

A Case Study of Froebel Education in Practice

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ABSTRACT

Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.

Aristotle

The field of education tends to separate early childhood education from adult education as if experience in one has little to do with the other. Indeed, much of a child's early life is a journey of self-discovery that centers on creative, even imaginative, problem solving and self-actualization, qualities that ultimately are fundamental to the life of an engaged and purposeful citizen in our democratic society. As a reflection of this reality, this study will review the philosophy of Frederic Froebel, a German educational philosopher and practitioner through the case study of The Froebel School and Kindergarten.

The purpose of this study is to identify characteristics of the Froebel philosophy that can motivate and empower young people towards self-determination, a personal desire to reach their best potential. The case study used current and past teacher, parent and past student interviews that highlighted recurrent themes of co-construction, self-activity, and reflection. The narrative of Dr. Barbara Corbett, a Froebel practitioner for sixty years and the Director of The Froebel School and Kindergarten supported the case study.

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Introduction

The rationale for this study has come from my past experience as a Froebel teacher that has had a profound influence on my view of what it is to be a teacher and a learner. As a young student teacher my first experience was at The Froebel School and Kindergarten. Froebel's educational philosophy argued that the early years of a child's education are the most important foundation for all later learning. Children develop ideas and connections from their own experience, and then develop relevant cultural knowledge through observation, activity, and discovery. Froebel took the naturalism of Rousseau and core ideas from the educational practice of Swiss reformer Pestalozzi and created a learning environment based on spontaneous and joyful self-activity. Froebel's vision of a good education is dependent on the careful notice, fostering, development, strengthening, and cultivation of the feeling that the child understands he or she is a whole, yet a part of all life.

My graduation from Queen's University in the early 1980s brought me to my own practice as a Froebel kindergartener (the term used for a Froebel teacher). This private school located in a suburban Ontario city, first opened its doors in the basement of a nearby church in 1950. The open classroom and child-centered activities were a positive and invigorating experience. I had the responsibility of a four to seven year old group, co-teaching with an experienced Froebel kindergartener. The respect and energy of the multi-age student groupings and collaborative peer teaching style fostered a dynamic, collaborative, and creative setting. This experience illustrated to me that children have the natural curiosity and ability to question in their own environment, seek answers, and given supportive conditions will take responsibility for the active learning process.

This first experience contrasted with my recent career as a music specialist in a large public school system in suburban Montreal. I had the opportunity to work with students from kindergarten to grade six in another dynamic and creative setting. There were basic differences in administrative directives and peer teacher relationships but the most blatant difference was in the expectation and delivery of teaching style. My experience in the public school system was of a teacher-led, systematic reiteration of information and facts that in turn would be assimilated by the students. In contrast, Froebel emphasized a student driven transformation through play, first hand experiences, self-chosen activities, and intrinsic motivation. This activity models a learning ideal that celebrates creativity, autonomy, the development of critical thinking skills that encourage students to reflect, and learn from their own work, all of which are significant elements of life-long learning. Can an educational philosophy that was developed over one hundred and twenty five years ago be relevant to classrooms today? What are the qualities that Froebel's philosophy can instill in students that promote life long learning skills?

Chapter 1 Froebel Philosophy

The genuinely healthy child will always be active; he will employ himself.

Why? He wishes to make something so his inward desire may also appear externally. He wishes that what is hidden within him, and lives in him, may also outwardly exist. (Froebel, 1885, p.59)

In this chapter I will explore the foundations of Froebel's educational philosophy. The origins of a child centered education can be traced back to the Enlightenment period of the late eighteenth century that introduced the idea that education could play a role in the social and human development of the individual. Prior to the nineteenth century, education took place in a variety of settings, home, church, by private tutors or tradesmen, and in public or free schools. In 1830, the development of the common school movement brought about rapid changes in the structure of schooling to reflect graded levels of attainment, transmission of specific knowledge and common values by professionally trained teachers.

Methods and content strictly adhered to routine and tradition, allowing for neither a consideration of the individual child nor their inherent capabilities. The dominant historical practices valued content over process and memorization over conceptual understanding. The expectation was that school should prepare young people for life and work. The curriculum was geared toward the acquisition of subject knowledge and negated the value of intrinsic motivation, creative inquiry, and reflection. Challenges to the teacher-centered classrooms of the nineteenth century reflected the nature of the tensions that existed between individual and group goals, scientific efficiency, creative expression, and socialization (Apple, 2000; Boyden, 1990; Bruner, 1996). Rousseau (1762) challenged the role of education in stating the task of education was not

to conform to society's rules and conventions, but to enhance individual liberty and self-expression. Rousseau was the first educational philosopher to examine the requirement for the educator to know, understand, and coax their students' unique nature into a means and a goal to develop full potential.

Pestalozzi

According to Heafford (1967), Swiss educational philosopher Heinrich Pestalozzi followed and expanded on Rousseau's concepts with the idea that education must harmonize with the natural world and advocated that each child should continue on a progression of simple to difficult tasks. Pestalozzi introduced an innovative and spontaneous classroom method, which relied on the approach of learning by doing (Heafford, 1967). A progressive view of child development included the value of intrinsic motivation, which led to activities based on personal exploration. As children develop, Pestalozzi considered they internalized these processes and used them as tools for problem solving and self-regulation, or the ability to return to the original idea and revisit strategies for providing solutions. Pestalozzi believed the cornerstones of an educated, moral and social community lay within the interconnectedness of Man, Nature and God. In this aspect the social nature of school, and the importance of peer interpersonal relationships supported a communal culture.

Froebel's Journey

Frederic Froebel (1885), an educational philosopher and practitioner argued that the early years of a child's education are the most important foundation for all later learning. He was a product of his time; the general political and social conditions of Germany were reconstructive

and community minded. The conviction that children are naturally creative individuals and through play become aware of their place in the world led to his central element of his pedagogical system, which is that of self-activity.

Froebel began his intellectual journey to a place he was to call the child's garden. The analogy of the garden was instrumental to Froebel and his teaching. We see the importance of the metaphor in many of Froebel's writings of the bud and the plant, the significance of the garden, and nature as the manifestation of the spiritual. "Froebel believed that the educator's primary concern must be the growth of relationships" (Lilley, 1967, p. 19). The garden plant grows from the seed, inside out, its roots and outside stimulus as important as the seed itself.

For example, the plant may grow, but it may be stunted from lack of appropriate sun and water. The roots, not visible, play a vital role in the health and growth opportunity. The child's idea made into self-activity is the seed that will prosper with proper nurturing. Educators can be seen as the gardeners that bring out the basic endowment that children possess and nurture those aptitudes to allow intelligence and potential to grow. The spiritual side resonated with Froebel's belief in the value of personal place and social community, which underlined the importance for the child to understand that he is part of a whole and yet whole himself. Everything in the universe is part of the whole: each individual has a relationship to each other as a member of a larger human community.

The kindergarten was to be an institution where the child could congregate with his peers outside the constraints of family and formal schooling. In Froebel's vision, "the child would develop naturally, while the teacher kept out of nature's way defending the happiness and rights of children" (Shapiro, 1983, p. 188). Games and folk tunes included in Froebel's early kindergarten were those he observed as popular among children during their social play (Kilpatrick, 1916; Weber, 1969). The physical environment of the child's garden was to be free of

clutter and the trappings of the adult world so as not to restrict children's self-activity (Shapiro, 1983). Kindergarten was to be the bridge between home and school. The primary purpose was social in order to cultivate in a child the move from an egocentric position to an awareness and consideration of others. These social processes illustrate to children how they may contribute to and shape a group activity and see others do the same.

The three roots of Froebel's philosophy were: response, relationship, and responsibility. Froebel believed that guidance based on an idea put forward by the child could lay the foundation and cultivate a child's capacity for will and action. Froebel had a high regard for children and the process of childhood. It is in this regard that he deemed play as an extension of life itself. Froebel believed children discover their environment through personal ways of action, otherwise known as self-activity. This self- activity or play creates an opportunity for the child to understand the external world and how physical qualities react with one another. From these reactions a child experiences themselves as an agent, capable of initiation, completion, and skill development.

Play itself has an elusive definition and embodies different components for different people. Garvey (1991) suggests that play is an attitude that can manifest itself in many attitudes or actions. Chazan (2002), a child psychologist who interprets child play as a measure of child development provides a descriptive and perceptive definition of play:

Playing and growing are synonymous with life itself. Playfulness bespeaks creativity and action, change and possibility of transformation. Play activity thus reflects the very existence of self, that part of the organism that exists both independently and interdependently, that can reflect upon itself and be aware of its own existence. In being playful the child attains a degree of autonomy sustained by representations of his inner

and outer world. (p.298)

Froebel emphasized the importance of children's interaction with their physical and social environment, especially the social collaboration with their peers that encourages children to observe and evaluate other children's play. In recognition that man is a social being, Froebel believed that children were strengthened by their common play and efforts to build stories and actions together. Children themselves have their own definitions of play where they create roles, use symbols, define and redefine objects, transform ideas, and determine action based on negotiation and shared meanings (Bruce, 2011).

Maria Kraus-Boelte (1892) introduced Froebel philosophy to North America in the early nineteenth hundreds and taught in a Froebel Kindergarten under the tutelage of Bertha Ronge, one of Froebel's own pupils. Her observations have been compiled into two volumes of valuable experience as a Froebel Kindergartener. According to her notes:

Individual and concerted action alike bring out the creative powers, develop the faculties, and give the children confidence and self-reliance, while developing their characters as social beings who have enjoyments and interests in common with each other and with all mankind. (p.74)

Froebel's Gifts

In order to facilitate his educational principles, Froebel took seven or eight years to design a set of toys, which he called gifts and occupations created to encourage design and discovery. Froebel did not invent anything new, rather he used his observations of games and behavior as a means to educate and develop a child's potential. The gifts follow a specific order

of progression, founded in geometrical shapes and materials that invite creative self-activity and challenge the symmetrical development of mind, body and spirit (Froebel, 1895, p.58). In all play with the gifts, three ideas take shape; beginning with forms of life, which surround the child, forms of beauty, which is acknowledged by the child, and forms of knowledge, which are practiced by the child. In the early years it is acceptable to have the child imitate use of the gifts as they see others play because speech and repetition are elementary forms of education. According to Kraus-Boelte, “Your play with the child must always be in the nature of transmissions and suggestions, which promote healthy growth [...] You must not envelop the child, you must develop it” (1892, vol.1, p. 44).

The first gift is the ball or sphere, made of soft wool in the six colors of the rainbow, a reflection of the natural world. This gift prompts a child to recognize color and texture, but by its many kinds of movability, the ball stimulates the child’s impulse to play. The gifts progress next to different set of wooden cubes, nested quadrilaterals, and triangular shapes, in increasing order of complexity. The children will recreate forms that they know from experience and what is most familiar to them, such as houses or furniture that they will rebuild over and over with small adjustments or additional features. Children will be encouraged to talk about their creation, anticipate questions, listen to and observe peer creations. These gifts reflect the many sides of perspective and allow the child to contemplate and physically manipulate the pieces to create a story or picture. These creative sessions give the child many opportunities to give voice to his or her own observations and feelings with limited means.

The gifts move on to what are referred to as occupations, with the use of sticks, points, lacing, weaving, modeling, stage and musical plays. The main difference between the gifts and occupations is that in the occupations there is a transformation of the material itself. For

example, the first occupation is the act of perforation, where the point is used to create a child's invention with the use of concentrated execution (i.e., precision is important), distance, direction as well as eye-hand accuracy and strength. The occupations depend on the mathematical principles of accuracy, neatness, precision, quickness, and delicacy of manipulation (Kraus-Boelte, 1892, vol.2, p.29). Drawing has been defined as "the expression of thought by means of lines" or as a "visible presentation, upon a surface, of our conception of form" (p.29). Folding, another occupation unites the elements of form and color; and teaches accuracy, neatness and industry (p. 253). Paper folding offers instruction in numbers, fractions and angles; for the paper of folded and refolded, divided into halves and quarters and on. It may be expressed that "much in little" can be said of this occupation (p. 301).

To give them habits of work and industry seemed to him so natural and obvious a course as to need no statement in words. Besides, the child that has been led to think will thereby, at the same time be led to industry, diligence – to all domestic and civic virtues. (Froebel, 1885, p. 55)

In the kindergarten, or the foundation years (i.e., three to seven), the principal consideration is the child, the strengthening and drawing out of his true nature. The school (i.e., eight to thirteen years) is focused on connecting the perception and comprehension of an object, its properties and relationships to other objects in the environment. Beneath the layers of symbolism, Froebel's philosophy supported the child's developmental process through natural play (self-activity) and activities that strengthened the relationship of the individual to the greater society (Kilpatrick, 1916). Froebel challenged education to be more than isolated facts and unrelated knowledge, but instead an active result of multi-disciplinary exploration. "If we

cultivate the heart as well as the mind and spirit, we develop in the child a harmony of desire, thought and deed; a unity of feeling, thinking and action” (Corbett, 1980, p. 58). Every part of this activity is on a continuum, that can be compared, classified, organized, and connected by the child to determine order and understanding. Each gift exercise should be treated individually and appreciated for its own value, and the value that the child is able to perceive.

The truth is that the child develops itself naturally only through creative activity. For that reason the child plays with so much earnestness, because in its play it sees its very work. By its play, it is entertained, occupied, satisfied, and exhausted, until by rest called up to renewed activity. (Kraus-Boelte, 1892, Vol.2, p.372)

Froebel’s Influence

Froebel had an influence on philosophers such as Vygotsky, Piaget, and much later, Dewey. Vygotsky was instrumental in developing the idea of imagination in action, whereby the child moves beyond the reality of here and now and into what might be (Bruner, 1996). Rules of play are constructed from memory or experience such as creating a broom out of a stick, and often replayed in different scenarios to find alternate meanings and or representations. Vygotsky also supported the importance of interpersonal relationships in identifying multiple perceptions. Vygotsky’s pedagogy is an integrated theory that states as children develop they gradually internalize the processes they use in a social context and begin using them as tools for problem solving and self- regulation. Vygotsky’s perspective may be supported by the view that learners benefit from the collaboration of others, problems that are solved jointly, and by interacting with the physical world around us. Vygotsky developed the theoretical zone of proximal development, which framed the issues surrounding learning and development especially in consideration of school aged children. In Vygotsky’s words the zone of proximal development is

“The distance between actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peers” (1978, p.89).

Piaget (1973) believed in the power and potential of the human spirit to define the possibilities of each person. Piaget reimagined education not as a traditional practice but as a topic of learned intellectual study where the individual is at the center of meaning making. In Piaget’s terms the principle of active methods is expressed as “To understand is to discover, or reconstruct by rediscovery, and such conditions must be complied with if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and creativity, not simply repetition” (Piaget, 1973, p.20). Influenced by Kant, Piaget saw young children’s play as a spontaneous expression of their own experience.

Dewey

Later, Dewey presented his philosophy of education of children as active rather than passive beings, capable of reflective and responsible reactions to the external world. His argument was that children’s interests should be taken directly into account in constructing a course of study in order to capitalize on personal potential. While experience is central to Dewey's philosophy of education, all experiences do not have equal educational value. Dewey placed relevance on the children’s interests but maintained students should not control the curriculum thereby creating “a free flow of experience and acts which are immediately and sensationally appealing, but which led to nothing in particular” (Dewey, 1962, p. 436).

Dewey's philosophy of education provided the child- centered pedagogy that the progressive educators were looking for at the turn of the century. “It may be summed up by stating that the center of gravity is outside the child himself” (Dewey, 1956, p.34). In keeping

with the kindergarten's heritage of child-centered active learning, the most valued component is not the teacher's instruction, but rather the child's construction. Self-activity creates learning opportunities that are constantly shifting, to be manifested time and time again, with adjustments to new and perhaps altered situations.

The influences of a child's close relationships with the adults who care for him or her are particularly important to the formation of behavioral patterns and cultural attitudes. The merits of trust, faith, and love are instinctive, as a child loves before he thinks or acts. Children have a natural curiosity and inclination to demonstrate activity, curiosity, creativity, and the discovery of their own essential goodness. Pestalozzi and Froebel believed that children should be involved in their own education and guided toward answers by using their own powers of observation, analysis, and reason. This requires a reflective and sensitive practitioner, more a guide or facilitator, rather than an instructor. A nurturing practice builds a climate of trust and openness, where students feel safe and secure. Froebel states the teacher's role is to enrich and foster a child's self-activity by observation and reflection of a child's true vision.

Froebel emphasized the value of play as an integrating mechanism that stimulates language in addition to unity of feeling, thought, and action. Eric Erickson, a developmental psychologist, has written about the ability of children to develop a desire for choice. This desire will manifest into action and will continue to shape a child's self-esteem and sense of pride throughout their lives (Erickson, 1963, p.252). Choice is also examined in the theory of decisions of principle. Explained by Dewey, it is understood that every decision has a generalized application so it is not restricted to its own situation. This premise offers the condition that a child's experience should create activities that are reflective of relevant circumstances including

social norms and expectations. Knowledge becomes one between act and consequence developing in the process a meaning of foresight or understanding of what could or should occur in this situation. Given that there may exist in a young child some fear or even disappointment that choices do not provide outcomes as expected, the desire to persevere and commit to a project needs faith and courage to navigate the possibilities. Perseverance becomes characteristic of internal motivation. Froebel believed that children learn best from self-directed activity that is linked to intrinsic motivation. Motivation is the process of initiating, sustaining, and directing activity (Garvey, 1991). This self-motivation is the key to provide children with the ability to withstand failure and the personal fortitude to enable the learning situation.

Present Day Froebel Educators

More recently, Corbett (1980) and Bruce (1991), both authors and Froebel educators, promote creative play as a natural and intrinsic activity which allows children to initiate, negotiate, arrange, and rearrange to bring to bear a shared and personal knowledge from experience (Bruce, 1991, p. 70). Play allows abstract ideas to create form and make ideas tangible. Children can adopt roles to make sense of social values and customs and create possible outcomes without penalty (Tovey, 2013). The student has ownership of their ideas and it is this intrinsic motivation that provides a meaningful and complete learning process. The child will develop a responsibility toward his own work that in turn will create opportunities for reflection and regulation, two important qualities towards strategic learning. This is not a permissive education. Autonomous students manage to be actively attentive and can perceive an alternate course of action. “Individuals must be equipped to reflect upon the knowledge structures we provide, to identify themselves with respect to them and to those around them” (Greene, 1978, p.122). The social aspect towards promotion of teamwork and collaborative practice prepares

children for future challenges in learning as well as encouraging empathy, creative problem solving, acceptance of different perspectives, active listening and communication skills.

Can a Froebel philosophy exist in school and society today with the understanding of the value that schooling places on education in multiple roles with multiple expectations? How can the perceived conflict between the desire to provide society with skilled, competitive workers and the desire toward a humanistic approach that values the potential of an individual be addressed? What is a valuable education and what counts as success? The increased expectation that education should follow a business plan that extols productivity, financial accountability and uniform results. This market-based system dictates a culture of organizational bureaucracy and devalues not only the professional role and impact a teacher has in his or her classroom but also the human side of education that cannot always be translated into monetary value. What have been the influences that have diminished the creative side of education? Have these influences established themselves so firmly into educational practice that change is not possible? These are questions that are necessary to consider when analyzing how society, particularly its mores and values, shapes educational policy.

Chapter 2 School and Society

Man is developed and cultured toward the fulfillment of his destiny and mission, and is to be valued, even in boyhood, not only by what he receives and absorbs from without; but more by what he puts out and unfolds from within himself. (Froebel, 1885, p.278)

What is the purpose of an education? Is it the acquisition of knowledge, a comprehensive set of skills or the development of human potential? Can all three objectives be met in combination or does this suggest a set of priorities constantly shifting to meet societal expectations? This chapter will examine social trends and practices that have influenced the role of education, and the impact they have had, particularly in elementary education. Society's desire to compete on the international stage, the injection of government stimulus toward reform, and the declining impact of family and teacher influence have considerable bearing on the perceived role of education.

The position of school in society today has not changed much over the years since the industrial era that trained workers for prospective roles in society (Apple, 2000; Peters, 2011). Children come to school to learn but schools do more than impart knowledge. They provide norms of behavior, codes of values, as well as skills and information needed for citizenship in a democratic society. School represents the only public institution that stands between family and public responsibility. In this view school becomes a mechanism for social control as well as a primary distributor of dominant cultural knowledge. The collective desire towards productivity, competition, and economic prosperity has overwhelmed the desire to nurture in children the characteristics of cooperation and community (Apple, 2000; Boyden, 1990; Bruner, 1996). The

humanistic goals of education, which emphasize learning for personal development within a democratic society, have been undermined and devalued by a *neo-liberal* system. A neo-liberal system refers an economic and political view that values the policies of a free market society under the guidance of a strong political will. This affects the education process primarily by creating schools that reflect a formal curriculum that is standardized in order to capitalize on legitimizing a dominant and competitive view of society (Apple, 2000; Peters, 2011).

Social Influences in Education

As society moves forward into a global and technological era there has been a shift in the view of the role of education. We live in a global world, with a diversely talented population, and an immense propensity for rapid change. This technologically driven exchange demands a competitive, creative, and timely response. However, the dominant educational paradigm still focuses on what students know rather than how they use that knowledge. Education has promoted social stability and material progress rather than what might promote individual happiness of self-determination (Greene, 1978, p. 61).

As stated within the basic United Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26 (2), “education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening or respect for human rights and freedoms”. The ideas, skills, beliefs, and values all contribute to a disciplined way of integrating a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The way that learners use this common knowledge becomes a practice of democracy, of participation and understanding. As learners become more competent and confident, they are able to participate in cross-curricular study, within multiple contexts, and lay the foundation for more mature and complete thought and action (Anning, Cullen, & Fleer, 2004).

If the aim is to develop individuals to the utmost of their potentialities, then a society of free individuals in which all, through their own work, contribute to the liberation and enrichment of the lives of others is the only environment in which any individual can really grow to his full stature. (Dewey, as cited in Edwards, 1996, p.9)

School Culture and Curriculum

What is a rich and relevant curriculum in contemporary society? The values that support society are incorporated into the everyday life of the classroom. This transfer of values is significantly influenced by a school culture. School cultures are unique to every community as a community often negotiates, and often influences what is emphasized in school curricula due to community and moral values. Deal and Peterson (2009), researchers on organizational culture, define school culture as an "underground flow of feelings and folkways wending its way within schools" in the form of vision and values, beliefs and assumptions, rituals and ceremonies, history and stories, and physical symbols" (p. 9). According to Deal and Peterson, research suggests that a strong, positive school culture serves several beneficial functions, including the following:

- Fostering effort and productivity.
- Improving collegial and collaborative activities that in turn promote better communication and problem solving.
- Supporting successful change and improvement efforts.
- Building commitment and helping students and teachers identify with the school.
- Amplifying energy and motivation of staff members and students.
- Focusing attention and daily behaviour on what is important and valued (p.9)

School cultures respond not only to academic performance indicators but are influenced by practitioner bias, and a set of community beliefs and values that can amplify or undermine the delivery of pedagogy. Many students find their classroom irrelevant to their lives and develop a sense of alienation from their study. Conventional teaching practices have often failed to nurture students' ideas and interests (Goodlad, 1975). The central idea, "is the intrinsic motivation principle of creativity: People are most creative when they feel motivated primarily by interest, enjoyment, satisfaction and challenge of the work itself and not by external motivators" (Amabile, 2012, p.7). Meaning is essential to learning; it is what gives value to the exercise. There should be a blend of challenge and comfort where prior knowledge, interests and strengths are acknowledged. Yet, with increasing demands to get better results, educators have resorted to designing reward systems that recognize an authoritarian and patriarchal education. The contradictions in the classroom mirror what exists in the larger social culture; individual concerns versus collective needs of the group; the devaluation of play in an achievement-oriented society; and the need for utmost efficiency, in terms of time and dollar (Apple, 1996; Penn, 2011). This inculcation of culture is referred to as the hidden curriculum, an interesting topic because it exposes the contradictions within the school system.

The Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum refers to all that which is learned in school but not explicitly taught within the curriculum. George Counts *Dare the School Build a New Social Order* (1969) challenged the nature of Dewey's (and other child development theorists including Piaget and Erickson) hypotheses that all young people travel in a singular path in order to become adults. Counts recognized the reactive, adaptive, and multifaceted nature of learning. The term *hidden curriculum* was coined by Philip Jackson (1968), *Life in Classrooms*, and supports the idea that

an established order or set of values and behavioral expectations are rewarded as an example of good citizenship. The experience that children discover at school is not limited to the classroom; in fact many children are influenced by what goes on in the hall, in the playground, and after school daycare (Jerald, 2006).

Paulo Friere (1970) argues that school is never neutral. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or it challenges the system with a practice of freedom. Children are always learning, but children learn undesirable as well as desirable things, for example, to mistrust as well as to trust, to hurt as well as to help. It is often the teacher that contributes to the beliefs and values that regulate a classroom, and often this is not through conscious action. Teachers' teaching methodologies are rewarded not only by school culture but are inherent and are conditioned by the teachers' own experiences (Cuban, 1984; Chamberlin, 1994; Greene, 1988). Unwittingly, teachers often replicate neoliberal concepts of obedience and conformity by the delivery of these values in learning environments (Greene, 1973; Knapp, 1992; Stromquist, 2007). It is necessary for educators to be aware of their own inherent bias and use of techniques that can further both students' and the teachers' own educational experience. Many teachers prefer students to exhibit traits such as unquestioning acceptance of authority, conformity, and logical thinking because it makes students easy to manage in the classroom (Cuban, 1984; Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1981; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

The Delors Report

The UNESCO Four Pillars of Education documents The Faure Report (1972) "Learning to Be," as a response to concerns about the effectiveness of education in a changing global society. Twenty-four years later the Delors Report (1996), to UNESCO "Learning the Treasure Within" reiterates the main idea: "The physical, intellectual, emotional, and ethical

integration of the individual into a complete man in a broad definition of the fundamental aim of education” (p.156). These reports reinforce the idea that education needs to support the experience of being human, rather than some idea or ideal that is presented by a hegemonic distributor of knowledge. According to the Learning to Be document, education requires sensibility (i.e., sense-ability) and responsibility (i.e., response-ability). There is a difference between learning and engagement. As learners develop confidence in their own decisions, they accept more responsibility and personal power into decision-making skills. This confidence in turn creates a democratic space where students are given the freedom to respond in the manner they feel is right rather than the manner that they expect a teacher wants to hear.

Many educators received these reports with great enthusiasm but there seems to be a contradiction between what is said and what is done in terms of the overall pedagogy of curriculum design and implementation. There is an acknowledgement that education serves as a process of improving knowledge and skills (Delors et al., 1996). This knowledge-rich environment has encouraged innovation, made it possible to incorporate new discoveries and apply them to a multitude of contexts. The limiting factor to this process is that learners need to develop confidence in their own ideas, exercise greater independence and judgment, combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility in the attainment of common goals. I have observed in my experience in the classroom, the opportunities for students to build self-confidence through trial and error, self-discipline through personal projects and self-regulation through reflection and empathy of their own peer group has minimal support. The design and implementation of curriculum still seems to solely support an academic and measurable outcome.

It is an important premise of Froebel’s philosophy that values the whole learning experience and its ability to lift a learner’s self-awareness, self-identity and self-direction. It is interesting to compare the insights delivered from Froebel’s writings in the eighteen-hundreds to

the statements of the UNESCO documents (1972, 1996), which are similar in theory and expectation. These reports reiterate that learning and teaching styles in the constructivist manner are hardly new, but they are difficult to administer, even with the political will.

Play in Education

In practical terms, many theories set forth by historical philosophers have encountered considerable obstacles in today's classrooms. If change toward a true child-centered education is to occur in the school system it is the primary grades that offer the most hope. Students are actively more creative in kindergarten but are socialized out of it by grade one (Epstein, 1999). It is common practice in public schools to use large round tables and open spaces in Kindergarten that promote group play and earnest discussion. There is an emphasis on stations or center play where children decide their activity at an assigned spot in the classroom and move around in timed intervals.

This practice, although still largely teacher-led, is important on two levels; a commitment to the idea of creative play and personal choice, combined with the development of interpersonal skills such as co-operation and consideration. Often the change begins in grade one, when students are placed behind desks, seated in chairs, and expected to conform to rules of the classroom that restrict movement and conversation with few exceptions. There is often a continuation of center work but it is heavily weighted by academic work rather than exploration and solely teacher controlled, by activity and time. However, there is no developmental milestone over the summer holiday that supports the change of practice for these children. The children are the same; it is the expectation of the children that has changed. In a matter of months, children are expected to practice and complete a set of general expectations that have been placed upon them without consideration of their interests or abilities.

These facts (as told by the teacher) were selected with little reference to their actual incorporation in the child's world of experience. Such a selection completely divorced the intellectual content of knowledge from the active experience of the child, robbed it of value to him, and made a bore of learning. (Dewey, 1962, p.10).

Every child has prior learning, a set of attitudes, and a set of skills that they apply to every learning experience (Else, 2009). The creation of new ideas then makes it possible to revise, correct and strengthen the learning experience with personal reflection and feedback. "What we seek in education is the cultivation of intelligence in the variety of forms in which it can operate. We seek to liberate rather than control" (Eisner, 1985, p.48). In my experience classrooms today are resistant to change due to curricular demands, specific knowledge expectations, teacher-led practice, and societal anxiety regarding global competition. The idea of a child-centered classroom is based on a promotion of self-discipline, self-activity and self-motivation. However, these goals are difficult to encourage when societal expectations are primarily academic and based on specific accountable outcomes.

Creative play is a time consuming process and does not always afford a clear path to what is referred to as traditional knowledge. As an educator observing child's play, it is important to reflect and be aware of personal values that may influence or disturb the creative process. Play is a personal, self-motivating activity that should be embraced as a method of ongoing discovery rather than a distinct stage of learning. With that thought in mind, by today's ideals, any creative play is subjective and without substance if it cannot be objective and accountable to curriculum standards. Another deterrent to child-centered teaching is class size. Today in a regular classroom, there are generally twenty to thirty children in a class, based on age group, whereas Pestalozzi, Froebel and Montessori all agree that class size should be a maximum of ten students. Each of these philosophers believed in an open classroom, with several age groupings, non-

graded activities and flexible spaces accommodated to various individualized study units. Today it has become customary for each student to be placed in a grade and be evaluated according to that grade's competencies even though student performance could conceivably be at a multi-grade level.

It is no wonder that some children learn to be passive and adopt a conventional role of acceptance rather than active citizenship. Classrooms are extraordinarily resistant to change due not only to the curriculum demands but also to teacher practices, specific instructional tools, and societal expectations. Schools are conservative, middle class institutions, not amenable to fundamental change (Chambertin, 1994; Goodlad, 1975; Krovetz, 2008). The classroom should accept a culture of resilience and accept that in a learning situation it may be necessary to try, and try again. This culture would promote students' involvement in a meaningful and engaging environment where they are challenged to speculate and act but not be criticized for mistakes or failures.

Educational Reform

There is acknowledgement towards a culture of new forms for learning and doing; however, public opinion stresses a quick fix option. Educational reform is concerned with curriculum change, yet as noted above, schools and education systems are not very amenable to change: they are conservative institutions. Nevertheless, most communities have been subject to fairly regular efforts to reform the system for more than a century. The reorientation and reforms of education seems to be discussed in the language of choice, innovation and relevance, but at the same time it is connected to a disciplinary structure that emphasizes compulsion, uniformity and retrenchment (Sears, 2003, p.191). Play-based learning has emerged as a dominant structure in an effort to negotiate the integration of developmental approaches within standards-based

frameworks. In Ontario, The Pascal Report (2009), “With Our Best Future in Mind”, outlined a comprehensive approach to early-years programming in which play is prioritized as a central mode of learning that “capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance” (p. 26). The Pascal Report is another initiative that gained support as an idea but remained difficult to translate into action.

In recent times, two global paradigms have influenced the course of educational reforms in Ontario and Quebec. The first maintains that knowledge has become the competitive asset and advantage of industrial nations and that a core curriculum of subjects such as math, science, technology, and language proficiency should be at the centre of educational reforms. In the late 1960s, people believed strongly in education’s ability to reconstruct the world and create a just society. The Ontario Hall- Dennis report (1968) reaffirms the desire to use education towards betterment of mankind and asserting that education should promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations (p. 9). In 1976 the Ministry of Education prescribed more attention to standards and rigour as a motion to address global competition.

Further to these initiatives the Ministry of Education promoted a study “Towards the Year 2000” that reiterated a singular purpose towards academic achievement. In a review by the Institute of Education Sciences, it is stated that the OTF (Ontario Teacher’s Federation) and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) have identified a global education project that asserts education must include preparation for the unprecedented rate of change in the modern world and global concepts of social justice, peace, human rights, development and environment belong in the curriculum. The Ontario Common Curriculum Project in 1995 endorsed and recognized the importance of both global economic competitiveness and education for global interdependence. This report was supportive of outcome-based learning with

standardized specific goals in grades three to six. Missing from the final version was reference to a student commitment to peace, social justice, and protection of the environment.

There is a financial burden on the commitment to revise and redesign curriculum. In Canada, educational funding falls into two categories: publicly-funded and parent-funded schools (i.e., private, independent, and alternative progressive schools). Although there is no single, unifying philosophy that guides publically-funded education, the underlying belief is that a free, accessible, and high-quality education is a public good and civil right (Pascal Report, 2009). Parent-funded schools are schools in which parents pay directly for their child's education through tuition and other admissible fees. The late 1990s saw further cuts to educational spending and more emphasis on privatized spending as well as a devaluation of the teaching profession as seen by the effort to allow uncertified teachers into the profession (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 320).

The reports from this decade were left fallow mostly due to the fact that no strategies or structures were put in place to facilitate change. Instead these reports have relied on school boards and administrators to execute the ideas, without governance or support. This trend continues today with the issuance of another policy document (Education Quality and Accountability Office 2010), "Growing Success," that addresses the role that assessment (i.e., standardized testing) can play in the improvement of student learning. In continuing to support a narrow utilitarian view of education, the public's priorities for reform remain mostly technical: instituting provincial and national assessment (SAIP), subscribing to national learning targets in education, and centralizing educational governance and power (O'Sullivan, 1999, p.321).

Parallel to the reforms instigated in Ontario are the competency based assessment reforms in Quebec by the M.E.Q. (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec; Ministry of Education, Québec, 2005). Reacting to the public's increased desire to instil and promote democratic values in tandem with academic excellence, this ministry document commits to the success for all, the

development of competencies, integrated learning and evaluation in the service of learning. The development of a range of competencies give the educator opportunity to place the student on a sliding scale of success for a specific task, reasoning that not every student is at the same place in their learning curve as others. Much of this assessment has been executed with little formal training for the teachers and less communication to parents (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010). For example, intellectual competencies draw on attitudes such as open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity, willingness to make an effort and intellectual rigour. These competencies are fuelled by the love of learning, the desire to succeed, the need for autonomy, and creativity.

The keywords in this program are not fully understood nor supported by educators in regular class activity, much less assessed in a meaningful way. The Quebec reform document calls for active participation by students, but allows teachers to choose their pedagogical approach based on a historical curriculum design. There exists a dichotomy in what is said and what is being done in the classroom setting. So many changes, with minimal support, will require time, trial and error. Unfortunately the growing public demand for accountability is the loudest voice in the room. Implementing education reform that stresses the development of interpersonal and cross-curricular competencies demands a renewed commitment from all levels of professionals in the field as well as the public domain.

The dominant assumption towards educative reform is to change the behavior of the teacher but the reforms are not teacher initiated. Governments are relying on strategies such as compliance and control such as legislation, inspection, and funding based on performance in order to implement reforms. These initiatives follow an authoritative and non-consensual direction that creates the environment where the teacher has limited decision- making options.

When people have the opportunity to participate in decisions and shape strategies that virtually affect them, they will develop a sense of ownership in what they have determined and commitment to seeing that the decisions are sound and the strategies are useful, effective and carried out. (Krovetz, 2008, p. 107)

As the imposition of change increases on a regular basis, teachers begin to withdraw their interest and any investment to the idea of reform. Schools can sustain reform efforts if there is investment and capacity building of teacher knowledge, skills, dispositions and views of self. (Hargreaves et al., 2001, p.159). Change involves an intense time factor; quick fixes are not usually effective (Mills, 1996). Change can be expensive and if not supported financially will not succeed. Change involves a consensus of all involved parties and should be introduced as a primary awareness. “Actively involved in governance, including setting learning goals, the distribution of power among teachers and students provides the basis for collective learning, civic action and ethical responsibility student agency comes from a pedagogy of lived experience” (Giroux, 1997, p. 267).

From a business perspective, taking charge of education means simplifying and standardizing results because comparative assessment has become the single most important ranking factor in the educational establishment. This narrow view of a business oriented, economic driven enterprise has reinforced this era of national goals, national standards, report cards, and national curriculum. The education system is held against the idea of “performativity”, a business model based on increasing a system’s performance (Stromquist, 2007, p. 6). The dominance of performativity assumes that outcomes can be explicitly identified, attributed, compared and measured, as education is a means to an end (Kelchterman as cited in, Butcher &

McDonald, 2007, p.37). The pressure of accountability reinforces the disregard for an experiential education as well as diverts attention away from the social, cultural and political patterns of belonging to a community (Gruenwald, 2003, p.620).

The instructional practices that encourage and reward obedience, uniformity and productivity prepare children for effective participation in a bureaucratic nation (Greene, 1988). A traditional school organization, based on a historical precedent, places rigid grade assignments based on age rather than ability on a year -to -year continuum (Fleming, 1974). This places a priority on cognitive development, specific subject skills, and a goal of institutional accountability. Educators in most provinces of Canada use the results of province-wide tests in combination with other important information, such as demographic information, to help improve student learning and achievement. According to a survey by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO, 2010), more than ninety five percent of elementary school principals and eighty percent of grades three and six teachers use EQAO test results to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in reading, writing and math programs. The cost in the classroom associated with the compliance of these standardized tests is the obvious time factor, primarily teaching to the test education (i.e., teachers go to a course to learn the test), student preparation, writing and teacher marking of the test.

These provincial standards have created a classroom environment where a disproportionate amount of time is spent teaching the test requirements prior to exam schedules. The scores on high school performance tests predict future success and opportunity at a university level. The greater the competition for academic placement, the more conservative and cautious the secondary school program is. At all levels of education, the achievement of quantifiable standardized test results, competencies and compliance determine success of a capable but passive student. This success is measured numerically as grades, but denies the

importance of the ability to transform knowledge according to an alternate context. The impact of testing on the curriculum places those subjects on the test to become more important in classroom time, energy, and content. The results are published for public scrutiny and used in the ranking of not only student achievement but as reflection of teacher and school educative ability. A part of the reason that language and math are emphasized is because they lend themselves to objective testing. The intelligence required to write a poem, perform music or create visual art continues to be a product-based, subjective assessment.

Role of the Teacher

There are different approaches to learning and different forms of instruction, from imitation to discovery to collaboration. Each different teaching style makes assumptions about the learner and challenges to the educator to provide situations that motivate and stimulate. The premise of a social constructivist model is based on the assumption that all learning is social in nature (Hogan & Pressley, 1997). Starting in kindergarten the social role that school plays can have a significant impact on how a child learns. The social environment can stimulate a sense of collaboration and challenge ideas by actively sharing and listening to new ideas. The students are able to accept more responsibility, initiative and competence when creating their own peer group modules for learning.

The promotion of collaborative practices and teamwork prepares students for work in organizations that need to be effective in creative problem solving and the acceptance of different perspectives. It is the creative idea that is owned by the child and in following this idea from start to finish; it is thought that constructive habits will develop. Learners have to be able to connect new material, restructure their understanding and challenge themselves to find how the information makes sense. Initially it is the teacher who is guiding the activities, but eventually it

is the learner who accepts responsibility. The educator is charged with actively observing and listening intently to the ideas and stories proposed and, if necessary, navigating the discussion into valuable learning situations. The challenges are inherent in the ability not to interfere or take control but allow the student time to develop or expand their ideas on their own. The term, *Padaiea Proposal*, popularized by Adler (Costa, 2008, p.22), is an ideal concept of school where self-development and intellectual empowerment is combined towards a culture of life long learning.

Debate surrounding the role of the teacher has been lively since Froebel's time. Essentially, the pendulum of advice for teachers has swung from teacher-centeredness to a child-centered approach. Even while a child-centered approach has dominated the discussion, it has also been the case in many parts of the world that what goes on in classrooms tends to be teacher-centred. Froebel was, of course, one of the first to clarify what a child-centered approach consists of in terms of how a teacher is to behave in the classroom, in his or her interactions with children. Many others have followed suit, as the following paragraphs illustrate.

Piaget, Dewey and Froebel advocated for teachers' use of experience, genuine reflection, meaningful dialogue, and importance of purpose. This practice observes a philosophy of partnership between teacher and student with the realization that:

- 1) Children can reflect and make decisions,
- 2) Learning involves emotions, feelings, perceptions and thoughts and none can be separated from the others,
- 3) Children are born with a curiosity and an urge to learn,
- 4) All children have an individual voice and a view that they can use, and

5) The best learning for the child is when he or she has ownership and investment in that learning (Ingram & Worrall, 1993, p. 14)

This value of co-construction in daily activities provides opportunity where content becomes more than information; it becomes a clarification and integration of a shared experience. Paulo Freire, an educator who criticized conservative pedagogy, proposed a model, referred to as *Praxis*, where the student experience was dictated by a co-construction of knowledge that was mutually engaged in between student and teacher. Praxis is an educative process that begins with an abstract idea and incorporates reflection and thought into purposeful action (Freire, 1970, p. 58).

This practice assumes the ability of the teacher to balance a set of objectives with an open dialogue with students. The kindergarteners (teachers) practiced play activities as an integrating mechanism for the learning processes (Wood & Attfield, 2005). The simplicity of the Froebel gifts offers a multitude of creative responses where there is no right or wrong answer. This exemplifies the theoretical underpinnings of argumentation as a mechanism to make knowledge more explicit and visible (Bell & Linn, 2000). To be effective at argumentation and persuasion students need to practice to be articulate, to elaborate and discuss towards the evaluation of different perspectives (Jonassen & Land, 2012).

The children share their stories with their peers and then the kindergartner (teacher) weaves a response story to recite back to the children aligning their main ideas. The impulse of the child to create is above all the most carefully and constantly fostered by the kindergartner. Play can promote metacognitive skills and competencies in memory, language, communication and representation. Learners will find freedom in response and action when an educator is open, sincere, genuine, non-judgmental and non-threatening (Longworth & Davies, 1996; Shipley,

2008). Co-construction in turn provides a democratic space, which promotes honesty on both sides to say what the learner thinks, not what he or she thinks the teacher wants to hear.

A democratic space in the classroom is difficult to achieve. Teachers typically feel constrained by time. It is important to recognize the responsibility that teachers assume to ensure that students use their time productively and engage in activities that are meaningful and contribute to academic growth. The finite nature of time is in constant conflict with increasing administrative responsibilities, class size and class diversity that requires specialty planning. Teachers in the public school system indicate that they feel that there is little time for creative and experimental teaching methods and significant pressure to teach the test (Bruner, 1996; Butcher & McDonald, 2007; Smith & Knapp, 2011). Few teachers are able to incorporate student planning of activities because the time spent on developing ideas and the guidance necessary to follow through on those ideas may not always have immediate measurable results. Most teachers I know want to be innovative but are stymied not only by class size and structure, but also by curriculum restrictions and responsibilities managing parental expectations.

In our schools we have professed goals of individual learning, flexibility and originality placed in direct conflict with a classroom operation that conditions conformity, repetitive reproduction of knowledge, and teacher dominance. In a study of over one thousand schools (*A Place Called School*, 1984), John Goodlad exposes a great hypocrisy between the goals of individual flexibility, originality and creativity, and what children actually learn. He states, “From the beginning, students experience school and classroom environments that condition them in precisely the opposite behaviors – seeking the right answers, conforming and reproducing the known” (p.241). The consequence of authoritative teacher-led programs is that children miss out on a richness of the concrete experience that constructs a personally meaningful experience. The

overwhelming sameness in classroom directives conditions a submissive response to follow instructions, without query, in an orderly manner (Goodlad, 1984, p.123).

This classroom management style reinforces the ideas of order and control rather than respect and collaboration. One learns passivity in this context with goals achieved regularly that require repetitive attention to basic facts and skills. Schools are not actively promoting intellectual development, “[...] the ability to think rationally, the ability to use, evaluate and accumulate knowledge, a desire for further learning” (Goodlad, 1984, p.236).

Teaching needs to develop imagination, foster the experiential and encourage risk-taking persistence across subject matter. A teacher’s role in the classroom is one of guidance, exploration and reflection. An important aspect to this role is to practice questioning strategies that encourage children to think and then respond, without judgment. These questioning strategies are modeled and then adopted by the students in their efforts to become increasingly investigative, tolerant and critical in their own thinking. This self-awareness shows children that there is more than one way to solve a problem. The willingness to grow, openness to new experiences and capacity to think for oneself all encourage a creative sense of self. A positive sense of self encourages the development of attributes such as risk-taking, building independent judgment, and a committed resilience in the face of adversity. Creative tasks are by their very nature open-ended and invite a tolerance for ambiguity, sometimes perceived as a loss of control for a teacher.

Far more energy is required from the teacher to manage student creativity and freedom of expression in class. Literature shows that creativity is a complex topic, but relies on both student and teacher engagement and acceptance (Amabile, 2012; Seltzer & Bentley, 1999; Zmuda, 2010). Teaching for creativity needs to develop and encourage imagination, motivate and foster persistence across subject matter (Gabbard, 2014; Smidt, 2011). All individuals are capable of

creativity, but like many other attributes, it needs to be cultivated and engaged in order to flourish. This creative mindset shifts the focus of skills set away from reproducing data analysis to one encompassing investigation of ideas and interests based on personal experience.

Teachers often see creative children as a source of disruption and interference. Kim (2008) draws upon an impressive body of investigative literature to support her conclusion that “Research has shown that teachers are apt to prefer students who are achievers and teacher pleasers rather than disruptive or unconventional creative students”(p. 236).

Teachers need a shift in the way they view themselves, their work and their contribution to the society in which they live. Teachers tend to function independently and in relative isolation from their peers. It has been my experience to see teachers of long standing replicate work assignments year after year, without change, because to accept change would be to accept more time consuming work. As discussed, change takes time and education is a conservative institution. The profession has consented to accept stagnant ideals and resist change because to do otherwise may offend union priorities. Specific time management prerogatives are set by union negotiations for everything from preparation to teaching time to minutes for lunch. In my experience, there is a failure to reward teachers with extraordinary ideas, because they stray from an accepted view of traditional expectations of an educator’s responsibility.

The principles of collaboration, creativity, and co-operation should be reinforced by school boards, and in turn, mentored in the classrooms. There is much to be learned by teacher-to-teacher links. When school boards empower and support individual decision-making and autonomous action by teachers in the classroom, there will result in more innovative and collaborative programs for the students (Giroux, 1987; Greene, 1973). In my experience, they are rare and the opportunities to observe or peer teach are minimal. These links could provide a valuable reflective and genuine collaborative momentum that would serve the profession well.

Teachers should model the habits and actions of a lifelong learner by a commitment of professional and personal development.

Role of Family

There is no argument that much of learning occurs outside the school walls. The family and community have impact on how a child learns as well as what a child learns. It is important to consider the role that parents play in the tension between reforms and maintenance of the status quo. The parents are a contributory voice in the erosion of confidence and devaluation of the teaching profession by their refrain of blame towards teachers for educational failures. Many of today's parents have bought in to the market model of education and are focused on the best career opportunities for their children's futures.

Childhood is no longer a journey of self-discovery and it does not allow time for any activity that cannot be measured. Parents are complicit in over scheduling their children between sports, tutoring and homework, and placing their children in a pressurized skill-based environment where free time is lost time. Even the cultural space for play is being eroded. Swimming pools, skating rinks are being closed and other facilities are charging user fees (Sears, 2003, p.195). The perceived shortfall of non-educative opportunities, such as team sports and music or drama clubs has created an environment where students are strictly scheduled in after school activities. The ability of family to affect development of behavior mores and expectations has declined due to socio-economic pressures. The average family has two working parents, often cut off from extended family and community, and relies on the day care system for child supervision. The fabric of the family, church, and community whose role was to mentor moral and social values of the community has been tested. Instead there are more expectations for the

school to replicate what is deemed to be socially acceptable. Directives initiated by school programs such as religion, morals and community outreach are presently illuminating student attentions to the patterns of belonging in a community. It is important to engage a student within a range of settings, relationships, activities, and skills through which they acquire cultural competencies and identities. This grounding creates a collaboration and connection between people, education, and offers an engaging start to citizenship and a sense of belonging in adult life (Gruenwald, 2003).

There is more to be done in communicating with parents about school reforms and expectations within the classrooms. In general, the parents who participate in active communication with the school, report more knowledge and understanding related to school assessment practices (Deslandes & Rivard, 2013). At the risk of generalizing, parents will get involved if they believe that it is a normal responsibility of parenting and that their efforts will make a positive difference for the child.

The framework of education theory needs to balance the role of content standards with meaningful problem solving and creative thinking exercises. Education reform that relies on standards and testing tends to cut off the process of teaching and learning from a student's learned experience in community life. Those educators who foster creativity in the classroom know that creativity is not an add-on activity performed in the last free moments of the day. Teaching for creativity includes the prospect for students to identify and solve problems from multiple points of view, analyze data and express themselves clearly. Those students who are encouraged to collaborate and co-construct critical arguments, known as collaborative reasoning (Waggoner, Chinn, & Anderson, 1995), will be more likely to engage in their work. A personal desire and motivation to engage in what you learn is the first step to making meaningful

connections to real life and assuming life-long learning models. A collaboration and connection between family, education, and community offers an engaging start to citizenship and a sense of belonging in adult life. A model of negotiation between student and teacher, and student to student, promotes communication, empathy, individualization and a developmental view of skills (Goodwin & Sommerwood, 2012). This model is exemplified by the case study of the Froebel School and Kindergarten.

Chapter 3 Case Study Methodology

On the other hand, what yet is to come out of mankind, what human nature is yet to develop, that we do not yet know, that is not yet the property of mankind; and still, human nature, like the spirit of God, is ever unfolding its inner essence. (Froebel, 1885, p.279)

The rationale for this case study is my personal experience as a Froebel kindergartener in the early 1980s and the contrast in pedagogy to twelve years experience as a public school teacher. In my experience I have witnessed creative and dedicated professional work from teachers who are underappreciated and not supported in a challenging and changing environment. I take the position that teachers, parents, and society as a whole lean towards overscheduling, rewarding conformity, and academic repetition without connection to personal or real world situations. It is these trends that have influenced the devaluation of creative play and self-activity: two qualities of child development that may serve as predictors for life-long learning. The purpose of this study is to identify whether the Froebel philosophy is relevant to educational practice in contemporary times.

This end was accomplished through a single case study of The Froebel School and Kindergarten supported by a historical narrative provided by the founder and director of the school, Dr. Barbara Corbett, who has agreed to be named in this thesis. A case study approach used current and past teacher, parent and graduated student experience and illuminated how this school actively translated theoretical concepts into local practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, all schools have distinct characteristics that influence an organizational culture. This is a case study because it is a study limited to one school. A case study is a qualitative research tool to examine real-life situations and an opportunity to apply ideas and methods in other contexts (Yin, 1984).

The culture and practice are unique in this school; however there were several characteristics that could work in the public school model of today. Froebel's theories come from a set of norms and beliefs based on daily behavior. It is from this cultural context that the self-activity learning models, set of gifts and philosophical traditions create an educational platform.

Setting of the Study

Ontario introduced the Froebel Kindergarten into the public school system in 1887, and it was the first government in the world to do so. Established in 1970, The Froebel School and Kindergarten Education Centre is an independent private school and kindergarten located in a suburban center in Ontario. Dr. Barbara Corbett, founder and director, discovered Ontario's remarkable early childhood educational heritage while studying for her doctoral degree in Education at the University of Toronto. She became dedicated to Friedrich Froebel's educational philosophy and vision for young children.

The learning space at The Froebel Kindergarten and School is an open concept classroom design with several age groupings in the same space. The groupings are divided by kindergarten (age three to five), junior school (age six to nine), and senior school (age ten to twelve). The junior school and senior school are on two levels divided by a staircase on either side of the first level. The kindergarten and junior school shared the same space with several circular tables with children's chairs and many activity areas that are accessible to the students. This physical environment allows the children to explore freely, to be aware of the consequences of their own behavior and to learn at their own rates. This learning environment allows the flexibility for individualized instruction, team-teaching, independent projects and flow of pupil activity. There is ample space for movement and exploration and a wide variety of materials accessible for students' creative hobbies and interests. There are bulletin boards that display student work and

reflections as well as displays of creative building materials. There are areas designed for quiet activities and places for small group activity. There is access to outside areas and the encouragement to use the outdoor environment as part of the child's learning environment. For example, planting a garden may promote activities that stimulate learning in science, economics, mathematics and language arts.

The kindergartener (teacher) is the observer and facilitator of the ideas generated by individual students. These educators gain insight and acquire understanding about each of their students. This process is on-going and reflective. Encouragement for trial and error, and support for curiosity and discovery defines a teacher's respect for the child's efforts. A teacher is the facilitator in guiding the learning activities with a receptive, flexible, creative, and student-centered practice.

With practical reflection the teacher becomes an autonomous person, who can improve their own performance and pursue the possibility that existing practice can be challenged and replaced by alternatives, with no negative impact. Children can learn from observing their educator and peers to determine different perspectives and means of productive thought. Educators use observation to evaluate student interests, attributes, and attitudes. They encourage children to experiment with the meaning and rules of life and stimulate the desire to play to negotiate a better understanding of their world.

The schedule of the day is structured to allow an open concept morning greeting between the kindergarten children and junior students. This morning circle is led by the kindergartener (educator) with an emphasis on songs, current events, and the sharing of personal news. The teachers and children are respectful of their peers and demonstrate age appropriate, but vivid vocabulary in variable subjects. The senior students also commit to a morning circle that is operated more like a business meeting with an agenda, minutes read, and a current events

discussion. In this forum, student talk is greater than teacher talk and the students decide and organize future content to be learned in small group activities. The kindergarteners observe and acknowledge student interests and peer interactions for future guided activity.

Froebel designed a set of “gifts” that give children concrete examples of natural objects used to explore the world around them. The gifts have a logical progression and the child becomes more observant and perceptive with experience, “The child in her play is not whimsical or unthinking. She gives thought to her activity” (Corbett, 1980, p.135). This gift play is fundamental to Froebel’s philosophy because it gives all students equal ability to create their own narrative with simple blocks to make a symbolic story. For the young students, gift play follows circle time. The first step of solitary play is a concrete reflection of what the child has experienced or observed and that information is consolidated, repeated, adapted and accommodated within existing knowledge.

The fundamental impulse to activity creates a self-instruction, self-education, and self-cultivation model, which have far more value to the individual than anything else extrinsically provided (Froebel, 2003). The child dictates the progress of the learning situation and is observed and guided by the educator. The students are expected to follow specific regulations on how to empty the box, create their own picture using their own pieces, wait quietly while others are finishing without discussion, listen attentively to other’s stories, and finish by placing the blocks back in their box in certain order. From this example the children are exposed to not only the creative principles of personal storytelling but also a sense of order, responsibility, empathy, and obligation. The child has many opportunities for decision making in gift play, from what to create, how to create, as well as the narrative that dictates his ideas and how he may defend or explain his creation. These skills are of lifelong importance because no matter what profession a student may enter in the future, the ability to decide, act and defend are abilities that are founded

in self confidence. The gifts allow children to experiment with language, math, science, arts and music in a personal and non- judgmental manner. Older children engage in parallel play and eventually co-operative play where negotiation and compromise add perception to multiple ways of knowing and the construction of shared knowledge. This process refers back to the work of Vygotsky and Piaget; they both emphasized the importance of children's construction of knowledge through interaction with their physical and the cultural environments.

Methodology

A series of one on one interviews, over a three month period with the director of the school provided an in-depth narrative of her experience and observations in her multiple roles of daily teacher, teacher training, and community university education liaison. The interview process was conducted one on one on site, in a private office of the school and highlighted the school culture and experience from an educator's point of view. Each of the five interviews was scheduled for an hour and was audio-recorded and then transcribed into written form. One interview by a past teacher was done remotely using a questionnaire (Appendix 4), due to geographical accessibility. The interviews discussed daily schedules, challenges, administrative responsibility and personal views. The nature of the interviews was semi-structured, that invited opportunity for discussions relevant to their own experience. The questions in the teacher interviews were a practical investigation of daily patterns and techniques used by the kindergarteners educative practice including observation, intuition, and reflection. The semi-structured approach of the interview created a scenario that encouraged story telling. These stories created a rich description of student teacher interactions that added value to the interview process.

An effort was made to include individuals who represented different ages and teaching experience with exposure to kindergarten, junior and senior school practice. There was a combined history of eighty years of Froebel teaching experience between these six women. Two of the women had been trained at the Froebel College in London, England and had practiced in that country for several years. One of the kindergarteners was a trained Montessori early child educator, which differs somewhat from Froebel's philosophy. Montessori education is based on a child-centered approach but is fundamentally driven by the educator's plan of activity. Three other teachers had been with this school for a lengthy tenure (the most senior had a history of over thirty years teaching at the Froebel School and Kindergarten). There was a small sampling of current and past parents of children in the school that was instrumental in highlighting the family perspective. There was opportunity to meet with two past students, who have finished their graduate programs and are now working full time in the field of education. This perspective was useful because the students were able to relay information of not only their Froebel experience, but also their experience transitioning into high school and beyond. The researcher protected the identity of the participants throughout the research process and the case record was created with data combined and presented as a mode.

The study was influenced by the researcher's prior experience as a Froebel kindergartener in the early 1980s and a personal and strong relationship with the director of the school, Dr. Corbett. As mentioned previously in the introduction I was exposed to the Froebel philosophy as a young student teacher. I had the opportunity to teach an early kindergarten class (four to seven year olds) for a year shortly after graduation. In the role of an insider (as a past kindergartener), I came to this study with an experiential bias and a vision of what Froebel could offer the education system. Although I spent only a short amount of time at this school over the timeline of a teaching career, this early experience had a profound effect on how I approached my own

teaching practice. In this study, I had to balance that role to my role as an outsider with a commitment to study the data with fresh eyes. In this effort, I kept a journal that became a reflective exercise of the interviewing process. These reflections became a separate sounding board, and created the opportunity to recall my own experience, some twenty years before. In line with Schofield (as cited Eisner & Peshkin, 1990), qualitative research is a valuable tool to use when inquiring as to possibilities, "to explore possible visions of what could be" (p. 217).

Chapter 4 Findings

At the heart of the education process lays the child. No advances in policy, no acquisitions of new equipment have their desired effect unless they are in harmony with the nature of the child, unless they are fundamentally acceptable to him. (The Plowden Report, 1967: par. 9)

Summary of Findings

The educators were unanimous in their consideration of The Froebel School and Kindergarten as a joyful, unique, and accepting example of experiential education. From the interviews there was an overwhelming commonality that the teachers want to be teaching. This obvious pleasure derived from their work is a very positive attribute. Much of this positive attitude comes from the dedication and confidence of Dr. Barbara Corbett, founder and director of the school.

Director's Interview

There is a language and culture of possibility emanating from Dr. Corbett. A physically imposing figure of over six feet tall, Dr. Corbett embodies a towering intellect with genuine warmth that defines each and every conversation. She is intensely interested in your views and experience and is expressive with a dry wit and sense of humor. Dr. Corbett is a passionate follower of Froebel philosophy having written one book on his philosophy (*Garden of Children*, 1980) and another book in progress.

Dr. Corbett began her personal journey in an experimental model school in British Columbia as a middle school student. Her experience was essentially Froebelian, although

certainly not labeled as such at the time. An educator that celebrated a love of nature and the ideas and energy of an experiential education taught her in a multi-grade classroom.

Each child was developed according to his or her own nature and disposition.

He is lovingly tended, guarded, and cultivated to achieve full potential as plants are when watched over by a faithful gardener. This is why Froebel called his child nurturers Kindergarteners. (Corbett, 1980, p.v)

After her graduate degree and several years of teaching in British Columbia, Dr. Corbett moved to Ontario to pursue her doctorate. She had been exposed to the writings of Froebel and chose to study the history of Kindergarten in Ontario. It was during her first student teaching stage that Dr. Corbett was presented with the strict discipline and parochial nature of public schooling at the time. During my discussion interview with her she told me, “I was assigned to work with a very severe older teacher who used spanking as a method of control. I nearly cried when she advised me that corporal punishment was the only way to master a classroom.” It was a turning point for her, which combined her own experience, her research on Kindergartens and a personal dedication to a child’s education that led her to become one of Canada’s foremost educators on Froebel philosophy. Over the years, Dr. Corbett has remained a purist and persevered to deliver the Froebel method to children and other educators with faith and tenacity. She states that:

Froebel was an educational architect. He suggested that education be organized into four phases: 1) the foundation years between four and seven; 2) the school years from eight to twelve; 3) the high school years from twelve to sixteen and 4) the university years as of age sixteen. His focus was always on the early and school years and made it very clear that it was a beginning point for others to make better. (Corbett, March 11, 2015, personal communication)

In her view, the child was to explore and master the environment, learn to love and serve his fellow man and find harmony in all life. This she says “is a comprehensive view of education from birth throughout one’s lifetime.”

During my own tenure at The Froebel School and Kindergarten I have observed firsthand the care and obvious respect that is shared by Dr. Corbett and the students of the school. As the director of the school she is responsible for its administration of the school, but during the school day she is present in the students’ lives. Dr. Corbett knows all the children by name and greets them with some knowledge of their own experience. It might be, “How is the bike riding going?” or “I loved that short story you wrote on the settling of New France.” Each time the student would beam with pride and share in the knowledge that their person is valued.

The warmth and respect that is shared in these relationships is instrumental in developing a sense of self-worth, motivation and pride. But Dr. Corbett’s generous nature is a foil for a steel-like expectation for acts of kindness, generosity, and empathy towards others. At one point in my student teaching days I had a particularly boisterous young boy who was constantly interrupting during circle time, the first gathering at the beginning of the school day. This transition from home to school at the beginning of the day is especially important to the young students who are still learning what the expectations are in an organized social setting and for the kindergarteners (teachers) who need to know what is important in their students’ lives. I had moved the boy physically from around the circle and placed him in between my legs to try to gain some physical control, if not behavioral control. Dr. Corbett walked by and sensed my predicament. With a crooked smile, she curled her finger in a come here motion and the little boy walked over to her. With her arms firmly wrapped around his body and in a very quiet voice she said, “What is happening here?” The little boy scuffed his shoe on the ground, knowingly. Dr. Corbett continued, “I am very interested to know what the others in circle time are saying. I need to know

that you understand what circle time is all about...do you know what circle time is all about?" He nodded and looked down on the floor. Very patiently Dr. Corbett continued, "Please tell me, what happens during circle time?" All the while Dr. Corbett is holding him, she is firmly waiting for the child to express to her his understanding. It was the most gentle and supportive chastising I have ever witnessed. The show of patience, respect, reflection and the values of empathy are qualities Dr. Corbett mentors with her staff and students by example.

If children imitate whatever they see, we are wise to help them notice things that are good and will further their development. If we need to criticize a child, we must speak to her privately. Only the good should receive public attention. We must be aware of the example we set for children, for they will become what we are. Hopefully, we too will develop qualities of kindness and responsibility, cheerfulness and patience, and perception and awareness (Corbett, 1980, p.106).

Dr. Corbett stresses the importance that education is not confined to formal schooling within walls, "The educational environment can be indoors or outdoors, [...] the foundation is to be broad and visionary. We do not know what qualities lay dormant in a child, so there must be a wide range of experiences if we are to awaken him to life and vigour" (Corbett, 1980, p.113).

The Frobel School and Kindergarten under the directorship of Dr. Corbett is based on the knowledge that play is significant to the child, for it is the way he or she learns and develops most fully. "Each play experience has three dimensions. It develops the whole child, it broadens his vision, and helps him channel his energies" (Corbett, 1980, p.116). Dr. Corbett stresses in every interview that the child is nurtured as a self-active and creative being. She is thoughtful in her explanation that although teaching is an important element of education, the most important is the art and skill of following the child. The interaction between adult and child is critical in a timely response, and the ability to listen and observe and then to speak clearly and distinctly. This

self-awareness is mentioned again in the educators' interviews. One experience will lead to another, although a main idea may be revisited so that the experience becomes more complex, as does the child.

He begins to see relationships, how things fit together, the parts to a whole, cause and effect, and meanings for others and for himself. He is becoming more perceptive and aware. The logical order of subject matter is of little use unless it takes place within the child. (Corbett, 1980, p.151)

As educators we have been trained to take charge of a classroom and to teach a set of standards and expectations. It is a challenge not to come to a student's aid when they are having difficulties and fix the problem. In the Froebel way, a kindergartener will not offer suggestions until the student has exhausted his own resources. It is most important Dr. Corbett advises to instead guide the child; the kindergartener must not do too much and the child too little. She insists that "encouragement draws out the child's effort and thus aids him in his development. The emphasis is not on the result of his efforts, but rather on his striving and doing" (Corbett, 1980, p.155). At the same time Dr. Corbett advises that our demands on the child need to be just and fair. Children need to understand the guidelines that we as adults set and develop self-discipline as a well-exercised skill. It involves choosing a way forward, with effort and respect, in order to accomplish a worthwhile goal.

Learning is not solely for the students. Professional staff development is on going with formal staff meetings monthly and informal school or kindergarten meetings weekly. Led by Dr. Barbara Corbett, the regular staff meetings often identify specific issues in the classroom and generate discussion and ideas to help solve these issues.

The mission statement of The Froebel School and Kindergarten reflects Dr. Corbett's work of over fifty years. The mission statement begins with the child and values the nurturing of

knowledge, compassion, responsibility and creativity. It follows with the connection to family and a greater society and finishes with a commitment “To give fresh vision by making Froebel’s educational theories and practices known” (Appendix 7). Dr. Corbett has been sustained in her efforts with a strong and unfailing Christian belief based on the Golden Rule; to do unto others as we would wish them to do unto us. She claimed, more than once during the interviews, “Words are to be lived out in deeds and such an inspiring motive makes it easier to develop personal attributes of self-discipline, responsibility, and self-awareness.”

Teacher Interviews

The six teachers in this case study reported to be purposeful in their planning and to assume responsibility for ensuring that specific learning experiences will occur in play activity. One such teacher (Teacher 1) had over thirty years teaching at Froebel following a ten-year service in the public school system. She was educated as a student in a Froebel center in Europe and does not have fond memories of the experience. Her recollections of a strict, forceful and narrow education do not match her experience at The Froebel School and Kindergarten. She is in her late fifties, warm and soft spoken, but articulate and formidable in her knowledge of Froebel philosophy. Her two children were educated at the school twenty years ago so her perspective was twofold, as a teacher and as a parent. As a teacher she recognized the challenge in balancing multiple learning styles and varying pace in a small group setting. As a parent she appreciated the value of individual guidance and the recognition of student interests. In her career she has noted a challenge in developing focus and listening skills, “Children are bombarded by information, television and computer games as an example. It is hard for them to focus on simple things. Children have access to too many toys that do not encourage imagination.” This teacher

acknowledges that multiple learning styles are difficult to manage but gift play is essential in learning about the children.

Children learn by example and they watch and listen to each other during gift play. Not only do I watch and learn but the students do as well. During this sharing activity the students learn who is good at certain things and will go to them after the discussion.

(Teacher 1, March 12, 2015, personal communication)

When asked about the value of gift play to an educative practice she comments that it is a learning experience for student and teacher, as long as you are reflective and responsive. “Gift play can be rewarding if you are open to what the children can give.” The idea that children learn that there is more than one way to solve a problem and be open to new experiences, gives a valuable perspective of others and a sense of self was a recurrent theme during the interview process. This kindergartener is charged with the six and seven year old group with seven students. The group is divided into four girls and two boys, in her words, with a pronounced sense of self. She had noticed that one of the boys had moved off topic during gift play and was restless and disruptive. She knew that this child had a fascination with big ships and was reading about the Titanic tragedy.

I made up a story and used similar names for everyone in the group and without pointing out anyone they all knew that they were included. I talked about the captain of the ship, that was me, and how important it was for the crew and the captain to work together. What would happen if they didn't work together? Well, they might hit a rock! All day long the children referred back to the story and were sensitive to its message of co-operation and consideration. (Teacher 1, March 12, 2015, personal communication)

Gift play is an external model of a child's personal experience and an opportunity to work out new situations, emotions and skills. The educators agreed that there is a practice of democratic

sharing in gift play. Even in kindergarten the ideas that are expressed by the students are listened to with a collective and supportive understanding from their peers. Very often, according to the kindergarteners (teachers), students may be criticized or challenged by their peers, but there underlies a compassion and empathy that is a significant quality in human development.

Teacher 2 is an energetic, positive and charismatic young teacher with a Montessori background. This is a philosophy divergent to Froebel's and the teacher is aware of the contradictions. In my opinion Montessori over claims its play theory since the activities are still primarily teacher led and artistic pursuits are not part of the program. Montessori was developed as a means to engage children with intellectual disabilities so that the end result would be they would become more independent. It structures its play model around real life occupations, such as homemaker or carpenter, and provides the students with tools to practice.

I came from a special needs practice to Montessori for several years. The first year I taught at Froebel was spent team teaching with someone who had more experience than me. I was able to learn so much from her and ask questions as they came up. It was really hard because at Teacher's college you are taught to be in charge. I had to learn to rely on my intuition and leave things more open-ended." (Teacher 2, March 12, 2015, personal communication)

Teacher 2 is a Kindergartener to the youngest group of children who are three to five years old in a split morning and afternoon program. This is often the first experience at the Froebel school and the socialization element is very important. Teacher 2 has five children in the morning class and six children in her afternoon class. This teacher has a child as a student in the older grades, which again gives her a double perspective. Teacher 2 referred to gift play as "amazing" because it is a great tool to understand what the child is thinking about. It was noted by the educators that

guidance might be required to initiate conversation because there is a chance that the students will not yet possess the skills. Teacher 2 commented:

You have to really listen to make sure your understanding of the child's story is what they actually mean. It is hard sometimes not to put your own spin on what is being said and more importantly not to direct or change meaning because to do so would be totally out of character with the philosophy. (March 12, 2015, personal communication)

At this age there is a lot of spontaneity and less self-discipline to keep ideas on track. It takes a flexible mind to keep up with the constant barrage of children who are inquisitive, active and exploring a world outside their home for the first time.

“Sometimes the best way to learn about the children is to join them for snack. It is during this time that they are honest and open up to each other. I learn more about what is going on at home as well, which can be a great advantage,” she states. The challenge this teacher experiences the most is to develop a routine that allows the children to be self-active and support social and academic skills. “I spend a lot of time after teaching going over my day [...] should I have done this or should I have done that? I think about changes I try to incorporate into my day.” She notes that children learn by doing in the most authentic manner, without too much influence from the outside.

We spend a lot of time making things out of recycled materials. Part of it is the age grouping of course, but I love to see what the students can make from boxes and paper rolls. Most of their time is spent independently, but I do see some collaborative work from the five year olds. (Teacher 2, March 12, 2015, personal interview)

She laments that some parents do not see the value in these rough creations and instead focus on those store bought toys. “Many parents refuse to take the creations their children have made home. I can see from the child's face that they are disappointed.” The kindergarteners also lament

the shift of parenting responsibilities away from the involved and interactive parent to an increased reliance on technology for stimulation and recreation. Teacher 2 states, “During circle time it is very sad to hear that the child has spent a beautiful weekend indoors playing video games. At five years old!”

Teacher 2 loves the physical space of the school because it allows for children of different ages to play together. “It is wonderful to watch older children playing with younger children. Not in a babysitting way but rather the older children seem to really enjoy the youngsters.” This comment reflects the common culture of acceptance that is so important in Froebel philosophy. The setting of this school, as described above as an open and flexible space, is reflective of the collaborative nature of a Froebel kindergartener.

The theme of self-activity is promoted within this setting with a commitment to share ideas and space. This enhances the ability of each teacher to gain the benefit of observing other class activity. The teaching is collaborative to make use of each kindergartener’s strength. For example, the staff knows each other well and can identify who is better suited to lead dramatic plays, and then share other workload responsibilities. There is little competition between educators, rather a collective desire to develop the personal attributes of each other.

The role of a supportive and engaged family was integral to Froebel’s philosophy. It is of utmost importance that communication between home and school remains consistent and current. Froebel was a strong supporter of family life and felt that the foundations of education lay in the family as a sanctuary of humanity (Froebel, 1885). In the Kindergarten, communication between teacher and parent often takes place as informal conversations at the beginning or end of the day. Twice a year the kindergartener writes a letter to the parent as a record of student effort, achievement and observations of independent and peer group activity. At the Froebel school, reports were written as anecdotes, Teacher 2 noted, “We basically write an

essay on each child. We try to present a whole picture of each child in different areas.” Teacher 3 corroborates, “At the heart of it, the message needs to be that children are valued for who they are” and “the children are the most important.” A challenge for this teacher was the fact that parents are more demanding of their children’s education and have difficulty letting go of competitive expectations. As a parent of a school aged child she is in a unique situation to hear more of the parent’s concerns. “Even parents who have had a Froebel education and know firsthand what is involved in gift play, they get caught up in the need to make comparisons between their child and another.”

Teacher 3 is responsible for the group of children who are seven to eight years of age. She has a warm and gentle nature, but is abrupt in her manner of speech. It is interesting to note that although she has had eight years of teaching Froebel, she has a different opinion on how to successfully manage the class. Her approach is more authoritative than I have surmised from the other interviews. “I have definite ideas on how children learn and sometimes I take charge.” In the interview process she was quick to state that her experience makes her a valuable part of the team, “I am confident that I am making the right choices.”

This single mindedness seems to be in contradiction to the Froebel philosophy of drawing out the child. During the interview Teacher 3 was concerned about one of her students on the autism spectrum. “It is really hard to run an integrated program when it is constantly disrupted.” Over the history of The Froebel School and Kindergarten, according to Dr. Corbett, there have been students with physical challenges, dyslexia and children on the autism spectrum. Each child is monitored to make sure that disruptions to the other students are balanced with the experience of empathy and generosity that living with different learning needs can bring. In this case, it had been recently decided that this particular student would be asked to leave. Dr. Corbett supported Teacher 3 in this decision by saying “Each student brings something valuable to the classroom. In

this case, we did not have the resources to ensure that time, space and safety were being met in the classroom.” I wonder in retrospect, whether this interview with Teacher 3 projected a negative feel because of a fresh sense of disappointment that the Froebel philosophy could not meet the needs of this student. I sensed a mother bear approach by this teacher, quite protective of her brood and quick to change course when energy should rise. “It is hard to keep control of the play. You have to watch, listen, and decide in a matter of minutes whether things are going well.” I find this quote a solid example of a teacher who struggles to translate the Froebel philosophy in to action because of a perceived need for control.

Teachers 4 and 5 are responsible for the school program. Teacher 4 has been with The Froebel School for over twenty-five years and recently retired. She was trained at The Froebel Institute in England and came to Canada as a young teacher. The Froebel experience in Ontario has been her single occupation. A lithe and energetic woman, with a bounce of gray curly hair, she exudes the energy that is required to work with students in the ten to twelve year age ranges. She explains that at this age group, to nurture creative work the Froebel classroom stimulates a sense of positive challenge, critical reflection, and an acceptance of diverse knowledge. Teacher 4 has an air of quiet and measured authority, her British accent clipping her words with clear meaning. Every morning the day begins with a mock board meeting. As Teacher 4 explains:

The students work and plan together the week ahead and every day there is a discussion on whether they are on task, or what has happened to move off plan. One student is the chair and others have committee responsibilities. This is great practice to confirm the values of co-operation and collaboration.(March 12, 2015, personal communication)

Teacher 4 is confident of her skill as a mediator and guide. “It is truly astounding what these students can do if they are given the time and leeway to do it. Sometimes the best thing we can

do as educators is to step back.” Products of their thoughtful work is displayed throughout the school and recognized by other students, teachers and administrators. Student/teacher teams that are collaborative, diversely skilled, and idea-focused give a balance to the curriculum that respects the diversity within it. She guides the students’ progress, much of the schoolwork is project based and each student is given choice on research and presentation style. Student driven exhibitions and portfolios document authentic student motivation in learning as an expression of values and opportunities. The premise is that the portfolio should display the work that the student and the teacher are most proud of during the term. This shared negotiation is a great opportunity for student reflection and engagement in self-assessment. Teacher 4 states:

The portfolio would not be complete without the student reflection on his or her performance. It is a chance for them to figure out how they learn best and then make decisions based on other opportunities. This student reflection is a lesson toward self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-discipline. It also creates a responsibility on the part of the student to give voice to his or her own experience. (Teacher 4, March 12, 2015, personal communication)

The portfolio as an alternative to standardized testing as a method to evaluate and reflect a student’s progress is a holistic measurement. Teacher 4 notes that “with knowledge of what each student is capable of, the teacher’s role to stimulate, guide, and evaluate becomes much clearer. It is a shared relationship with potential to develop communication skills, initiative, and create a challenging environment.” In The Froebel School the senior students assume increasing responsibility for curricular planning. This planning allows a student to develop competence in developing their own ideas with an eye towards specific results in the self-directed model of learning. The promotion of collaborative practices and teamwork prepares students for future life

situations that require efficiency in creative problem solving and the acceptance of different perspectives.

Teacher 5 is the longest-standing member of the Froebel staff, who with Dr. Corbett has been teaching for over forty years. She is a diminutive, soft-spoken woman with a strength that is observed from her formal carriage. She is back at the Froebel school after a brief retirement because of a staff illness. Teacher 5, although in older years, has piercing blue eyes that speak to high expectations from her students, “The hardest things I see from students today is a lack of focus. They are stressed and strained from all their activities outside of school to a point where some of them are tired and a bit washed out when they arrive in the morning.” She notes it is a challenge, because of low enrollment in the senior school (ages twelve to fourteen), to create an environment that stimulates discussion, diversity of thought and peer communication.

So much of what Froebel has to say is based on a strong peer presence. Because of small numbers at the school level [there were only seven students attending in the year of the interview] there is a lot of opportunity to do individual teaching but in my opinion there isn't enough social interaction. That is to the detriment of the students' well-rounded education. (Teacher 5, March 12, 2015, personal communication)

Teacher 5 is aware of her responsibilities to meet provincial standards and her students must write the leaving exams to enter grade nine.

It is always a struggle to maintain that balance of approach. If we get caught up in an idea, do I let them run or do I stop them and get back to study plan? Of course, Froebel would have said let them run, they are getting the best education from their own efforts. But I don't think it is that simple. There is limited time in the day and so much pressure on these young students to succeed academically. (March 12, 2015, personal communication)

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Ontario Ministry of Education supports the use of provincial testing targets for Grades four to eight in Mathematics and English Language as created by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO, 2010). There is a legal responsibility to correspond to Ontario Ministry regulations and results are part of the package for high school admissions. Currently, although not always in the past, The Froebel School and Kindergarten has declined participation in formal provincial exams at grades two and four but by law must comply with grade six exit exams. The Froebel School argues against a standardized assessment protocol that does not measure the student's potential abilities; only what competencies have been acquired so far.

The importance of giving is central to a creative group during the act of empathetic listening or shared stories. Teacher 5 laments:

For example, I don't seem to spend enough time on gift play, which is still a valuable tool for measuring where the students are in terms of individual development. Gift play needs a calm and patient environment and sometimes that is hard to achieve. I regret not finding more time for it, it can fun for me too!" (March 12, 2015, personal communication)

Learning involves seeing other points of view, understanding different perceptions that, in turn, may encourage flexibility in creative problem solving. The key theme discussed by the teachers is the cultivation of imaginative and critical thinking with disciplined guidance. The Froebel kindergarteners (teachers) agree that they need to stay mindful to maintain a safe environment where students feel comfortable and understand the rules for discussion. The teacher can act as a coach, sensitive to the student's ability to engage in discussion, falling silent when necessary, and restating ideas instead of asking questions. Teacher 5 expands on this idea:

Students sometimes need to be aware of different perspectives or arguments in order to reflect on their own point of view. The ability to explain personal thoughts and counter

arguments, to discuss, and to investigate with confidence is a life-long skill. (2015, personal interview)

Small class sizes, individual instruction, practiced observation, and guidance are hallmarks of a Froebel education. Teacher 5 notes, “It is a fact that this education philosophy relies on a small class size to ensure that every student receives the attention they deserve.” Dr. Corbett reflects that the most successful features of effective schools are autonomy, responsibility, respect, and teamwork within the classroom. Shared reflection and dialogue is respected, and the integration of study themes based on learner-sensitive topics is pursued. Teachers follow the children’s interests and ask questions, remain open to possibilities, and plan changes in response to new questions or ideas. “It is interesting to see what ideas the students come up with. When the idea comes from them, the end product ends up far more interesting!”

Teacher 6 was the only teacher interviewed by survey because she currently lives outside the interviewers’ geographic means. She has been retired for fifteen years but counts her experience as a Froebel kindergartener rewarding and significant in her own personal development. In her experience with the eight and nine year olds, Teacher 6 credits gift play as the starting block in finding out about the child and transformative in making ideas action. She states that the children’s ideas create energy in the class that encourages trial and error and a willingness to challenge oneself. She credits the peer relationships as an important part of the Froebel experience because learning becomes more collaborative and moves the student from “Me to We” (Teacher 6, July 15, 2015, personal communication). Kindergarten is usually the first formal entry into organized education. It is during this first experience that children learn the expectations, obligations and interactions that schooling confers. The social aspect of school continues to challenge a student in learning that their egocentric role is challenged by a complex creation and negotiation of meaning in a larger circle, not only of people but also of ideas.

Teacher 6 recognizes that self-evaluation is something that we all do as reflective human beings, but the Froebel philosophy encourages a self-awareness that gives new perspective to the learning process. This perspective allows the student to gain a sense of place within the student body and create opportunity for communication and collaborative skills to develop alongside with self-discipline to maintain a sense of self. She states in her comment section:

The Froebel experience as an educator has given me permission to express my creative side as an adult. It is like I have been given a new attitude or approach.

I don't have to be so serious. I can see the playful side of life. We talk about learning in a school sense but I think there is so much more.

(Teacher 6, July 15, 2015, personal communication)

The six teachers in this case study encourage a trusting, self-active environment that encourages children to take ownership over their learning. Froebel emphasized the value of play as an integrating mechanism that stimulates language and the unity of feeling, thought, and action. There is a strong sense of student- teacher co-construction in the curriculum as well as a teacher responsibility and responsiveness to children's ideas. Dr. Corbett and the staff at the Froebel school are dedicated to the importance of drawing out the child and guiding them to fulfill their potential is a pure and central tenet of Froebel philosophy. "Children in the Froebel Kindergarten are not schooled, they are developed. The aim is not the mastery of content, but the nourishment of the whole child physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually...all kept in delicate balance" (Corbett, 1980, p.17). In this case study I found the educator interviews to reveal individuals who are open, sincere, non-judgmental and non-threatening. This nature develops a self-assured learner with characteristics of autonomy, determination, patience, reflection and empathy. These characteristics are valuable in the development of a confident life long learner.

Parent Interviews

The influential role of family in a child's education is often based on the reality of behavioral, cultural, and academic expectations that parents and extended family come to presume. Froebel was an educative philosopher who believed in childhood and the importance of a playful attitude that would confer possibility instead of complacency (Froebel, 2003). This learning and development is not restricted to the classroom walls, indeed much of what the child learns the child learns at home. The use of family stories, not only develop literacy skills but convey cultural and social contexts for a child's future involvement in their own community. Much of this knowledge is passed on with subtlety and sometimes parents are not even aware of the transmission. Froebel encouraged parents to be self-aware and self-disciplined in their efforts to guide the child in his or her own discovery.

Parent expectations and perceptions were sometimes difficult to manage according to the Kindergarteners (teacher). This concern was a surprise to me, since the parents would have accepted the Froebel mandate before enrollment. In specific interviews with two current parents of students in the school I recognized a shared vision of what the Froebel philosophy has brought to their children. Parent 1 exclaims, "I find it fun watching their confidence grow in themselves as learners." Parent 2 agrees, "There is a time and place for everything. This school is all about getting the most out of the day, and everyone has to participate." This commitment to a shared learning environment is a concept that is reiterated across teachers, parents and students as well. Parent 2 continues, "I think I am a valuable part of the learning process, just in terms of support and attitude. I try to manage my own competitive feelings. I really feel that school is too competitive at a young age."

When I interviewed two past students' parents I learned that independence and patience were two attributes the parents noticed. Parent 3 notes "My son came out of the Froebel school

with confidence in his ability to challenge himself. It was amazing how he would persevere over a problem.” Parent 4 agrees, “I think that her experience taught her that it’s okay not to get it the first time. You have to try, try again.” Every new parent to the school is requested to attend Froebel classes, taught by Dr. Corbett, which explain the basic Froebel principles. I had the opportunity to observe in one such meeting. There were four new parents (mothers only) with Dr. Corbett reviewing some of the principles and expectations of a Froebel education. The discussion revolved around how to recognize self-activity in their child.

The parents had children in the Kindergarten and it was their first exposure to Froebel philosophy and formal schooling in general. The discussion led to concerns about how to support their child at home in terms of fulfilling the most positive experience for their child. This insecurity, to provide the best for your child, is universal. One parent noted, “It’s a lot easier to tell him what to do rather than wait for him to tell me what he wants to do. It is especially hard at those busy times of day when you’ve got lots going on!” It is interesting that these parents, who have made a commitment to the Froebel philosophy, are still influenced by social conditions of competency and competitiveness. One parent commented: “I know that I shouldn’t be concerned about when and what my child is reading but I can’t help but listen to other parents and compare her skills to others.” Dr. Corbett explained the need for patience, understanding, and commitment from the parents to always draw out the child as a first step. These classes are a great opportunity for parents to learn about not only Froebel, but also the importance of the bond between home and school.

The importance of the family to Froebel philosophy has been discussed in Chapter Two as a foundation to the acceptance of self-activity and its benefits. The parents in the interview process had difficulty balancing the absence of standardized instruction and the recognition that guiding the child through self-activity is a process that results in confident learners. It is my

opinion that every parent struggles to do their best for their children and in so doing is constantly revising and reprioritizing goals and expectations.

Past Student Interview

Although only two former students were interviewed, similar generalizations to teacher/parent interviews were exposed. Both students (one male and one female) have gone on to finish post-graduate degrees and maintain communication with The Froebel School today. Their view was that their formative years at The Froebel School and Kindergarten were instrumental in motivating a personal desire towards excellence in education. One student commented, “I probably wouldn’t be a teacher if I hadn’t gone to Froebel. I really believe that that experience gave me confidence and a love of learning.” Both graduated students agree that The Froebel School engaged in learning activities that challenge the intellect and the imagination.

I was supported in the things that interested me. Usually as a class, we would agree on a theme and that would be the jumping board for so many other projects. In senior school, I remember one day I brought in a stick that I thought looked like moose antlers. We as a class made a moose out of boxes and then started researching things such as where they lived and what they ate. This in turn created a theme across science, geography, math, and language arts. It was great! The moose was a centerpiece in our class for a term!

(Student 1, March 11, 2015, personal communication)

A learning environment that challenges the intellect and the imagination is conscious and reflective. Both students noted that the transfer to a public high school presented academic and social challenges.

The public high schools of mention were located in the same geographic area as The Froebel School but were significantly larger in student body and class size. The biggest transition

for these students was in terms of school culture and social interactions. The public high schools were much more authoritarian and student critical thought was not overtly encouraged. The students were accustomed to initiative and negotiation, and a culture of acceptance. Both students indicated that the initial response was to draw back their questioning behavior and avoid respectful but challenging discussions. “I learned not to put up my hand even if I knew the answer,” one student said.

This new passive behavior was mitigated by the knowledge that most teachers were accepting and accommodating on a one-to-one level. The Froebel students were teased by the other students for being “the teacher’s pet” but were often approached by their peers as a resourceful tutor. Both students remarked that the social and co-operative learning groups at The Froebel School and Kindergarten enabled them to practice skills such as listening, empathizing with peers, clarifying each other’s ideas. “It was really subtle at the time, but I was aware of how others were thinking.” Being able to interpret interpersonal cues such as body language and the ability to see through diverse perspectives gave them advantages as they continued through their academic studies.

Froebel philosophy allows the student to value their own ideas and the ability to pursue them in a supportive environment. This in turn, creates a motivated and committed learner with personal experience to accept success and failure during practical training. Both graduated students feel that the self-activity model of Froebel’s philosophy provided them with well-rounded personal qualities such as creativity, determination, empathy, flexibility, and a confident learning style that encouraged a commitment to life-long learning. One student explains:

I see myself as someone who will continue learning all my life mainly because I have had such a great start and feel good about the early experience. Would I have been different if I had not had the Froebel experience? I don’t know. Maybe it’s genetic, may

its family or peers, but I am able to say that I am a teacher today because I had a good start. (Student 2, March 21, 2015, personal communication)

I would like to include a metaphor described by Dr. Corbett when asked to describe the role of education. She contributes that the idea of education is similar to that of a bird in flight. A bird needs two wings to fly and if one wing is damaged the bird will be limited in its abilities. In this view, education should balance a system of learning and a system of fulfilling student potential. There is opportunity for both systems to co-exist and ensure that human possibility is realized. Balance is crucial for a bird in flight and balance is needed in education. To take that metaphor further, birds also require tail feathers to ensure smooth and guided flight. In this case the teachers act as tail feathers, a constant source of guidance that is integral to the process. It is important that the wings and the tail feathers are used in a co-operative and supportive manner, just so that the teachers and students are working together to achieve the best outcome. What form or practice would help give students the benefit to realize their potential? Potential is linked to their understanding and realization; in effect new potentials arise when old potentials have been realized (Scheffler, 1985, p.10). This confidence creates a whole new set of possibility. The task of the educator therefore is rooted in a wisdom that combines knowledge and the ability to draw out the child.

Conclusion

Play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance.

Cultivate it, foster it, protect it, and guard it. To the calm, keen vision of one whom truly knows human nature, the spontaneous play of the child discloses the inner life of man. (Froebel, 1885, p.55)

The failure of education today is the failure to address identified tensions between tradition versus modernity in pedagogy, the universal versus the individual, long term versus short term negotiation of reform, and the reconciliation of the forces between competition and cooperation (Delors et al., 1996, p.15). Society today acknowledges conventional qualifications, yet demands a complex and multi-disciplinarian approach to knowledge. Academic qualifications are still at a premium because they represent the currency and status of employment. However, future employers are more likely to seek people who are skilled and adaptable with more qualities such as initiative, co-operative and positive attitudes towards learning. Encouraging a climate of creative purpose develops attributes such as risk-taking, independent judgment, and commitment in the face of adversity. This climate of creative purpose may ensure higher dedication and levels of commitment from individuals toward common goals.

As there is no single theory of learning, there is no single rule for educational practitioners. In order to facilitate a change in learners there needs to be a shift in the way that teachers view themselves. Teachers are often not able to maximize their effectiveness because they are restrained by circumstances such as inflexible space, conservative routines, and administrative controls. A democratic education is where children learn in different ways. Education should be focusing on developing the skills for critical inquiry, reasoning, flexibility, and collaboration for students to be able to thrive in our current changing environment.

Froebel has imparted his theories of developmental education but his real gifts are still being developed, defined, and extended daily in early childhood practice. Creative play is children's work and therefore a forerunner of work in the adult world. Playfulness, creativity and imagination are qualities that link our childhood and adult years. The benefits to the child of a Froebel education extend the ability to use knowledge in a variety of contexts and establish a life-long learning propensity. But his philosophy, developed over one hundred and twenty five years ago, has resonance in the current educative discourse. A child's natural impulse and curiosity is rewarded and guided into an intellectual and personal journey.

This personal journey education is an experience that supports self-reliance, which in turn develops life-long constructive habits that will be used in the world of work. A life long learner is prepared to continue to acquire knowledge, be active in inquiry and will develop confidence in his or her own education. Learning is incremental, continually revised, in a process where children learn flexibility and transferability. The Froebel School and Kindergarten promotes these elements as they encourage divergent ways of thinking, reasoning, and creating networks between areas of learning and experience.

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Appendix 1



INFORMATION AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Study Title: A Case Study of Froebel Education

Researcher: Pat Bowlby

Researcher's Contact Information: dpadams@sympatico.ca

Faculty Supervisor: Ailie Cleghorn

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: ailie@education@concordia.ca

Source of funding for the study: None

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to investigate the relevancy of the Froebel educational philosophy written over 160 years ago, today in the 21st century.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to answer and reflect on questions regarding your practice in the classroom.

In total, participating in this study will take approximately twenty minutes.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

This research is low-risk and not intended to benefit you personally.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: Your responses to specific questions related to your experience as a Froebel practitioner and or parent, guardian or past student.

By participating, you agree to let the researchers have access to information about your experience as a teacher/parent at the Froebel School and Kindergarten.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research, and except as described in this form. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

To verify that the research is being conducted properly, regulatory authorities might examine the information gathered. By participating, you agree to let these authorities have access to the information.

The information gathered will be anonymous. That means that it will not be possible to make a link between you and the information you provide.

The information gathered will be coded. That means that the information will be identified by a code. The researcher will have a list that links the code to your name.

We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results.

We will destroy the information two years after the end of the study.

In certain situations we might be legally required to disclose the information that you provide. If this kind of situation arises, we will disclose the information as required by law, despite what is written in this form.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before September 2015.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix 2

Personal Interview Protocol with Director A Case Study of Froebel Education in Practice

What is your educational background?

What has led you to follow Froebel's education theory?

How is an education theory written over 160 years ago relevant today?

What value does play represent for the senior elementary student?

In your opinion, how do children learn when they free form play?

What life challenges do you envision for young students today?

How does Froebel's philosophy fit into these life challenges?

How can a creative based education prepare young students for the future?

What advantages do children have when they are encouraged to play?

How important is the educator in a student's success?

The role of the teacher is termed nurturer... how is this role supported?

What personal qualities, in your opinion, ensure success as a Kindergartener?

What does the Froebel Foundation do to ensure the parent's active role?

What approach do you use do manage parents' expectations in the role of education?

This is a private school that is chosen by parents for their children. What aspect of a Froebel education, in your opinion is the most valuable?

You have been an active supporter for Froebel theories to be used in public system. Are the philosophies viable given the nature of overcrowded classrooms?

As a developmental philosophy, the school is in conflict with standardized testing. How do you meet ministry expectations?

Does the Froebel philosophy support life long learning? If so,
How does the Froebel approach meet the needs of adult learners?

Appendix 3

Personal Interview Protocol with Educators A case Study of Froebel Education in Practice

How many years of teaching experience have you completed?

How many years of teaching have you completed at The Froebel School
What has been your training as an educator at this school?

What part of the Froebel philosophy has drawn you to teach at The Froebel School?

If you could abbreviate your experience at The Froebel School into one word, what would that word be?

How do you view your role as Kindergartener different from a teacher at another school?

What is the most rewarding part of the day with the children?

What is the most challenging part of the day with the children?

How do you ensure that ministry standards are met?

How do you manage parent expectations?

How do you assess children's creative efforts?

Explain to me how you use gift play?

What are the benefits to your students during gift play?

Appendix 4

Survey Protocol for Kindergarteners A Case Study in Froebel Education in Practice

Please choose the answer that best fits your experience.

- 1: do not agree
- 2 : somewhat agree
- 3 : agree sometimes
- 4: agree most times

Children's gift play promotes cross- curricular activity.

1 2 3 4 5

Children's interests are a strong motivator for self guided education.

1 2 3 4 5

In the classroom peer relationships are strengthened by creative play.

1 2 3 4 5

Children's confidence is strengthened through parental support.

1 2 3 4 5

Children's ability to self evaluate comes with experience.

1 2 3 4 5

Please comment on any experience you have had that expresses how Froebel's philosophy has impacted your teaching career.

Appendix 5

Interview Protocol for Parent/Guardian A Case Study of Froebel Education in Practice

Please answer the following questions based on your experience.

1. What attracted you to the Froebel School?
2. What is your definition of play?
3. What advantages do you recognize by having your child attend this school?
4. What disadvantages do you recognize?
5. What are your expectations for your child's success?
6. Do you feel that you are a valuable part of your child's education?
7. Are you a student of Froebel's educational philosophy?
8. Is there clear and consistent communication between home and school?
9. What, in your opinion, is the most significant developmental factor in elementary school?

Appendix 6

Interview Protocol for Froebel School Past Student A Case Study in Froebel Education in Practice

What year did you graduate from The Froebel School?

How long did you attend the Froebel School?

How would you describe your best memories of your time as a student?

How would you describe your memories of frustration as a student?

Can you describe the transition to high school?

In one word can you describe the relationship you had with your teacher?

In one word can you describe the relationship you had with your peers?

What, in your view, is the most valuable asset of a Froebel education?

Do you believe that your time at Froebel shaped you as a learner?

Appendix 7

The Froebel School and Kindergarten Mission Statement
A Case Study of Froebel Education in Practice

THE FROEBEL EDUCATION CENTRE MISSION STATEMENT

The Staff Desire:

To nurture the innately creative child to be knowledgeable, responsible and compassionate.

To support the family as the most valued social entity.

To encourage each other to utilize one's own self-active, creative potential.

To inspire others to become Frobelian kindergartners and teachers.

To give fresh vision by making Froebel's educational theories and practices known.