression *'it tickles in my tummy'* (Sandseter, 2010). They perceive these situations as both fun and scary, but mostly fun. This is exemplified by statements such as:

Crashing into a tree while skiing and not managing a turn is both fun and scary – it tickles in my tummy

Bi-cycling fast in a turn is fun...but also scary because I can crash – it tickles in my tummy

It's scary when being captured by someone chasing me, but it's also fun – It tickles in my tummy

The ambiguous state of experiencing both exhilaration and fear is therefore the core value and the main motivation of risky play because the exhilaration is highest when arousal is high (Aldis, 1975; Cook, 1993; Stephenson, 2003; Sandseter 2009, 2010)

What are the benefits of risky play?

Psychological benefits

Engaging in risky play has clear psychological benefits. For one thing, children will develop their personal courage and acquire a realistic risk perception and sound sense of risk through their experiences with risky situations in play. This will make them better at assessing risks and handling risks they might encounter later in life (Aldis, 1975; Ball, 2002; Boyesen, 1997).

Research also have documented that children who are overprotected, especially by their mother, become anxious children. They learn that the world is dangerous place, and that there is a need for worrying, and finally they are over represented in the adult population of people with anxiety (Allen & Rapee, 2005).

Children also gain emotional competence through engaging in risky play. As mentioned they experience the emotions of both intense exhilaration and real fear, and all the emotions on the continuum between the two; therefore they are using and experiencing their whole emotional register. They also feel contrasting emotions at the same time and in the same situations; experiencing ambivalent emotions

Physical and motor benefits

Engaging in risky play also has physical and motor developmental benefits. Encountering physical challenges and risks gives enhanced physical strength and motor competence, and this is documented with a wide range of research. For instance children will gain muscle strength, better coordination, balance, reaction skills (Ball, 2002; Boyesen, 1997; Fjørtoft, 2000; Grahn m.fl., 1997; Smith, 1998; Stutz, 1999).

Also spatial – orientation skills and perception of objects, depths, heights, speed – and adjustment of movements according to them will get better through challenging and risky play (Fiskum, 2004; Rakison, 2005).

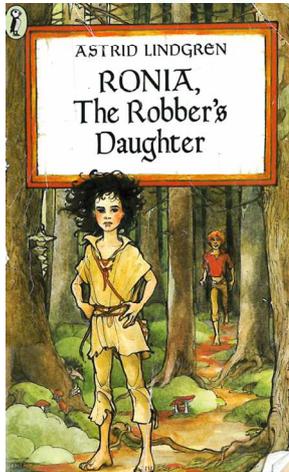
Risk mastery

Both the psychological and motor developmental benefits are important for the enhancement of children's risk mastery. The children benefit from developing:

- Strong, flexible and coordinated bodies – that can move and react fast and appropriately
- Mental strength and experience – becoming sure about themselves, on others and what they are able to master and achieve

In relation to the child safety debate where external regulations and physical interventions to prevent children from for instance climbing too high or attaining too high speed have been dominating, I am of the opinion that letting children enhance their own risk mastery – becoming able to evaluate and handle risky situations by themselves is the best injury prevention and safety precaution!

Developing the ability to master challenges and risks



And in the days that followed, Ronia watched out for what was dangerous and practiced not being frightened. She was to be careful not to fall in the river, Matt had said, so she hopped, skipped, and jumped warily over slippery stones along the riverbank, where the river rushed most fiercely. She was to stay by the waterfalls. To reach them, she had to climb down Matt's Mountain, which fell in a sheer drop to the river. That way she could also practice not being frightened. The first time it was difficult; she was so frightened that she had to shut her eyes. But bit by bit she became more daring, and soon she knew where the crevices were, where she could place her feet, and where she had to cling with her toes in order to hang on and pitch backward into rushing water.

What luck, she thought, to find a place where she could both watch out that she didn't fall in and practice not being frightened!

So her days passed. Ronia watched out and practiced more than Matt and Lovis knew, and in the end she was like a healthy little animal, strong and agile and afraid of nothing. Not of grey dwarfs, not of wild harpies, not of getting lost in the woods, and not of falling into the river. So far she had not begun to watch out for Hell's Gap, but she planned to start soon.



Conclusion

As a concluding remark I will draw some brief reflections on my results.

Overall, Norwegian preschools and their staff seem to have a relaxed attitude to risky play. My results show that the staff has a positive attitude to the value of risky play, and support this kind of play. This is positive for the children, because the results show that children love the ambivalent emotions they experience in risky play. They call this emotion "scary funny"; loving both the scary and the funny part of this emotion

To conclude: It seems that Norwegian children in preschool have good opportunities to engage in risk-taking activities and through that develop a sound sense of risk and learn how to master risky situations, **and last but not least: to feel the thrill, the excitement and the fun of managing something they did not think they would dare.**

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Increasing the Visibility of Play for Opportunity in Diversity in Early Childhood Development

By Stella Nguluka, Bokamoso Early Childhood Education, Ghanzi, Botswana

Introduction

Play is an important phenomenon for children and not surprisingly for adults as well. In early childhood development play has been a subject of research and debate by many academics and practitioners. Yet, not all practitioners have advanced the role of play in child development as important, in their fields of speciality. For instance, it was discovered in Botswana in a study by Seabelo that very few primary school teachers paid attention to play; viewing it as an activity that contributes little to a child's learning [Seabelo, 2002]. Seabelo in her considerations also reflects that the majority of parents in Setswana cultures have considered play as unproductive and unrelated to intellectual pursuits; to be reserved for after school or work. In a baseline study conducted by UNICEF [2006], many parents verbalized the importance of play but in reality expressed that they found it neither valuable nor advisable [UNICEF 2006] in their children's learning and development.

The World conference on *Education for All [UNESCO, 1990] and Dakar Framework of action [2000]* recognized the significance of early childhood development by stating that "*Learning begins at birth and that the preconditions for educational quality, equity and efficiency are set in early childhood years, putting attention to early childhood care and development as essential to the achievement of basic education goals.*"¹ The essence of early childhood development which refers to the period of time from birth to up to 8 or 9 years of age is that: it is a formative stage, when children grow and thrive, by the gradual and holistic unfolding of their potentials. It is a matter of importance and necessity for educational practitioners to pursue and show all the elements necessary for the formative years to set the stage for all learning and development. Play is one such element. The visibility of play in an early childhood situation is a good indication of quality in early development.

Play has already been advanced before by this Network as being vitally important for a child in skills and knowledge formation, personal and interpersonal development, self-actualization and survival. Gunnestad offered 'play as golden route to learning and development in preschool years' [Gunnestad, 2005]. Visibly, the north-side of this Network is already persuaded of this. All the preschools visited since I started coming to Norway show that play is the child's main occupation in pre-school years.

In retrospect, in the South this phenomenon has yet to be progressed. Many preschools visited in the South have often shown that preschool is a miniature of secondary and college learning situations; lectures are given to pre-school children with little portions of play punctuated here and there but otherwise offered to children after 'school'. To exemplify, a counting lesson maybe executed to preschool children with objects drawn on the blackboard or piece of manila paper and children are given to count them after the teacher; or an alphabet lesson given in the same way in rote memorization; or hygiene lesson given to children with the teacher standing in front showing the children how teeth are cleaned or hands washed without the children getting to do it themselves and learning through the experience.

¹ EFA Framework of Action, Paragraph 20.

What is play?

My summary of the dictionary meaning of play is that:

- Games and activities engaged in for enjoyed especially by a child or children
- To occupy oneself in sport, or other recreation for amusement rather than for a serious or practical purpose
- Behaviour or speech that is not intended seriously

[Concise English oxford Dictionary, 2006]

Clearly some of the easily observable elements in play in the above definitions are activity, amusement, enjoyment, pleasure, buoyancy, good spirit, intrinsic desire, inspiration, motivation, desirability. These characteristics of play have permeated the test of time.

Although there is clear evidence of children playing throughout history, since play is as old as God's creation or Mother Nature, differing views on play have emerged before. The Greek Philosopher Plato is said to have been one of the first to recognize the practical value of play, 'distributing apples among boys to help them learn arithmetic, and giving miniature tools to children to play with; advanced that play is 'anticipatory socialization,' preparing a child for adulthood (427–348 B.C.E.) Early puritanical period viewed play as evil, not to be enjoyed and largely to be abandoned; but later John Locke an English Philosopher also raised as puritan believed that children learned best not by being coerced; that if learning was made a recreation[play], they then would develop a desire to be taught (Locke 1632–1704). Jean-Jacque Rousseau thought that in all the games that children played, there could be found material for instruction [cognitive], and what they learned from each other in play was worth far more than what they learned in the classroom [social] (Rousseau, 1712–1778). Piaget emphasized the importance of play in symbolic representation, growth and intelligence and its contribution to socialization providing the child the means of practicing and consolidating his knowledge with to fit reality (Jean Piaget 1896–1980). Inarguably, play fosters the development of the children's personality, social interaction, and internalization of standards of the society and custom rules.

Why Some Practitioners Shun play

Children may be viewed in diverse ways in different cultures, but the common grounds supported by research evidence and experience show how learning for all children starts in infancy before formal learning and continues throughout life. James Heckman notes how significant early childhood is for human ability and motivation shaping by the environment [Heckman, 2000]. He points out how 'early learning begets 'later learning' and 'early success' breeds 'later success' just as 'early failure' breeds 'later failure.' For this reason perhaps, child development has strong connotations with economic development and empowerment. In the developing countries where there is a strong pursuance for attainment of economic development through 'serious' educational pursuit, play may be viewed as 'illogical flights of fancy' [Lubimiv, 1994]; for most then as unproductive and unrelated to success [UNICEF 2006]. Although many parents have appreciated the benefits of early learning, they have however expressed dissatisfaction when they have found their children playing in preschools, relegating 'play' to 'wasting time'.

Thus, even where the importance of early childhood learning may have been recognized; not much attention is being paid to methods of early learning. This could be attributed to little research on the benefits of play as a vital and natural means of learning for children being made in the South. Then when it is performed, the information collected is not available to parents and other stakeholders. As a result, play as a mechanism for learning by children continues to be shunned and it is then common for early learning settings to be laden still with academic instruction characterized by formal instruction and rote learning. There is no evidence in the South offered that the formal approach fosters better academic achievement in later years.

Scientific facts show that brain structure emerges with the child's active involvement and experiences in and with her environment [Shore, 1997]. Genetics put us in a certain inclination or present certain abilities, but dealings with the environment helps in shaping the adult the child becomes. It is not just by sitting and listening attentively to a teacher talking for long period of time to issues and facts about the environment that shapes the person. On the contrary, when the child is playing, all the time she is making decisions to do things, thinking, experiencing, manipulating, discovering, failing and then trying again, and then being successful, then setting rules from experience for more future success, or to avoid another bad experience. She can also learn to count as she plays, learn and recognize the letters of the alphabet through play, learn shapes, sorting thereby weaving meaningful academic experiences into a free-play setting (Greenberg, 1990; Schickedanz et al., 1990). Thus, Play gives the child many opportunities to make decisions and choose experiences that cause reaction and change thereby fostering a vital platform for the child's development. Through play, children learn initiative, autonomy, industry, and competence (Elkind, 1987), which are important prerequisites for later formal instruction and other transitions in life.

When early learning and development situations remain devoid of play we are ***neglecting the essential elements in quality early childhood development***. Lack of support for play oriented learning in our preschools in the south shows then that our children there are still at risk of not having quality early childhoods. It also strongly suggests that early childhood development has not yet been embraced as being vitally important in a human being's development there.

When Gunnestad [2005] examines Joseph Levy's theory on play, he exemplifies *intrinsic motivation* as wanting to do something from an inner desire because the activity in itself is enjoyable, attractive and rewarding. Secondly, Play has an element of *suspension of reality* as it can present an imagined life providing an opportunity for a child to practice roles and situations beyond reach; thereby attaining a position of control and management. In the third element, the child displays *an inner locus* of control through being imaginative and creative moving from one level of accomplishment to another, using all his/her abilities to the fullest; while exploring his strength. Other contemporary theorists have acclaimed play as having an irrefutable role of being the 'highest level of child development giving the child the spontaneous expression of thought, feeling, expression and action' [Akinpelu, 1981].

The Benefits of Play

From ten benefits of play by White doves² and from Seabelo's study on play I have summarized the following basic benefits of play:

- Play inspires a child to think, to be curious and creative; unlocks the child's potential; helps discover special talents and builds inner strength leading the child into a world of discovery. It gives the child the opportunities to solve problems and gives her adaptive abilities. While playing, the child gains more control over situations, by experimenting, exploring, taking risks with ideas without fearing the consequences that might happen in "real life. The child developing by gaining skills, knowledge and habits to handle this complex world along the way as she plays.
- Play exercises the brain's flexibility maintains and even perhaps renews the neural connections that embody the human potential to adapt, and to meet any possible set of environmental conditions. At the same time it allows for the child's body to gain competence, control and mastery in movement and action. This **well-being sets a platform** for holistic development.
- Play creates laughter, joy, a good spirit and a feeling of inner peace. It is a powerful catalyst for positive socialization as it takes away feelings of fear, anger, and unhappiness. It helps release those thoughts that are locked in the head and the heart producing a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the world and its possibilities.
- It provides a better alternative for struggle, conflict, and worry, giving a healthier sense of belonging and connection to other people. It makes things less scary and helps the child build new enthusiasm for life. ***It provides opportunities for inclusiveness and thereby self-esteem developing positive thinking as a basis for a happy life.***

Play and Situations of Diversity in Early Childhood Development

Diversity recognizes that not all the children are the same: meaning that learning will never be the same for all children because of difference in orientation, pace, language posing special learning needs for most children [Nguluka, 2005]. Because of modern economic and socio-cultural trends there is almost no society that is mono-cultural today.

Klausen in Gunnestad [2004] defines culture as the ideas, values, rules, norms, codes and symbols a human being takes over from the previous generation...Whatever the focus and interest, this is what each group of people wants to takeover and carry forward. It is well reflected in our lifestyles- socially, politically, economically etc. This cultural arena affects every child. The holistic view of a child shows that its identity exists out of its culture. The complex and diverse society today presents every child as influenced by different cultural environmental [Bronfenbrenner, 1979]. Education has the biggest mandate for cultural sustainability. Gunnestad [2004] recommends curricular that is multi-cultural sensitive to meet the learning and developmental needs of young children in a culturally diverse society.

But where there is cultural diversity there can be barriers to learning because things are often not viewed from the same perspective. Curricular must be sensitive to create common grounds and a conducive setting for learning to be successful where cultural barriers will be viewed and

² www.whitedovebooks.co.uk/site-design/will2.css

understood. This helps to create bridges where interaction and sharing is possible and builds intercultural competence [Kalkman 2010].

Challenges of Diversity

In a comparative study undertaken by Larsen and Nguluka [2007] on the situation of the indigenous San of Southern Africa and the Travellers of Norway- two minority groups; similarities were found in how their ways of life, culture and language [for the San] affect their children's education. The culture of the minority San which is significantly diverse in values and norms from that of the mainstream groups negatively affects their children's attendance of formal schools. A child from a hunter-gatherer, highly mobile, communal, non-competitive and non-authoritative society with its own concept of time finds him in a modern system that controls time and movement, is authoritarian and materialistic and a vast language barrier. A San child has therefore found mainstream school unfriendly and alienating [Le Roux]. Like other children from disadvantaged minority ethnic groups' cultural factors and marginalization have been found to be some of the main reasons hindering them from accessing education opportunities in their societies.

Play as Break-through

In the example here given of the San people, the break-through for accessing more of their children to modern education has been creating stimulating early learning environments as a foundation. One of the important features in these schools has been play. Play oriented friendlier school environments have kept San children in school where they have been introduced to modern education systems, new cultures and languages. Through play, stories and songs, children build their conceptual knowledge in their mother tongue. Stimulating learning experiences, through play, have been the means of incorporating traditional and modern child rearing practices and fostering transitions into mainstream schools in the development initiative of the Bokamoso Education Program for the San. Through a play friendly curriculum, gradually the San children have been introduced to mainstream culture and languages and have wanted to stay in school and learn.

Socially, the San children now have the opportunity to make friends among themselves and with those of other ethnic groups of people and adults with less fear or worry and anxiety. When the children have shared songs, stories, dances, crafts, played dollhouse, cars, ball, painting houses, built with blocks in free-choice activities, explored, discovered things of relevance to their own home knowledge and new knowledge of mainstream culture, heard new languages, thinking and eager about what they were doing they have had opportunities for cognitive development. They have made decisions, taken choices, preferences, creative, inspired, making mistakes in a light moment and able to re-do things with the opportunity to correct the mistake, buoyant and enjoying themselves; meanwhile developing his self-esteem in inclusiveness.

For the child, a bigger world is therefore created through Play where cultural barriers can be seen and smoothed out making the world more understandable to them, and enabling them to develop knowledge and competence skills.

Play can, therefore, have an important role in showing and explaining the different elements of cultures in a multiculturalism sensitive curricular. It is a safe ground to view the other person's orientation, perhaps leading to better understanding and appreciation. The benefits of play here enumerated makes a case for its importance in the role it has for inclusiveness in a child's learning and development in a culturally diverse society. Play is a common element among all children in the world, no matter what their sex, religion and status. 'Serious observers recognize that there is a

common ritual in play that can engage all children to learn through play' [Lubimiv.1994]' **across all diversity**. Content of play may be different, but all children play. The fact that there is already common ground for engagement- play makes it a very viable medium for cultural sharing and social integration, skills and knowledge building.

As the children play together, intrinsically motivated, they are exposing their thoughts, practices from their orientations and experiences, involved in spontaneous expression of thought, feeling, expression and action. There is collaborative learning shared in an early childhood setting. New ideas emerge, experiences are tried from each other's background, creativity is engaged and put to test, problems are solved or unsolved but resolutions are sort and emotions are aired. This situation gives children the opportunity for building social relationships, making things less scary of the other world as they are tried out.

Experiencing continually helps the child build new enthusiasm for life and gives them reason for moving forward. Even more importantly the social relationships created provide opportunities for inclusiveness; develops positive thinking and thereby self-esteem. One can suggest here then that play creates '**corridors**' or '**avenues**': opportunities where children can move about, exploring and learning and building skills and competency for different transitions that life may present. In the formative years a child playing at skills that are commonly used in the next phase first learns to master them in play and joyful circumstances without fears of marginalization and embarrassment before he reaches that next stage.

Conclusion

Diversity often creates a situation where majority and minority groups emerge. Minorities do not often get to carry the banner for leading influences on major society decisions including those on tools for development.

Play as a natural way of children communicating, acquiring knowledge, skills and habits of the child's own group is also the means of learning other people's knowledge and skills. For children in circumstances of cultural diversity and on the marginal side, play gives an opportunity to participate and make a contribution. A child can taste the others' foods, dress like the other people; try to speak another language because it is fun in play. Done from their own position of strength through play, children view the other cultures, and when they share their own ways and traditions, links are made, communications strengthened, fears and anxieties are reduced.

As suggested in Resilience in Minorities³ [Gunnestad, Larsen, Nguluka.2009], a bi-cultural approach in educational curricular would be inclusive of minority people's ideas and participation in society. This should start in formative years. The natural media in early childhood is play. Through play, the child learns to make movements between cultures and necessary links of the home-based knowledge to the school-based education so as to create confidence, interest and resourcefulness in the marginalized child. This gives the child from a marginalized position an opportunity to familiarize themselves to the skills they will need to survive and forms a solid foundation for transitions into mainstream society. These children build resourcefulness as they learn to be in control of situation;

³ This article builds on two cross cultural studies: A) "Where journeys meet. A comparative study of two minority groups: the San people of Botswana and the Travellers in Norway" by Larsen and Nguluka (2007). B) "Resilience – a cross cultural study of ability to cope, protective factors and supportive processes among children in Norway and Southern Africa" by Gunnestad (2003, 2006).

they can influence positive outcomes and they learn to face life's challenges taking opportunities for new learning; and commitment now has a new significance for engagement in activities and as a basis of meaning for lives'[Pearson, 2006]. There is then more assurance to school completion and aspiration for vocation attainment.

Increasing the visibility of play firstly calls for a strong appreciation of its importance in a child by practitioners in early childhood development. It also calls for a realization that because the elements in play: amusement, enjoyment, pleasure, buoyancy, good spirit, intrinsic desire, inspiration, motivation, desirability, activation etc are naturally attractive to children, it makes it a ready means of providing a meaningful context for children to build foundations where learning is enjoyable and sustainably rewarding.

Developmental benefits are holistic. In situations of diversity play offers opportunities for children-**corridors** and **avenues** to move in while exploring the new world, yet building the resourcefulness needed to cope with different transitions in life. Play therefore gives equal opportunities to all children to meet their educational and developmental needs in society.

Increasing the visibility of play means academics emerge who make research across cultures meaningful and resourceful; rallying parents and practitioners on board around this important issue of play. Academics, practitioners and parents should develop philosophy of professional practice in early childhood settings that promotes play.

Generally, all of us that have to do with children should improve our advocacy roles and skills and advance plans that have clear rationale and strategies for implementation of critical child development tools and elements such as play; then are we to be assured of desirable change in the early childhood settings in the *interest of all children*.

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Meaningful Parental and community involvement for child development and learning in Early Childhood Education

By Mrs. Magnaem Haufiku, Namibia Early Childhood Development -NGO Association, Windhoek, Namibia With Mr. Patrick Kang'anga, Tanzania College of Education of Education, Korogwe, Tanzania

Parents are the most important people in a child's life. They are the child's first and best teachers.

My aim in choosing this topic is to emphasize that without parent and community support us as trainers and trainees will not reach our aim of giving quality education to the little ones. *There is saying: It takes a community\ village to raise a child.*

The integrated Early Childhood approach recognizes the critical roles played by parents and the community. This shows that the choices made and actions taken by parents and the community in the early years of a child's life have a powerful and long lasting influence on the progress of the individual and subsequently on the community and wider society.

Historically, parents, primarily mothers, cared for their own children at home before those children were ready to enter school, but with the growing participation of women in the workforce, the earlier model for early childhood care has changed dramatically in Namibia.

Due to this change the care of children is being provided by extended family members, including older siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents.

One of the challenges faced in the implementation of most forms of early childhood education is the involvement of parents and the community in the programming, operation and/or administration of high quality care for young children, as lack of parental involvement, hamper the smooth running and administration of a centre.

This is sometimes due to lack of knowledge and information on the importance of ECD.

Another problem in the country is the illiteracy among parents of young children remains high and is perceived to relate directly to the lack of positive parent- child interaction.

As trainers and training institutions we are all well aware of the fact that Parental involvement is of vital importance, and to realize this we need to make sure that training of ECD caregivers should aim to support the community and family efforts, to strengthen their skills by building on what they know and by educating parents through awareness raising and information dissemination.

In Namibia we have a family Visitors Program, where parents are given information on how to assist their children especially those attending Pre- primary and grade one.

We also have Adult literacy programs where adults are taught to read and write, first in their vernacular then in English, for them to be able to read any information by themselves and we have National, Regional and Constituency ECD committees some of the Constituency ECD Committee members are ECD caregivers.

Their tasks are to give guidance and advocacy on ECD issues. This is done in the afternoon during week days or in the morning on weekends. We call it Parent Day. National Immunization and weight monitoring days are also done at ECD centres.

The NECD –NGO Association’s training course is offering **Pre School Management** as a subject where the topic of Parental and community involvement in ECD is being extensively discussed, as most of our trainees have to carry out advocacy and information dissemination on ECD in their villages, after completing their training.

I attended an International ECEC Conference in Kuala Lumpur- Malaysia in April last year and was greatly impressed by the presentation of Mr. Jaffe from the USA who gave an example of a four legged chair, and I quote.

“If we are to establish a meaningful involvement, we must envision a four-legged chair:”

One leg is the ECD centre\program including the administration, ECD caregivers, and other staff who are empowered to provide an environment and process for the care, nurturance, education and development of each child.

The second leg is the child. Children enter the early childhood experience with a sense of joy, wonder, and curiosity. Where they are “short” on experience, they are remarkably long on enthusiasm and expectation.

The third leg is the parent or guardian who has significant expectations for the program, and operates either at a distance from the program or, more effectively, as a potential critical element to the success of the program.

The fourth leg of the chair is the community. The community functions as a sounding board, potential funder, enthusiastic ally, and in many cases, a change agent for the improvement of care.

With a completed four-legged chair, the early care and education program takes on a life of its own. Without one of the components i.e. the program itself, the child, the family, and the community, there will always be a weakness in the program. Each of these four legs must be strong and steady”

In the absence of any of the above components, there will be a deficit in the early childhood care and education program. Therefore each leg must be strengthened to compliment the others for the successful operation of the program

According to a worldwide forecast from UNICEF, statistics from Namibia indicate that out of 100 children:

- 8 will probably die before their 5th birthday
- 30 will suffer from malnutrition
- 26 will not be immunized against common childhood diseases
- 19 do not have access to safe drinking water
- 40 do not have access to adequate sanitation
- More than 10 suffer from some physical or mental disability or developmental delay and
- 17 will never attend school

This is indeed a terrible situation, but these statistics only refer to the average situation in some areas of Namibia, the situation might be even worse than this. The only solution to this terrible situation is parental and community mobilization.

Parents should also have knowledge on the proper upbringing and care of children. It is a fact that parents have inborn instinct in raising children but they need support as they ought to know about the developmental stages, milestones, health and nutrition, safety and security etc.

I would like to conclude, by stressing that, the purpose of parental education and mobilization is not to foster reliance on an expert, as parents come with different skills and experiences, and all these skills and strengths put together will give us the opportunity to take the initiative, and to use these skills in a positive way in order to develop the ability of every parent to solve problems.

I thank you for your attention

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Innovating projects in preschool teacher training for the best interest of the child

By Professor Ingar Pareliussen, Queen Maude's University College, Trondheim, Norway

Introduction

The reasons why we became educators are many, and differ between people. However, a common reason was probably the belief that through education the next generation can have a better life; or, a belief that education is at least a part of the answer of the question of bettering the world. If we believe that the next generation can experience a better life, which implies that the education we are using could be improved. So even if one knows that one deliver the best education in the field, one should always ask how I could be better. How can research and development help us becoming better educators?

Research and development are often seen as separate entities. In early childhood education (ECE) it is important that these two are closely connected. This paper offers some thoughts on why research and development is necessary, what research is and what is development work and look at some areas where collaboration could benefit many in the network.

As educators we are often set in our ways, we have become comfortable in our methods, our curriculum, and our way of doing things. This is what we know, our comfort zone. This is human, if something works, why fix it? We need to be certain that it is not working before we change. Sometimes, however, it might be important to change, not because what we are doing is wrong, but because we can become better. By shifting out from our comfort zone, we can do things better. Sometimes just getting out of our comfort zone, perhaps only a small change can have large impact on the success of our teaching. However, without a research framework around our development work, how do we know if the new method is better, or why it is better?

Many research studies show that humans are not natural statisticians. Humans are much more swayed by a single story than a summary of facts. The story of hardship or relief of a single human being is much stronger than tales of percentages blighted or rescued. This is well known, and used by most people that are great orators. These types of statistical fallacies that humans do are called cognitive illusions. By crafting scientific studies, collecting data and treat the data correctly we can reduce the probability of acting on cognitive illusions.

As important to do own research and development is to read up on the latest work other has done. By following what other do one can get a lot of ideas, and save time and effort both in education, and research and development. As a part of the research community it is important to document and publish the findings.

Research and development in ECE

The colleges that educate teachers for the early childhood education have a special responsibility for research and development in the early childhood education sector. This sector is large, and R&D can be directed at many levels and with the use of different data and methods. Here I try to identify some levels, and data that are possible. However, many more are plausible, and this paper cannot go through methods, analysis and data relevant for each and every one. However, the network should try to

establish research groups to strengthen each other's competences in the research and development field.

The first level is research and development in the institutions of early childhood education. Without knowing what is happening and being done in the intuitions, like daycare centers, preschools and schools, it is difficult to know what the teachers need to know when their tuitions are finished. Research methods can be interviews with children and/or staff. When working with children one should remember that they are usually not able to give their consent to participating in a study and should be given anonymity and be protected by the scientist. However, other data is available, like plans and facts like: How many children is supervised by one adult, observation of interaction between adults and children, between children etc.

Development work can be either studying or describing developments happening spontaneous in the institutions, such as new organizational models or it can be teaching methods. It could be students trying out, or inventing, new methods, or it can be the researcher testing out methods in many institutions and collecting the feedback for incremental improvements of the methods.

The next level is research and development in early childhood educational-training, at this level one focus on the teaching, looking on how the curriculum is delivered, interviewing the students about their studies etc. More traditional data sources are also available such as plans, exams results, number of ours the students spend at the school, does the student work along the education etc.

The development part in the training is similar to the development work done in the institution; however, the focus is now on the teaching of students. One could suggest this method to be the normal mode of teaching at the colleges.

At the top level is research and development and then at the regional and national level. Usually this is a more fact based research, looking at national curriculums, text analysis etc. Development in this context can be to lift the knowledge from the lower levels to the political scene to influence the education on a broad scale. However, in a perfect world national curriculums should have a period of development before they are used.

R&D topics at Queen Maud's University College

In Norway the research and development in the ECE-field has been sparse for many years. However, QMUC is trying to rectify this by focusing our research and development to this field. The Norwegian government seems also to increase its funding to the field and it is my hope that this field will get more funding in the coming years. As the ECE-institutions are mainly staffed be Norwegians with Norwegian as their first language much of the research from QMUC is in Norwegian only. However, there is a change in the attitude of the researchers as the importance of international collaboration is getting increasingly more focus. In the future international research collaboration will become more important, and will probably be focus area for QMUC in the coming years.

Here is a short list of some topics of papers published at QMUC. A full list is available at the website of QMUC (<http://www.dmmh.no>).

- Children's Expressions of Exhilaration and Fear in Risky Play.
http://ssmon.chb.kth.se/vol13/Sandseter_paper2.pdf and
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/j17713825h254137/>
- ECE as an learning organization (Norwegian only)
- Is Norwegian ECE-leaders spending less time with the children? (Norwegian only)
- Mentorship, a tool for comprehension and change in ECE (Norwegian only)

- Resilience in a Cross-Cultural Perspective.
<http://www.immi.se/jicc/index.php/jicc/article/view/99/68>

Important topics for QMUC in the future

It is difficult to know what happens in the future, however, it would not be surprising if these topics were somewhere close to the top of the list of research topics at QMUC. The network should thus be able to find researcher working with these topics, and there may be opportunities for collaborations in the future. However, there might be other topics that are possible.

- The youngest children
- Play
- Quality
- Mathematics
- Languages
- Special needs

Summary

QMUC has as its core-value to “act in the best interest of the child”. One way to fulfill this value is to do research and development in the ECE-field, in collaboration with our international network. To support our network we pledge all the support and knowledge we can set aside for development of research within the network. We all have finite resources, but by collaboration we may learn more, and together act in the best interest of the child.



Conference Participants, Trondheim 2010

What's Happening in The Networks?

1. Free Evangelical Association Centre

DR. S'lungile Thwala

General Information

The F.E.A. Centre offers a Diploma in Early Childhood Education. The centre began by offering certificates but later improved to diplomas. In fact what happened was that the certificate program was evaluated and the evaluation revealed that the content of the courses was equivalent to a diploma. The evaluation therefore necessitated the upgrading of the program. The programs

The Diploma in Early Childhood Education is a two year part time program.

Student enrolment has risen steadily as shown in the table below. The statistics for the last five years are as follows;

| Year | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 st Year | 23 | 25 | 26 | 30 | 34 |
| 2 nd Year | 22 | 23 | 23 | 26 | 25 |
| Total | 45 | 48 | 49 | 56 | 59 |

Sometimes the enrolment at second year drops because some students leave because of financial challenges and they cannot secure sponsors to pay for tuition. The students are accommodated in two spacious classrooms for their lessons.

New Developments

The Centre has made a shift from certificate to a diploma. This has been a great achievement for the centre and the first of its kind in the country (Swaziland). An initiative by the F.E.A has seen the Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education being designed in collaboration with the University of Swaziland. It is hoped that the degree program will be offered by the University of Swaziland on both part time and full time basis.

The centre is currently working on the possibility of establishing a Primary School beginning in January 2011. The preparations are at an advanced stage indeed.

Also, the Centre has applied for Affiliation rights to the University of Swaziland and this is still under consideration. The University hasn't approved the application but the centre is optimistic that the response will be positive.

Challenges

After funding from Norway we struggled to run the institution in our first year.

Following the move by government to take over the present (Helemisi) premises, a site opposite the present one was identified to build there. This process has taken a rather long time but the new centre is now complete and we hope relocation will be effected soon.

The centre has continued outsourcing lecturers from the local Teacher Training Colleges. The lecturers are dedicated and always willing to participate in initiatives of improving the training.

There has been a tremendous response in student enrolment but the greatest challenge is the payment of fees. The students do not have sponsors and they struggle to pay the tuition fees.

The Ministry of Education is in the process of introducing Early Childhood Education in the local Teacher Training Colleges, this has implications for our College, but, it is hoped that this will not threaten our future.

Victories / Successes

As shown in the table above, each year the number of students enrolling for training in our centre are increasing.

- Most of the students who graduate from the centre are highly marketable and this is a positive reflection of our training. Since attaining the diploma status, the products of the centre will be potential candidates for the degree program to be offered by the University of Swaziland. It is hoped that they will be exempted from doing the first year of the four year degree program.
- In line with global technological developments, the Centre has seen it fit to make computer literacy an integral part of the curriculum. Students are taught basic computer skills by qualified I.C.T lecturers from the neighbouring colleges.
- The greatest achievement that has attained is being able to sustain itself through income from its various activities.

2. Karen Christian College- Kenya

By REV. Daniel Ogada

INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Through many decades Early Childhood sector in Kenya has faced many challenges, some of which have led to inefficiency and poor provision of education.

Narrowing the Gap

- ❖ Ensuring quality early childhood education and care to all children irrespective of their status in the society

The Challenges Include:

- ❖ Lack of enough funds to run the programmes,
- ❖ Poor government policy,
- ❖ Health and safety,
- ❖ Lack of trained teachers ,
- ❖ Poverty
- ❖ Among others.

The prevailing Situation

- ❖ Firstly, teachers are regarded as caregivers, if there is no proper training, the lives of the children and the general care giving role jeopardized.
- ❖ Preschool teachers handle a very sensitive age group which requires more care than teaching and therefore proper training is required of them.
- ❖ Secondly, so many issues surround the education system in Kenya, some of which are HIV and AIDS pandemic, Health and safety domestic violence among others, these issues are very sensitive and directly affect the children. Without properly trained teachers, the issues may not be properly tackled.
- ❖ Thirdly, early childhood education in Kenya is organized in such away the curriculum majors on material development that unfolds the potentiality of the children, if teachers are properly trained; this vital element of Kenyan curriculum may be easily ignored
- ❖ Fourth, the gap between the rich and the poor as far as early childhood education is concern is so wide, this is due to the fact that the rich families can afford the high cost of quality

education while the poor may, teachers who are properly trained are required to offer similar kind of education but in informal settlement.

ABOUT KAREN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

- ❖ Karen Christian College is a Christian Institution sponsored by Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya, whose Philosophy is rooted in the Bible and Theological commitment of the Pentecostal Evangelical tradition. It is built on a seven acre farm in Karen area in the Southern part of Nairobi at the foot of Ngong Hills.
- ❖ The College has a 32 years history of training pastors, evangelists and church servants in diverse fields like Bible and Theology, Counselling studies, Community development, Education and Information and communication technology.
- ❖ Karen Christian College was established in 1976 as Karen Bible School by the Scandinavian missionaries as a pastoral training seminary for the sole purpose of training church ministers of Free Pentecostal fellowship in Kenya.
- ❖ The Bible school served this purpose by offering three months short courses until 1989 when the need for a longer period of training was realized and the one year training program was implemented.
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VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission

To provide excellent education and training based on Christian values to serve God and Humanity

Our Vision

Transformative Servant hood training for a better World

Objectives

- ❖ To improve the quality of Early Childhood education in Kenya.
- ❖ To increase literacy levels in the country through a strong foundation in early childhood education.
- ❖ To strengthen the capacity of Karen Christian College as a training college of excellence in the field of education.

- ❖ To increase house hold income of the trained and employed pre school teachers thus reducing poverty
- ❖ To advocate for children's rights through lobbying and networking with other like minded organizations

General Overview

- ❖ The programme began in April 2009 under the supervision of college principle, a total of 34 students were admitted in the same period, and the programme follows the stipulated Kenyan curriculum which takes 2 years for both the certificate and Diploma.
- ❖ So far there are 78 enrolled s

Academic Program Structure

- ❖ The programme has both certificate and Diploma levels. Diploma requires grade C and its equivalent while certificate requires grade D+ and its equivalent. At the end of two years intensive training, the students take a national Exam offered by Kenya National Examination council, a national body in charge of setting and marking of Exams in Kenya.
- ❖ The programme also includes activities such as teaching practice, research projects and practicum. The college also offers an internal examination which is regarded as continuous assessment test by the exam councils.

Students and activities

- ❖ The welfare of the students while in college is highly considered and checked; students are involved other activities such as worship, academic trips among others. Some of the activities during the last one year are as stated bellow:

1. Instructional Assessment

The project has carried out 3 major assessments on students while in field in their various preschools throughout the country. These were done in the periods of October to November 2009, February to March 2010 and in July 2010

2. Staff Training

The project conducted training on the members of staff in October 2009. This was a one week training which took place at the Karen Christian guest house.

The topics covered included: -

- ❖ Marketing Strategies,
- ❖ Incorporating ICT in teaching,
- ❖ The role of the Ministry of Education in Early Childhood Education,
- ❖ Among others

3. Early Childhood (ECD) Workshop

The project carried out an encompassing ECD Workshop in December 2009. This workshop was planned and hosted by the college and invited a number of other ECD colleges within Nairobi and key ECD stakeholders.

4. Educational Tours

In August 2010, the students visited various educational sites around Nairobi the capital city of Kenya. They visited The Bomas of Kenya where they had a chance to see "bomas" from various tribes of Kenya and the cultural activities. They also visited the Uhuru Gardens one of the national museums. This was a relaxing venture out of their busy schedule and also a learning opportunity since most of them comes from very remote areas.

5. Material Development

As an institution that is training preschool teachers, it is very vital for our students to have knowledge and skills of preparing teaching aids. Thus during every session, students take part in preparation of materials after which the lecturers assess and award marks. These are then well displayed in the ECD resource center.

6. Micro-teaching

This is an activity that enhances the teaching skills and methodology in the students. In this activity students organize themselves like a preschool class where one acts as a teacher and others act as the pupils.

This activity is done every once a week in order to ensure that the students acquire the relevant practical skills in teaching.

7. Cultural Day

There is a cultural day within the college where students showcased song, dance, poems, riddles and drama from ethnic communities. It helps in recognizing and appreciating the cultural diversity among the students. It is an enjoyable as well as learning activity as each student identified with their own culture and discovered the culture of other ethnic communities.

Modes of delivery

- ❖ The methods of teaching include; lecture methods which take larger percentage,

Other methods include:

- demonstration,
- educational visits,
- research and
- Experimentation
-

Network and Linkage

- ❖ The programme has enjoyed close relationship and linkages with both internal and external institution and organization, however more linkages are still require to enable the programme have internal feelings



BOKAMOSO EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING

GANTSI, BOTSWANA

By Stella Nguluka

Provide a culturally appropriate and quality Early Childhood Education for all Batswana, especially the minority groups as a platform to enter the formal education system and as a transition into mainstream society

The Bokamoso Early Childhood Development and Educational program is an independent non-governmental organization aiming at educating while conserving the culture and identity of the disadvantaged rural communities of Botswana.

Bokamoso Trust strives to provide culturally appropriate and quality early childhood development education for all Batswana but especially the children in disadvantaged rural circumstances as a foundation to enter the formal education and other transitions in life.

The motto of the Bokamoso Early Childhood Program is 'our Children, Our Education'. It emphasizes the kind of education that we intend to provide- a culturally sensitive education that develops the potential of the child from the early stages to prepare them for self-reliance later in life.

The Bokamoso Program which is BOTA [Botswana Training Authority] registered and accredited provides training suitable for both rural and urban preschool school needs. The Bokamoso program has already proved instrumental in the education and development of the vulnerable children in remote areas, such as the indigenous San and other children in communities that have found the program useful.

Since its foundation in 1983, Bokamoso has continuously sought to build its role as a culturally relevant educational programmed for its target population. Children in the rural areas and especially the San receive quality early education as a foundation to formal learning and other transitions in life through its Early Childhood Training Program.

BOKAMOSO

FOR

- Increased opportunities for all children
- Enhanced self-esteem of all people for self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods
 - Positive living against the dark cloud of HIV/AIDS
 - Economic development by investing in quality childcare



Types of Education Offered

- **Certificate in Early Childhood Teacher Training**

1. In-service – 2 Years

10 weeks of institutional learning for two years with a lot of termly- On-hand support Covers six [6] modules: Child growth, Health, Principles of teaching, Education Personal and Professional Development

2. The Full- Time ECD Certificate- New and extended for 36 weeks [*New development in last two years*]

Explores- Child psychology & principles Of Education, Child health; Religious Studies, Physical Education and outdoor Activities; Creativity; Language; Mathematics; Music, Movement and drama; Environmental Studies; Civics, Personal Development; Teaching Practice

- **Structure**

- ▣ Capacity for 40 students 2 classes
- ▣ Only Twenty students if all seek Boarding
- ▣ Two and half full time staff
- ▣ One part-time
- ▣ Guest teachers

- **Challenges**

- ▣ Sustainability- Bokamoso is an NGO, Non –profit making, seeks funding to give educational grants to disadvantaged rural communities
- ▣ Been granted use of hostel and kitchen to sustain training, but situation not favorable with landlord’s high rentals

☐ Replicating in other areas not financially viable

- **Victories**

☐ 14 preschools started in 14 communities in Ghanzi District because of Bokamoso Training

☐ Over twenty other preschools supported with trained teachers outside Ghanzi

☐ Member of Task Force writing ECD Standards for Botswana.

☐ Good Networking and support



- **NETWORKING, ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

Partnerships:

- National Preschool Development Committee *-remains abreast with National policy issues and other ECD matters- Ministry of Education, Depart of Social Services*
- The Competence Building Networks for Early Childhood Education in South and East Africa'
- *Queen Maude's University College, Norway*
- Tanzania College of Early Childhood, Korogwe
- Saint Mary's College of Education Tanzania
- Free evangelical Early Childhood College, Swaziland
- Namibia Early Childhood Development-NGO association
- Botswana Training Authority
- Kuru Family of Organizations
- Local NGOs working with children
- Kellogg Foundation

NETWORKING PERSPECTIVES





International Cooperation in Early Childhood Teacher Training - for the Best Interest of the Child

Report from the 11th International Network Conference

from 27th to 29th of September 2010

At Queen Maud University College (QMUC), Trondheim, Norway

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Queen Maud's College of Early Childhood Education,
Trondheim, Norway

Stella Nguluka(Ed.)

Bokamoso Early Childhood Training,
Ghanzi, Botswana

**Network for Preschool Teacher Training and Preschool
Development in Southern Africa**

C: Network for preschool Teacher Training and Preschool Development in Africa

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