

Sharing Froebel's Knowledge



Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.
With your basket and mine, the people will thrive

Aim

To support educators' understanding of Froebel through the use of song and rhyme to demonstrate the impact of Froebel's approach to education, and his influence on New Zealand's early education.

Rationale

Froebel's influence and philosophy is implicitly evident throughout Te Whāriki, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum (May and Bethell, 2017). Supporting teachers to recognise and understand the importance of this influence is our vision.

Connecting to Te Ao Māori

Māori use waiata (song) as a method of connecting to the mauri (life-force), spirit, and identity of each individual (Fletcher, Green, MacDonald, and Hoskyns, 2014). Best (2016) surmised that "the spirit is, for Froebel, not some unsubstantial 'part' of us, but is more like the essence or whole of us" (p. 10).

Using Song, Rhyme, and Fingerplays

Bruce (2004) explains the importance of creativity in engaging children. Furthermore, Froebel observed how song and rhyme were an important factor in establishing, developing, and maintaining relationships between the adult and the child.



Educators attending the workshop, practicing a waiata (song)

Implementation

Taking inspiration from the early champions of Froebel (Read, 2003), we decided to use networking to connect with educators and settings across Auckland who might be interested in making connections to Froebelian practices.

Introducing Froebel

It is important to first build and develop an understanding of the child and learning, which then enriches the adult's understanding of how to best interact with them (Tovey, 2017). Participants reflected on how their foundational memories from early childhood linked to Froebel's principles.

Te Whāriki and Froebel

The four principles of Te Whāriki have been influenced by Froebel's philosophy (Meade, Fugle, and McCaul, 2018). Participants were required to first demonstrate the explicit links they could see between the two (e.g., community and relationships).

What Matters Here?

The question 'what matters here?' was posed to ignite thinking about their setting, their children, their families, and their community to consider what matters, and what are the important learnings for their children. (Bruce and Dyke, 2017). Participants then looked at Froebel's principles, and considered which best aligned with what they had previously identified as the things that mattered to their communities, and how Froebel's principles might be used to help them develop this.

Song, Rhyme, and Fingerplays

Participants were introduced to Froebel's Mother Songs and the idea that songs "provided key learning experiences" for children (Tovey, 2017, p. 101). They shared songs they already use in their setting and considered how these aligned with Froebel's approach. They also reflected on the ways in which the songs relate to everyday experiences of the children.



Educators sharing thoughts on their setting

Evaluation

Impact

All the participants indicated a shift in their understanding of Froebel's principles, and an understanding of how these principles align with Te Whāriki. It is vital to consider the child's voice, so visiting these settings to observe how the child reacts and participates in song and rhyme would be another key way to measure the impact of this project.

Sustainability

Bruce (2012) highlights the need for practice to be continually reflected upon and reviewed so that it remains relevant for the context of the setting and the everyday life of the child. Therefore, it is important to continue to network with the participants of the workshop and support them in reflecting on their adapted practice.

References

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