Summary

OMEP Sweden decided in September 2010 to join the continued OMEP project part two - ESD in practice. OMEP members as well as preschools and schools were invited through newsletters and the OMEP website to sign up for the project.

The overall aim of the ESD project is to enhance the awareness of Education for Sustainable Development among OMEP members, young children and early childhood education at large. The aims of Part 2 - ESD in practice are to implement Education for Sustainable Development together with the children in early childhood education practices and to collect information and further understanding of young children’s ideas and actions within ESD.

Part 2 – ESD in practice is inspired by the 7 Rs, as shown in the new logo. The participants are asked to work with the children around the 7 Rs, one, two or many. The Rs were originally identified by the Brundtland Commission Our Common Future (1987), and have now been further developed by the OMEP World Assembly. Together, they include all three ESD pillars; Respect, Reflect and Rethink relate directly to social and cultural...
dimensions, Reuse and Reduce highlight environmental aspects and Recycle and Redistribute clearly draw on the economic perspective.

Children, teachers, parents or other adults choose together how to organise ESD in practice projects; what can be done in everyday life and what to focus on. Those, who took part in the OMEP Child interview project, already have knowledge about the most important issues for young children for a sustainable lifestyle. Part 2 ESD in practice can thus be a continuation, leaning on the answers from the child interviews. For all, a starting out question could be:

**What do you think is NOT sustainable here in our centre/preschool/school?**

**How can we change this together?**

Eight preschools signed up for the project in three different cities of Sweden, Gothenburg, Stockholm and Umeå. Characteristic for the preschool involvement is that they all have focused on child participation and sustainability in the preschools. The local OMEP Chapter appointed contact persons to the participating preschools, who visited the preschools during the year and also arranged for meetings where the participants could meet and discuss ESD in practice. The national project leader sent out the initial information and was responsible for continued information and communication during the project. Six of the preschools handed in reports on time.

Three reports were focusing on the social and cultural aspects of sustainable development, such as gender equality and democracy. Two preschools focused on environmental and economic aspects especially linked to reuse and recycling and the sixth preschool focused on creating a sustainable preschool outdoor environment.

OMEP Sweden plan to arrange a meeting for all the six participants, where they will tell about their projects. We will also collect the six projects in an OMEP booklet on ESD in practice to be spread and used as inspiration for others during seminars and conferences.

Gothenburg in May 2011

Anette Hellman, project leader

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**Most interesting result**
Democracy and gender equality are important parts of ESD in everyday practice in Swedish preschools.

The Swedish preschool is part of a society with a strong political emphasising on gender equality and democracy. This discourse is, for example, codified in the national curriculum for Swedish preschools where teachers have an obligation to counteract gender stereotypes, and critically analyse norms that influence how routines and activities are organised as well as teachers and children’s daily interactions. The national curriculum for the preschool (National Agency for Education, 2010, p. 3) states that:

Democracy forms the foundation of the pre-school. For this reason all preschool activity should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values. Each and everyone working in the pre-school should promote respect for the intrinsic value of each person as well as respect for our shared environment. An important task of the pre-school is to establish and help children acquire the values on which our society is based. The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between the genders as well as solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school shall actively promote in its work with children.// The ways in which adults respond to boys and girls, as well as the demands and requirements imposed on children contribute to their appreciation of gender differences. The pre-school should work to counteract traditional gender patterns and gender roles. Girls and boys in the pre-school should have the same opportunities to develop and explore their abilities and interest without having limitations imposed by stereotyped gender roles.

At the same time other norms, like discoursers of gender difference and images of “typical” boys and “typical” girls are given relevance and children’s influence and participation are sometimes neglected in preschool practices. Democracy, children’s rights and gender equality are important norms in practice as well as in the national curriculum, but how can they be carried out among teachers and children in their every day activities? This complexity of norms, and the manifestation of them, has been a starting point from where the Swedish preschools started their projects about ESD in practice.

One preschool worked with a project about democracy. The project started at the same time as the national general elections in September 2010, when all busses, streets and media were stuffed with advertisements and arguments from different political parties. The point of departure for the preschool project was a small hut in the preschool garden, not longer needed for its former activities. What could the hut be used for in the future? The teachers decided to make the changing of the hut into a project about election as a way to teach democratic values and procedures. But most of all, a way to show children how democracy works in practice – with influence but also with responsibility and solidarity.
Another project about environmental aspects of ESD connected in many ways to the previous project about democracy, since the teachers put forward children’s influence, and made children’s questions central for the pedagogical work with ESD in practice. Focus in the project was the two Re-concepts Reuse and Recycle. The title of the project was invented by the children themselves: *Using Again*. A starting point in this project was when an activity failed and children and teachers had to “reuse” their creativity.

Some preschools focused on the social aspects of ESD. One example is a project that describes teachers’ and children’s work in order to achieve a more gender equal environment in preschool. This is very exiting reading since it brings the reader close to teachers’ work with pedagogical documentation and self reflection – processes essential in order to become a better teacher. We can also follow children and teachers through these self reflecting processes inspired by action research.

The following section will describe three of the projects in detail.

**Child participation in a democratic process**

*Project one – by preschool teacher Ingrid Levin - Jusufovic, Gothenburg*

**Introduction**

This project was carried out in a preschool in the rural outskirts of the city of Gothenburg. There are five units in the preschool for children aged 1-5 years. The project was primarily carried out by the 16 five year old children, 12 boys and 4 girls from three different units in the preschool.

This project focuses on democracy and child participation. Timed alongside the Swedish General elections in September 2010, the aim of the project was to give an example of democracy as it is carried out in elections and to practice the voting procedure. One goal in the National preschool curriculum (National Agency for Education, 2010, p. 12) is that the pre-school should try to ensure that children:

> develop the ability to understand and act in accordance with democratic principles by participating in different kinds of cooperation and decision making.

Voting is both a right and an obligation to bring one’s opinion forward. At the same time, one’s vote does not always reach the majority, which is an important part to understand within a democratic system. Taking the changing of the hut as the content for the elections also became a possibility for the children to influence decisions very much linked to their playing in the preschool. The voting was seen as a concrete means to make democracy visible for the children.
Procedure

In the yard there is an old hut that was previously used for prams, but not any more. It was decided by the adults that we should take away the doors and paint the hut. But how should we use it? The five year olds were interviewed outdoors, close to the hut using two questions. They had multiple ideas:

What would you like to do here? and How can we make that come true?

Kiosk, Police station, Prison, Fire department, Garbage dump, Airport, Garage with mechanics, Painting workshop, Bowling hall and Garages

After these interviews the children painted their ideas with pencils and colour pencils. Their ideas were written down and attached to the drawings by the teacher. Three proposals were frequent: Garage with mechanics, Airport and Kiosk.

Now it was time to vote, coordinated with the General elections, so there was much talk and attention these days on elections, how and where to vote. The general elections actually take place on a Sunday in this very preschool.

Three boxes were marked with the three different alternatives, there was a tiny hole in each box and the top was fastened so that it could not be opened. The children were given one token each, corresponding to one vote. The boxes were placed behind a screen and the concept of anonymity was introduced. The children went one by one behind the screen and they carried out their voting by putting a token in the preferred box.

When all children had voted, the boxes were brought out, the seals were cut open and the tokens in each box were counted. The result was Garage with mechanics – 2 votes, Airport – 9 votes and Kiosk – 1 vote. The Airport won. The children made a poster announcing the result of the voting for all to read.
Having a result, the children were asked how to go about to realise the Airport. Was it to be an indoors airport or an outdoors? The children wanted both. The interior became different shops (and a kiosk) and the exterior showed the Airport from the outside. Acrylic paint on cardboard was used to make it last during the harsh Swedish weather. The children chose between painting the interior or the exterior:

The Airport exterior:
Airplanes, Cars, People and Luggage carts

The Airport interior:
Shops for Ice-cream, Newspapers, Donuts, Toys and Sweets.

To be continued…

Of course the preschool will make a study visit to a nearby airport, to get more inspiration for our new play station – the Airport. They will also continue with democracy in practice, using proposals, presentations, argumentation and the formal voting procedure.
Using Again

Project two - by preschool teacher Carolina Estrella Götriksson, Birkagården, Stockholm

Introduction

This project was carried out in Birkagården’s preschool, in central Stockholm, a preschool celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2012. There are four units with children aged 1-5 years, in total 72 children. The preschool was in 2007 awarded the Green Flag, by the Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation, for previous commitment in relation to Education for sustainable development. There is a proposed theme for the whole preschool, and this year it was about Sorting garbage. The teachers and children reflect on the theme and come up with different activities, and the parents are invited to participate. Joining the OMEP project they decided to concentrate on the concepts Recycle, Reuse and Respect.

This project was carried out by the 2-4 year olds in the unit Krylbo. As an ongoing activity during the theme Sorting garbage, the children regularly go to a local recycling station. One day, on the way to the station, the children started to play with the empty milk cartons, which resulted in that we carried the cartons back to the preschool for creative play, Using them again. Thus the focus for the children in the Krylbo unit was born and given the name Using again. Research questions were: How can we reuse our garbage? and How can we cooperate with our neighbours to make them recycle garbage instead of just throwing it in the streets?

Methods and activities

This is a project driven by the children, by their questions, investigations and by the interviews made by the teacher, resulting in an excellent example of Explorative learning and Child participation.

Reflective talk when returning to Krylbo

T(eacher): Now we have taken back all the garbage that we set out to recycle at the station. Are you really sure you want to save these cartons?
C(hildren): Yeah.
T: But we grown-ups are concerned. We don’t want Krylbo to look as a recycling station. We need to plan this. What can we do?
C1: We could paint them, then they don’t look like garbage.

T: Do you think it is enough to paint them?
C2: Yes, like we did last year for the vernissage on food.
C3: What?
C2: Don’t you remember? We made different kind of food out of trash.
C4: Uhm, that was fake food.
C5: The more we use things again … like old things that doesn’t fit any more, but can be used for something else.
And that was the starting point for listing all the garbage and ideas of how they could be used. The list grew longer and longer for every day.

New ideas while on picnic in a nearby park

A regular activity is to go to a large nearby park, Karlbergsparken, bringing a snack picnic. This day, the teacher assembled some leftover crackers and pear cores in a paper bag. The children are helpful, already conscious on not to leave any leftovers. On the way to the bin, they saw some birds:

  C5: They look hungry, Miss.
  T: Yeh, the poor ones.
  C6: But we have food …
  C: All the leftovers!!
  T: Can they really eat them?
  C2 and C7: Yes. We use to feed the birds in the park with our Mummy
        We give them old bread.

When they were back at Birkagården, the teacher asked the children if they had been using something again during our outing, having the feeding of birds in mind. But the children talked about (re)using the climbing tree many times and in many ways.

  T: What about the crackers? Didn’t we use our garbage to feed the birds?
  C: But Miss, that is not reusing. It is food and it was still food when the birds ate them.
  T: So what did we do?
  C: You know, we fed the birds.

The following day, the topic was brought up again:

  C6: Miss, I know what we did for real with the old crackers.
  T: What?
  C6: We decreased our garbage, and we helped both the environment and the birds.
  T: How did you come up with that?
  C6: I told my Mummy and she explained it to me.

Feeding different kind of birds and rabbits with our leftovers is a much appreciated activity by the children, and we do it often. In this way, the children have got to know the birds and the animals around the preschool and how to take care of them.
Focusing on the garbage and the garbage man

Reusing the trash was fun and the children spent many hours on creating new things out of garbage. But they also wondered what actually happens to the garbage. Where does it go? They prepared for an interview with the garbage man:

T: Hello! May we ask you some questions?
G(ARBAGE MAN): Yes, just go ahead.
C5: Is it heavy that garbage bin holder?
G: Yes, quite, but I am strong.
C6: What do you do with the garbage?
G: We load them into the garbage truck and then we drive to the garbage dump.

C6: What happens with the garbage there? In my cottage we burn leaves.
G: You know a lot. But I collect more than leaves. We take plastic, food leftovers, metal och lots of other trash.
C1: What happens then? Do you save any of them?
G: No, we sort them. And some trash is recycled and made into other things, or we go on with some things to other special dumps.
C4: How?
G: Where they do new cartons, aluminum, lots of new things.
The children turned quiet.
G: You know, have you seen commercials for returning bottles and cans, “Pantamera” (Cash in more)?
C2: Yes. I have seen “Panta mera”.
G: Exactly, so you use the bottles again, but you have to sort, clean and prepazre them carefully.
C3: Yeah, but how do you do that?
G: I collect the garbage and others do the sorting and send it on to the other places for preparation. Kind of use the material again for new things that we then can use again.
The children look like question marks…
T: Like we do here at Krylbo when we build the new toys out of the trash.
G: Maybe, but now I have to go.
C: Thank you for the interview, Bye bye, see you next time.
After this interview, the children are very curious about what happens with the garbage. They want to know, to understand, what he meant by saying that they make new things out of the trash. What kind of things and how? But how can they find this out?

C1: We can wait outside the preschool and then we can follow the garbage truck.
C3: But it can go very quickly. Shall we run or what?
C2: Let’s take the bikes. Yes, that should work.

The children are convinced that they can follow the garbage truck, so the next day is Thursday, when the truck is due. The children wait, and then they follow it down the road. It makes multiple stops and the children keep following. However, after one hour, the truck drives away too quickly and too far, and the children have to give up.

The next plan is to visit a garbage dump, but preschool aged children are not allowed to visit, out of security reasons. They go to the library and borrow some books on garbage, but does not satisfy the children. What actually happens to the garbage that is in the garbage truck?

There is a large recycle station at another park, Humlegården, where the people in charge show how the garbage is sorted at the station. Unfortunately they cannot answer the children’s questions about the next step. What happens to the sorted garbage?

Finally, they find a documentary GARBAGE which becomes the favourite film for many weeks. The children’s interest grows, and they come up with more questions because there are some tricky processes involve, e.g. when recycling paper and carton into new things. The parents tell that their children are sorting garbage also at home.

There are more things involved in cleaning

The film GARBAGE has shown the children that there are also other types of cleaning machines and professionals involved in taking care of the environment. The children start exploring them, interviewing the people in charge and reconstructing them all in the preschool from trash.

T: You build many machines and play a lot with them and the cleaning officers. Why?
C4: It is fun.
T: But you have been going on for months. Shouldn’t we move on?
C3: No, we like it. We do lots of toys. I am about to make a fire truck.
C2: When my Daddy was young, he made toys out of cones. And I make them out of milk cartons.
C4: My Grandma makes dolls out of fabric.
C6: Then she uses the fabric again.
C3: Hmm… It is good to make officers. I will make a fire fighter.
T: I wonder about us at Krylbo, don’t we do more than reusing? Aren’t we also working men and women?
C1: Yeah, Yeah, NO, that was crazy T.
T: But reflect, we do take care of our Krylbo. What do we do to help caring for our environment? Shall we make a list?

The list included:

Picking up trash, Help cleaning at home and at Krylbo, Clearing away when finished playing, Take away our plates when we have finished eating; Sometimes, doing the washing up after snacks. The children looked at the list and C3 said: We are doing a lot, almost everything.

Summary

This project is living proof that children’s curiosity and fantasy are unlimited. There are now lots of self made toys, cars, trains, trucks as well as people handling them in the preschool. The important thing is to give children enough time to explore a theme, to come up with their own questions and to find answers in a creative way.

The project has grown much beyond the aim of the theme – Sorting garbage. The creative constructions with the recycling material has deepened the learning and been great fun for children, teachers and parents.

USING AGAIN, reusing, by building toys out of the garbage was fun and educative. The inspiration came from the local neighbourhood and the children paid attention and developed a caring attitude to their environment, both in the preschool, at home and in the surroundings. The meetings with birds and animals as well as the interviews with the adults led to understanding and respect for animals and professionals.

Adults and children found that they can decrease the amount of garbage by rethinking everyday habits. The adults became aware of the children’s thoughts about the polluted streets. And the children discovered that small things can make a great difference.
Working with teacher’s attitude in regards to gender equality

Project three- by preschool teachers Siv Jirblom and Gisele Fuentes

Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental democratic value. The UN Millennium Goals (2000) represent an international agreement on global development for decreasing poverty, child and maternal mortality, HIV/aids, TBC, malaria and other diseases and for assuring schools for all children, fresh water and sanitary, sustainable environments, global cooperation and gender equality by strengthening the status of women. In this perspective the teaching profession is highly important, and there is a need for well trained teachers prepared to make conscious decisions about what is important and how to promote a sustainable lifestyle.

The preschool Tärnan is located in central Gothenburg, with 24 children aged 3-5 years. The teachers are well trained and have worked together for 13 years, taking on the task to further develop the quality of the preschool. Important tools are in-service training, action research projects and continuous time for planning and reflecting as well as for observations and action-oriented development.

Working with gender issues starts with a critical review of the teachers and their attitudes. By training in action research, the teachers are familiar with different types of observations and analysing tools, thus making it possible to study gender stereotypes and gendered patterns. Video camera and a diary are helpful tools. From previous projects the teachers know of four situations during a typical day, where gender stereotyped attitude and behaviour are close at hand:

1) The first meeting in the hallway in the mornings, when more comments were given to the girls for their clothes, hair style and attributes, using words as nice and beautiful. The boys got comments on the symbols and images on their clothes, of super heroes etc. The teachers are instead striving to express the joy in the meeting and to ask the children more questions.

2) When going outside, the teachers gave more help to the lively children, even to the point where they interrupted helping other children, just to satisfy some out-going ones. The teachers decided to give attention to the children who were involved in dressing themselves, and to support initiatives where the children helped each other.
3) During the meals, the teachers treated boys and girls differently, asking more of verbal communication from the girls. Boys just had to point or hum to be served by a teacher or by a girl. Instead, teachers think about giving open questions to all children and praise the children who help each other.

4) There seems to be a manly norm in child literature, with a dominance of male animals and male lead characters. This was brought up with the children while reading and also experiments to e.g. say she instead of he consequently about an animal character.

For this project, the teachers decided to focus on gender issues, starting with the many comments on what a woman or a man can do for a living. The children said things like:

- A doctor is a guy
- Girls can’t be fire fighters
- Daddies cannot bake
- Girls can’t play ice-hockey
- Girls can bicycle
- Fathers can do tricks
- A nurse is always a girl
- Daddies can’t put up your hair

When the teachers asked why, the children referred to what they had seen themselves or read in a paper or a book. With this background the teachers decided to start a project about gender and professions.

**Methods and activities**

An initial round of child interviews was made, asking the children: Who can work in this profession (police, doctor, nurse, fire fighter, dentist, school teacher, preschool teacher, carpenter)? Can a woman? Can a man? Can both? The answers were gender stereotyped.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr.1</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
<th>Nurse</th>
<th>Firefighter</th>
<th>Shop assistant</th>
<th>Dentist</th>
<th>Teacher in school</th>
<th>Teacher in preschool</th>
<th>Carpenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Men</td>
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The materials used during the project were paper dolls, men and women, and professional clothes that suited all dolls, large play boxes that were designed together with the children as a hospital, a fire department and a police department and books about different professions.

The teachers joined the playing for shorter periods, they video taped the playing and they were reading and discussing the children’s books every day. Later on one more box was built, this time a garage and paper doll mechanics, which brought a new vocabulary into the games, of technical terms.

The teachers also read professional literature on gender issues, to be able to challenge their own views and to develop a balanced but challenging environment for the children.

After some months another round of interviews were made, which showed that the children now said that most professions were open and possible for both women and men. When the
teachers brought up the results from the first round, the children said that they didn’t know by then that both men and women could work in all the professions as they had never seen it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr.2</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
<th>Nurse</th>
<th>Firefighter</th>
<th>Shop assistant</th>
<th>Dentist in school</th>
<th>Teacher in preschool</th>
<th>Carpenter</th>
<th>Mechanic</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Women</td>
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<td>Men</td>
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The observations showed that the girls played with the female paper dolls, but these were equally skilled in all professions. Maybe they chose the female dolls because they identified themselves with women. Other observations showed that both children and adults changed their quality of voice depending on the profession they played. A female fire fighter got a deeper voice than a female nurse.

On the other hand, the initiative with the theme on gender and professions was successful as most children had a more open view on who could have what profession. The teachers also think that the extensive readings and discussions using a rich vocabulary with synonyms and explanations have been important for the children’s meaning making during the project.

**Concluding comments**

Being a teacher includes a great responsibility. Preschool is the starting point for life-long learning. Through the interactive communication, learning and playing in preschool, the fundamental values and norms are shaped. The teachers serve as role models and their approach should be based on critical reflection and an including pedagogy. By listening to the children, challenging them but also allowing them to try out their own ideas and pathways, a sustainable future is possible. Teachers can promote the fostering of children, towards thinking and creative human beings who strives for the well-being of nature and mankind.