

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

**REPORT BY - MARGARET OWENS CHURCHILL
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RESEARCH SCOPE

To research theory and practices associated with development of centres of excellence for early childhood care and education, involving families, children and the community with a view to improved outcomes for children's behaviour, learning and health in later life and the influence of the aesthetic environments has on young children's learning.

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Signed: Margaret Owens

Dated: 30 September 2003

INDEX

Introduction	3
Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	4
Fellowship	6
Conclusion	18
Recommendations	19
Itinerary	20

INTRODUCTION

The basis on my 2002/2 Winston Churchill Fellowship was to study the role and importance of the early years of life to children's health, education and well being. The services I chose to study had the reputation of providing high quality early childhood care and education services with an integrated curriculum that was inclusive of working in partnership with children, parent and the community. Alongside this focus I investigated the application of various pedagogies, the diversity of forms of delivery and range of curricula and the criteria and attributes of Centres of Excellence. I was particularly interested in the development of comprehensive multidisciplinary early childhood services.

My fellowship enabled me to travel to 5 countries over 10 weeks. The countries visited were Canada, America, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom. I visited 28 centres and met with 27 early years professionals. All had reputations for combining research, best practice, innovation, and diversity in their delivery of early childhood care and education services.

Each country had something new to learn. Canada gave me insight as to how the knowledge from brain research can influence and be applied to practice. The United States of America showed me a variety of pedagogical styles. Scandinavia had a consistency of high quality early childhood services that demonstrated a respect and value of children. Their world reputation for providing high quality early childhood services is justly earned. England is pioneering the development of comprehensive multidisciplinary early childhood services and integrated professional development training opportunities across a range of disciplines. All these countries provide models or aspects from the models that could be adapted for Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful and sincerely thank the Winston Churchill Trust for the honour and privilege of giving me this unique opportunity to be a recipient of a Churchill Fellowship. The whole experience has been an invaluable learning journey that will continually to have an impact on both my professional and private life. It is my intention to share this experience and my findings as widely and broadly as possible within the Western Australian community, nationally and globally where possible.

Most importantly I am indebted to the love and support of my brother, sister, my close friends and referee's for their unwavering support, love and their encouragement throughout my application process, travel and report writing.

My sincere thanks and gratitude to all the wonderful talented people I met during my travels. They extended their warm hospitality and friendship as well as sharing their knowledge and wealth of expertise with me. I especially want to thank the children I met during my travels who warmly welcomed, accepted and openly shared their experiences with me.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the words of Martin Luther King "I have a dream" that one day early childhood care and education services in Western Australia will emerge themselves into a seamless education system. That ultimately embodies the true concept of trust, respect, responsibility and self-confidence in children who are viewed as responsible citizens who not only receive, but also contribute, to society in many diverse forms within an emergent curriculum.

The basis of my 2002/2 Winston Churchill Fellowship was principally formed around the role and importance of the early years to the health and well being of children. It examined the current trend of diverse early childhood services, the role of working in partnership with children, families and the community. Alongside investigating the criteria and attributes associated with centre of excellence in early childhood services. Explore the pedagogical practices and the provision of multidisciplinary early year's services across countries such as Canada, America, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The commonality across all countries visited and Australia is the increased understanding and awareness for investing in early childhood education and care programs. In particular early year's programs that provide families opportunities to work in partnerships with communities and agencies through a range of diverse integrated programs.

Alongside early childhood care and education programs, services were offering a diverse range of programs for families in areas of nutrition, health, baby massage, employment programs, budgeting skills, all based on their local community needs. It was interesting to observe the shift towards integrated multidisciplinary early years programs for children and families, all operating from early years (childcare or school) sites and how this is applied in the countries visited.

It was equally interesting to observe how the countries visited approached integrated early years programs. Application was as diverse as the programs. For example government - policies changes to support programs, corporate – funding for ongoing research, tertiary – changes to training modules, research – to analyse and investigate and promote the role of early years or practice – integrated programs. Some countries had a combination of these whilst others had aspects of integrated programs.

With the central shift towards providing early years integrated programs for children and families it appeared that the fundamental pedagogy principles were being lost or overlooked. Outcome based learning formed the major component of learning for all children across the early years with little or no attention given to the process of learning with the exception of the Scandinavia countries. I found myself constantly analysing my observations, reflecting upon the fundamental pedagogical values and principles of the role of child initiated/centered or an emergent curriculum across care and education. However the value of a child initiated/centered or emergent curriculum was put into perspective when I visited the Scandinavia countries and the long term outcomes for children's health education and well being was clearly evident.

Additionally many of the professionals I met with expressed their pedagogical concern along with the lack of coherence and co-ordination of early childhood care and education services. They raised concerns with the practice of labeling children at risk in order to provide them with access to programs and services that may not otherwise be available including preschool.

Alongside these concerns was the global issue pertaining to the low status of training and remuneration for childcare professionals. The alarm and concern raised in America with the current status of employment for childcare being 16 years of age. Clearly a message Australia should heed with changes that have occurred over recent years to the training of our childcare professionals. With our current knowledge about the importance of quality early years programs does this not jeopardise the professionalism of childcare, raise the issue of longevity of quality childcare programs for children and their families as well as the possible effects on children's health, education and well being. Previous research has discussed the economic rationale of every \$1.00 spent in the early years has a saving of \$7.00 in later life in the areas of health, education and well being. Therefore why are we witnessing the continuous abuse of those working in the childcare sector and exposing the vulnerability of our most precious resources children?

How does this match current knowledge about brain development in the early years and embody the issue of valuing and respecting children within our community? What would it mean to our community if we had a government brave enough to implement bipartisan policies for early childhood care and education? How does this build a knowledge nation?

What are the implications for Australia? This is not new knowledge for Australia. It has been well documented and reported broadly in reports such as 2001 OECD report "Starting Strong – Early Childhood Education and Care" and "Child Care Beyond 2001".

It's time to crystallize our dream of improved outcomes for children. Streamlining education and care into a seamless system. Pedagogical practices that embody valuing and respecting children. Recognition of the value for quality early childhood programs through training and remuneration. In the words of Dr. Fraser Mustard get "early childhood under the skin". Improving the outcomes for children goes hand in glove with improving the outcomes for early childhood professionals.

Canada

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

In Toronto and Vancouver I had the delight and pleasure of working with a diverse collaborative team of professionals across health, education, care and welfare lead by Dr. Fraser Mustard. I extend my appreciation and sincere thanks to Dr. Mustard for the sharing of his knowledge and time. Dorothy McKinnon for organising my itinerary for Toronto and Vancouver and her warmth and hospitality.

Dr. Mustard has a dream of getting early childhood under the skin of ministers, governments departments, private sector and the community. Forming a concept of early childhood development to human development, enabling communities to give recognition that early childhood sets the stage for learning, health and behaviour throughout life cycle. He strongly advocates that learning is a dynamic process and is most effective when it begins at a young age and continues through to adulthood. He emphasis's the relationship between development and the early years as a determining factor in children's long term outcomes in learning, behaviour and health risks in the later stage of the life cycle. Critical to this outcome for children is partially dependent upon the partnerships between health, education and welfare disciplines working collaboratively together to improve outcomes for children.

Collaboration and partnerships needs to be approached on several levels. Including ministers, government departments, community, parents, children and non-profit sector but this is not an exclusive list. A key component to the successful outcome of collaboration and partnerships is partially dependent upon the collaboration of government departments mentioned previously jointly with justice, housing and treasury.

A strategy the Canadian's early year's initiative adopted was to relate the importance of early years in terms of education and economics a language that was relevant to and used extensively by ministers and government departments. The Canadian team also incorporated in discussion the concept of what constitutes a safe community in terms of economic and safety for citizens an issue relevant to everyone's lifestyle. The relationships between early years as the foundation for all latter learning and behaviour and the outcomes for safer communities were the essence of these discussions.

Additionally Canada set about engaging voices within the community that ministers would listen too. By forming a joined up approach of professionals across all disciplines to champion the role of the early years. To ensure the ongoing voice and passion for the early years continued Canada worked with people and community members with the same passion to keep the energy going whilst working with others services/organisations to drive through the early year's message to business and governments. They discussed the importance of remaining positive and chipping away slowly and highlighted the need for caution by not trying to do too much too quickly. Emphasised the critical role of engaging corporate bodies in projects and the early year's passion to obtain sustainable funding for 3 years or more and to champion the cause were also shared.

Action research pertaining to initiatives combined with ongoing research around early childhood development is viewed as an essential. Evidence based research and practice forms the basis for all ongoing discussions with ministers to champion and drive the role of the early years forward and influence policies. An essential component is the role of data analysis within individual communities to identifying progress, gaps, community resources required and build a long-term picture of the role, outcomes and importance of the early years. Dr. Mustard Brain Research lead the way forward followed with Dr. Magdalena Janus Early Development Indicators. A child assessment tool to measure all children's readiness to learn at ages 4, 6, 8 and 10 years. Combined with University of British Columbia Community Asset Mapping project. This project measures the communities' effectiveness in preparing all children's readiness to learn by mapping the available resources within communities, identifying the gaps. The asset mapping process provides valuable information for the present and the ongoing future planning of resources for local communities and has been the foundations upon which current policies have been built.

The dream of getting early childhood under the skin has been established by these collaborative partnerships and others not mentioned in this report. This initiative has brought about a heightened increase and awareness along with changes in practices across Canada. However they are the first to state that there is still a long way to go to really bring about significant change and improved outcomes for children and families.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

Across the province of Ontario Canada there is an emergent of early years parenting services providing integrated programs for children and families. In general they operate from school sites and provide childcare, preschool, formal education, parenting programs, and drop in service. All designed to meet the developmental needs of children during the critical early years. Additionally some schools have engaged in the Roots of Empathy program an initiative established by Mary Gordon to prevent bullying in the school environment.

Integrated early childhood programs have been established with a multi-disciplinary team approach to support children and families. I had the privilege of visiting a First Duty Ontario programs established under this model and joined the multi disciplinary team meeting being held. Meeting focused around the developmental and learning needs of children. The richness of discussion at these meetings lead team members towards identifying programs or services that could further support families within their community. Further initiatives being undertaken to progress the integration of programs focused on child care and preschool programs. An outcome of discussions was to improve the flexibility of these programs for children. They established a process whereby children could flow between both programs. It was viewed that this initiative would support children with the transition from childcare to school and provide the opportunity to establishment of relationships for children. Additionally it provided team members the opportunity to discuss and gain an understanding of the individual needs of children, their strengths, areas for strengthening and their areas of interest. This environment also had a variety of resources available for families such as financial planning, employment support programs, computer programs, parenting programs and health issues.

This ecological approach adopts a holistic model of support children and families forms the fundamental foundation upon which families' capacity to support children in the early years of development and learning is strengthened. This jointly strengthens the outcomes for those children health learning and behaviour throughout their life cycle thus impacting on the community for all citizens.

Research, the EDI and community mapping process mentioned previously can play a critical role in supporting communities. It is a tool whereby decisions makers can match education and economic outcomes with the outcomes identified for communities. Enabling communities to reverse what could otherwise be identified as a real brain drain resulting from lack of community resources.

A further strength of integrated programs for children and families is the opportunity that prevails for incidental learning to take place. Creating non-threatening environments whereby children and families can learn from each other simply by providing the opportunities to come together on a regular basis. This has proven to have positive outcomes for children and families.

The approach to have a one stop shop for children and families by using school environments goes a long way towards meeting families' needs. It also prevents families having to juggle their time and expect young children to adapt too many environments and people throughout a day. However of equal importance is the role the aesthetic environments plays in supporting development and learning for both children and families. In general the services visited came across as very cold, institutionalised and cramped. In some environments there appeared to be a clear lack of quality early childhood resources for children. Environments lacking warmth and resources are not conducive to providing a positive development and learning experience for children during the critical early years.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Similarities between Canada and most states and territories in Australia can be drawn with the division between care and education. This results in care and education services being administered from separate governments departments and brings with it the same issues of funding, recognition and training combined with a fragmentation of services for children and their families. Canada is also struggling with issues of recognition for the role and importance that childcare plays towards the long term outcomes of children health, education and well being in the critical early years. Childcare is viewed as babysitting and is reflected in the funding, resources and training attributed to this service by governments. Preschool moves slightly higher up the scale due to the fact it is seen as education, but struggles for recognition in the broader sense of education. This complacency highlights and reinforces the critical role of talking with ministers and governments departments in the broader sense of education and economics to improve services for children in the early years.

Pedagogical practices across care and education focused on structured didactic outcome based learning with an emphasis on mass-produced products. Opportunities to foster children's learning and ability to wonder, exploring, test, predicting, problem-solving, negotiate and seek out information was not evident. Components of an emergent or child centered curriculum that fostered child initiated play with teachers facilitating children's learning by stimulating their play experiences with open ended questioning to encourage children ability to predict, hypothesise, explain, reason and express their opinions was also lacking. Combined with experiences to help children use their observations to construct, make inferences and predictions and use information creatively in solving problems did not form part of the curriculum.

Representatives from early childhood training institutes raised and discussed their concerns with me in terms of the structured didactic early childhood programs being offered to children across care and education. They discussed the role of an emergent curriculum and the difficulty of bringing about change across these disciplines. To support the industry with the change from a structured curriculum to an emergent curriculum Jane Bertrams from Ontario institute for Studies in Education (OSIE) has developed a change measurement tool for the industry to support the change process through an action research and a reflective practice model.

Discussions also lead to the remuneration and conditions of employment varying across care and education. The ability to bring about significant and sustainable change is difficult whilst this disparity between care and education remains. In reality it forms a formidable force against any significant change. The disparity experience here is comparable to that identified in the research conducted by OECD Starting Strong for Australia. Having said this however does not mean that it is O.K. to allow this to continue and raises the question about how serious we are about addressing the role and importance of the early years for children and families.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

The openness and willingness to share professional knowledge, expertise and time across health education and welfare was commendable. The coming together around tables, across the internet and visiting services/organisations to discuss issues and how to work collaboratively together to support children and families in the early years. This approach has left lasting impression on me. It brought about an analysis and pondering the value of Australia's tendering process along with how our programs would look, feel and sound like if we all worked collaborative together for children and families in the early years and the long term benefit this would have for our community.

AMERICA

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

My visit in America took me to Los Angeles, Chicago and Michigan. I was exposed to a wide range of early childhood care and education services across private and public domains. Collaboration, partnerships and integrated programs formed key components of early childhood services and implemented within an American context.

Collaboration and partnership that I observed were approached on a three-tier mandate of practice, professional organizations and research.

For example in Chicago the Harris Institute founded by Irving Harris a 93-year-old gentleman who plays a vital role in supporting initiatives for the early years within the community. For example he sponsors the Erikson Institute that undertakes training for early childhood professionals.

I attended an early childhood conference that emphasised the importance of brain research and the responsibility business has to early childhood and children issues. Discussions undertaken at the conference identifying issues such as finance, roles, recognition of care and education were all debated at the conference with professionals from health, education, welfare, justice, tertiary institutes, business, senator and universities all participating to bring about a sustained and ongoing change for early childhood years.

At a practice level within a school environment a multi disciplinary team of care, education, welfare and health professionals came together to plan, develop and evaluate their family partnership program.

The Early Childhood Council in Chicago brought together professionals across all disciplines combined with representatives from federal and state governments. This group discussed the infrastructure and resources required to meet the needs of care and education services for the delivery of family support programs. Representatives from state and federal government present at the meeting outlined their process for supporting the childcare industry by ensuring that all funding being made available to establish programs did not compete or conflict with each other. Representatives worked closely together to develop strategies for ensuring services knew what funding was available and provided support with the application and implementation stages of the funding.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

Evidence of integrated early childhood programs was occurring at some of the early childhood programs I visited ranging from parenting centres through to grade 7 all operating on school sites.

Carole Robertson Centre for Learning located in Chicago with a high population of Mexican Americans provided diverse programs within a multi-disciplinary team approach to support children and families. This service had a large infrastructure on site that enabled them to provide a broad range of programs across a multi disciplinary team to children and families. Here again families had the opportunity of support in areas of health, financial management, training and employment preparation. A further point of interest here was also the initiatives undertaken to progress the integration of programs. There was a focus on childcare and preschool program by providing flexibility within programs for children to flow between both programs. Supporting children with the transition to be undertaken at the beginning of their school year program and providing the opportunity for the establishment of relationship for children prior to commencing school.

Team members within the Carole Robertson Centre also came together on a regular basis to discuss individualised needs for children and families. They planned and evaluated programs for families. To ensure programs or services were working collaboratively with each other in order to provide positive outcomes for families that did not place unnecessarily stress or pressure on families that was outside their present level of attainment.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Pedagogy practices across care and education in the three states visited varied greatly. However a constant across all was the focus on structured teacher directed outcome based learning related to the current government strategy of no child being left behind. The interpretation of what constitutes a child centered, child initiated Reggio Emilia or an emergent curriculum appeared more diverse than the diversity between all of these models. Theorist such as Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner or social constructivisms in general with the exception of a couple of services did not feature as a key component for children's learning and development. Reflective practice as an area of professional development emerging within Australia forming a key function of pedagogy practices in Europe was evident in one service visited. This service placed a strong emphasis on reflect practice using tools such as daily video recording whereby teachers evaluated, analysed their practices along with children's learning, development and interests to adapt and modify practices and curriculum for children.

All the academics I meet with expressed their concern and disillusionment with the current direction of early childhood under the current government's administration. They raised concerns relating to the strategy of no child being left behind and the push down to structured didactic learning within the education system to preschool children as young as 4/5 years of age. A curriculum that focused on outcomes of reading, writing and arithmetic implemented through a rote learning program. Little or no attention placed on the process of learning that equips children with skills that are transferable throughout the life.

With the current direction and focus on outcome based learning is resulting in large numbers of 4/5 year olds being pushed through system of achievement.

In addition programs observed focused on children achieving set activities directed from the teacher. Accordingly the role of teacher/child or child/child relationships appeared not to form part of the curriculum along with developing an interest and passion for learning during the early years that sets the stage/foundation for future learning. The experience gained from of the majority early years learning environments visited were cold, felt devoid of warmth and nurturing. Children were rushed through set activities, little or no choice for children to explore strategies that foster children's learning by wondering, exploring, testing, predicting, problem solving negotiating and seek out information. Spontaneous learning outcomes self-initiated play to support children feeling competent in solving problems that require new skills were also lacking. Identifying children's interests, abilities and discussing the extend these impacted on individual children and or groups was not evident. Open ended questioning to encourage children to predict, hypothesise, explain reason and express their opinions was not observed.

Experiences to help children use their observations to construct, form generalisations and concepts, make inferences and predictions and use information creatively in solving problems were not evident in any programs visited during my stay. The majorities of services visited discussed child-initiated curriculum and were strong advocates for this curriculum within their services. However implementation of this form of curriculum was undertaken from a teacher focused outcome based learning. That is the children were offered the opportunity within a set time to make for example a boat using a piece of cupboard prepared by the teacher along with the five craft objects for gluing onto the cardboard again provided by the teacher.

Programs such as Highscope in Michigan focus more on the process of learning rather than outcomes. However they mentioned their need to adapt their program to meet the current government strategy of no child being left behind.

However a most disturbing issue raised by academics I meet with was the current training programs for childcare and the preschool system. On several occasions I was informed that the qualification for childcare was 16 years of age and breathing. Training institutes try to encourage childcare workers to undertake a minimum of 12 hours. Pre school teachers are required to have a 2-year early childhood college degree and teachers in formal education are required to have a university degree.

Here again the Highscope foundation provides the opportunity for childcare workers to undertake a training program focused on the Highscope curriculum. At completion of this training these people are then employed as co-ordinators within the school system to delivery a child initiated program for early childhood. As mentioned previously the interpretation of what constitutes a child initiated program varies greatly. Due to scarce financial resources Highscope do not have the human resources to provide ongoing support, coaching and mentoring to those who have undertaken their training program.

The value and respect being acquired to the early years from a governmental perspective within America currently appears not to place great value on aspects such as training, curriculum framework, value of children and their role within the community. Why would Australia entertain the notion that we would want to adopt current American pedagogy practices for our Australian children? How does this or would this build a community that had compassion and understanding for others in a knowledge nation? It was many of these issues that lead me to ponder the observed differences between pedagogical practices of a structured didactic process and that of a child/centered/initiated or emergent curriculum.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Attending early childhood council meeting whereby care and education meet to discuss issues from curriculum, resources, research, practices, financial and training. The collaboration between federal and state services at this meeting to support childcare in obtaining resources and funding. Ensuring there was no conflict of interest or competition for services occurring goes a long way in the delivery of early childhood services that supports children and families.

SCANDINAVIA

I had the delight and pleasure of visiting two Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Sweden. This has been a dream of mine for many years. As an early childhood professional I have developed a passion to gain a deeper understanding of the pedagogical approach in these countries. This experience lived up to my expectations and beyond. Since my return I have had difficulty articulating my experience mainly because it's and experience of society, culture norms, values and beliefs. The safety, sense of community, belongingness, openness and hospitality I experienced I believed is indicitived of their society.

EARLY CHILDHOOD VALUES OF TRUST, RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

For this section of my report, I'm going to deviate from the format largely because of the universal services and the pedagogical practices that they are well known for.

Trust, respect and responsibility is an entire approach that encumbers every aspect of the Scandinavian society. An experience I will carry with me for my entire life. How I would like to see this translated into our community.

To gain an understanding of the difference between Scandinavia and other welfare states, it's relevant to note in particular the welfare reform era that layed the foundation in Sweden that forms the rights and benefits of social policy that has allowed them to reach the high levels of citizen related universalism for standards of living. Similar reforms were undertaken in other Scandinavia countries during these eras. The basis of social policy reform in Sweden relates back to the speech by the 1928 Prime Minister Hansson where he stated:

"The basis of the home is community and the feeling of togetherness. The good home knows no privileged or disadvantaged individuals, no favourites and stepchildren. There, one does not look down upon another, there, nobody tries to gain an advantage at the cost of another, the strong one does not hold down and plunder the weak. In the good home equality, consideration, helpfulness prevail. Applied to the great people's and citizens' home, this would mean the breaking down of all social economic barriers, which now divide citizens into privileged and disadvantaged, into rulers, and dependants, into rich and poor, propertied and miserable, plunders and plundered".

Having read this quote since my return has crystallised for me my experience in Scandinavia that I have struggled to articulate. The structure of Sweden curriculum framework for pre-school, compulsory schooling and secondary schooling is in accordance with the democratic values of the country. This is translated in Sweden in broad terms to their curriculum in areas of fundamental values, understanding and compassion for others, objectivity and comprehensiveness and the tasks of the pre-school. The curriculum framework also address areas of goals and guidelines, norms and values, development and learning, influence of the child, pre-school and home and cooperation between the pre-school class, and the leisure-time centre (known in Australia as Outside School Hours Care). Aims of schools in Scandinavia is not just to ensure children acquire certain knowledge, it is also an environment to convey to them the central values of society and to see to it that they become able citizens in society.

The value of the system is its approach to seamless care and education to which they do not discriminate but rather approach as one system for children. This provides for a continuous and building upon the frameworks and structures in existence clearly evident in how the curriculum from preschool to compulsory schooling etc has been developed. For example in Scandinavia all pupils in a class remain together for their entire schooling from grade one through to grade 9 and are usually taught by the same teachers throughout the entire course.

The pedagogy of Scandinavia views early childhood as providing a rich daily life carrying its own rewards. That includes learning and development as an essential ingredient, along with satisfying peer interactions, engaging interaction between children and adults, meaningful play opportunities and ensuring that the environment is child ready by creating environments from the child's perspectives. Interests and needs inclusive of the child's psychological environment needs that assist children in developing a sense of suitability, a feeling of belonging, well-being and capacity to succeed in this new place. Schools view themselves as an important part of the ecological process and highlight the connections between families, schools kindergarten and communities. Scandinavia approach supports children in taking part in the decision-making process through participation in a number of decision making processes at the school and making children responsible for the decision they take. This is viewed as ensuring the credibility of the education system in a democracy.

Children are viewed as responsible citizens and therefore are acquired the same respect as adults. An example of this respect for children is undertaking by never asking a child to do something because an adult has said so. It must make sense and be understood by the child first. This is achieved by and seen as the adult's responsibility to assist the child with their understanding of why something needs to occur. Yes this does take time and demonstrates respects. However respect is not something that is taught but rather something that is demonstrated by one person to another regardless of race, colour, religious beliefs or age.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

I have been left with an enduring impression of the true meaning of trusting, valuing and respecting children within a community. Creating learning environments for children that have a magnificent blend of a warm nurturing home environment combined with a learning environment. How respect trust and responsibility is implemented within a preschool/school environment and the Scandinavian children thirst and self motivation for knowledge and learning and how they take responsibility for their own learning. In addition I was also amazed at children's own ability to self regulate. During my time in these countries in a variety of situation I never witnessed a child or group of children that required guidance for their behaviour. Children, respecting children, adults and the environment are testament to the sweeping social policies changes made in the last century. What could Australia learn from this? Isn't this the community we are striving to achieve?

UNITED KINGDOM

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The United Kingdom has a range of diverse programs in response to the current government's commitment to the role and importance of the early years. Some programs came under the umbrella of Sure Start programs. All programs endorsed the concept of collaboration and partnerships across government, training, research, health, welfare and practice. However some programs felt a reliance on volunteers. Some people raised their concern about the extent that volunteers maintained the ongoing running of programs. Whilst others felt this was too excessive and raised concerns about the sustainability of programs under the structure.

Additionally the ongoing viability of some programs was being raised due to the sliding scale of funding over a set period of time. The ability to maintain collaboration partnerships was being questioned if funding reduced along with the possible increase demands for services.

The establishment of the 1993 Early Childhood Education Forum combined with their focus of the role and importance of the early childhood within the United Kingdom has been attributed to the vision of Dr. Gillian Pugh. This forum brought together 41 member organisations right across the early year's sector. Members were united in their concerns to develop the health, education and wellbeing of children from birth. The strength of this forum is that it reflects a broad range of views and experiences and focused on issues that everyone care about and collaboratively sought to promote across the early years sector. To more closely reflect the voice of representation and reflect its success in integration of early education, care, health and wellbeing the forum changed its name by dropping education from its title and is now known as the Early Childhood Forum. This forum now attracts minister, policies and decisions makers along with other interested parties that sit in and listen to the discussions, issues and debate taking place during meetings.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

The Thomas Coram Centre and Pengreen Centre both provided excellent models of integrated diverse early childhood programs for children and parents that worked in partnership and collaboration with families. These programs are both based on working from the strength of each individual family and building upon that strength. A further strength of these programs is their ability to meet the needs of families from diverse backgrounds within their local communities and the employment of staff from diverse backgrounds to work with families.

Guys Hospital Family Partnership Program lead by Professor Hilton Davies initiated to address the serious concerns that they had identified in their society in relation to family adaptation and the psychological development of children. The fundamental principle of this program is based on the relationship between the family and the family support person. Combined with an understanding of the mechanisms by which intervention is effective. The program is designed to support parents in identify the support or changes they would like to make with their child rearing practices or other issues based on valuing and respecting all partners within the process.

This program is a training model that has been broadened to childcare workers to support them with their partnerships with families and can be adopted by any services that work with families across health, welfare, education and justice.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Pedagogical practices varied from structured, teacher directed, emergent curriculum to child initiated from all services visited in the United Kingdom. Having said this, the majority of programs had aspects of an emergent curriculum that provide opportunities that foster children's learning by wondering, exploring, testing, predicting, problem solving negotiating and seek out information. Spontaneous learning outcomes were enhanced through self-initiated play that supported children feeling competent in solving problems that require new skills. Open ended questioning to encourage children to predict, hypothesise, explain, reason and express their opinions. Programs had a major focus on schemas and supported children's learning by creating environments to support the development of schemas through play.

The service visited on my last day discussed with me the challenge they face and continued to face with the introduction of a child-initiated approach. A program that incorporated indoor/outdoor play occurring as a constant throughout the day combined with a program that encouraged children to be active participants in their own learning process and encouraged teachers to be the facilitators of children's learning.

Hand in hand with an emergent or child centered curriculum goes the valuing and respecting of children. Therefore early childhood professionals are also required to develop skills that support children's social emotional development by assisting children to gain an understanding and compassion for others. This is partly achieved by the role teachers demonstrate in their daily practices with children. This in turn requires teachers not to shout at children, humiliate children by using aggression in the vocal interactions with children whereby you can visually observe children withdrawing into themselves and displaying a fear or uncomfortableness with the current situation.

The Effective Early Learning Programme a strategy that has been developed by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood provides the proforma for evaluating and improving quality in early childhood setting, designed as a professional development programme. This quality improvement is similar to the Quality Improvement and Accreditation system operating in Australia for children service. A major difference between the two is that the English program is designed as a personal professional development program and is voluntary, whereas the Australian QIAS is designed as a professional development program for services. Components such as the adult and environment engagement scale in the English system could also be relevant within the Australian context.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

The diversity and integration of programs provided to families from early childhood services such as the Thomas Coram Centre and Pengreen Centre. Both services provided excellent models of integration, diversity, collaboration and partnership with families within a local community context.

CONCLUSION

Globally the role and importance of the early years related to current research about brain development is at the forefront of all discussions pertaining to the long term outcomes for children health, education and wellbeing and the socio economic impact this has on the community. The link between research and economic rationalism's continues to be debated even in the knowledge of every \$1.00 spent in the early years constitutes a saving of \$7.00 later in life per person.

Multi disciplinary collaborative partnerships is an emerging trend globally in the early years combined with joined up programs that provide diversity for children and families designed to strengthen the outcomes for children and families long term health, learning, wellbeing and behaviour.

Australia along with countries visited has a current trend and emergent in the role and importance of the year years based on brain research. Australia too along with all of these countries is struggling with the role, importance, recognition, disparity training and ongoing professional development for early childhood professionals especially those working within the childcare arena. Therefore if this situation continues the real brain drain will become evident throughout upcoming generations despite the current knowledge we are all equipped with in terms of current brain research. Is this the society and communities we want for the future of our country?

In conclusion the Scandinavia society provides us with an excellent model of the long term outcomes in areas of health, education and well being. Provides us with a model of what it would look like, feel like and sound like when a country ultimately embodies the true concept of valuing and respecting children and the long term outcomes for health, education and well being. Australia why are we not listening?

RECOMMENDATIONS

What would the future of the Australian community hold for its citizens if we seriously analysed the social policy structure within Scandinavia and adopted practices that represented valuing and respecting children and families.

Australia is a player on the world stage across all topics discussed in this report. Therefore Australia needs to become more confident in their own skills, knowledge and abilities and promote this across the global stage.

Clearly the evidence from this research strongly supports the development of centres of excellence across care and education that involves children, families and the communities. As the evidence suggests the three components of collaboration and partnerships, integrated programs and quality pedagogical practices that value and respect children as active participants in their own learning are the main attributes for the criteria of excellence that transforms care and education into a seamless system.

Australia needs to develop less of a reliance on countries such as America when forging policies that have impact on children and families.

Australia has developed collaborative partnerships with Canada and the United Kingdom across health, education and welfare. I would recommend that the Scandinavian countries would be a critical partner as Australia continues to move forward in the development and commitment to the early years.

Australia can only progress forward with the development of the early years by supporting and recognising the important role of people working within the childcare industry. This recognition needs to be reflected in areas of training, remuneration, and conditions. Currently in Western Australia we have teachers seeking a 30% salary increase along with additional non-contact time in recognition of their role. It's time the same drive, energy and professional status was acquired to the childcare industry in the critical foundation years of early childhood development as documented by current research by OECD.

Australia its time to truly value and respect our children by implementing bipartisan policies and strategies at a federal and state level for the early years and reverse the brain drain before it widens further.

INTENARY

DATE	DESTINATION	COUNTRY	CONTACT PERSON
23/04/2003	Mia Mia Child Care Centre Macquarie University	Sydney	Wendy Shepherd
28/04/2003	Founders Network	Toronto	Dr Fraser Mustard
28/04/2003	Roots of Empathy	Toronto	Mary Gordon
29/04/2003	David Thomson	Toronto	David Thomson
29/04/2003	1023 Child Care Centre	Toronto	Collette
29/04/2003	George Brown College Day Care	Toronto	Joyce Gee
30/04/2003	Children at Risk	Hamilton, Toronto	Dr Dan Offord
	Readiness to Learn	Hamilton, Toronto	Dr Magdalena Janus
	Kids Can Fly	Hamilton, Toronto	Sharon Brook
5/01/2003	Conference & Ontario Early Years	Niagara Falls	Donna Daghish
5/02/2003	Ontario's Promise	Toronto	Karen Chan
5/02/2003	Ontario's Institute for Studies in Education	Toronto	Daniel Keating Jane Bertrand
5/02/2003	Toronto First Duty Early Years	Toronto	Jane Bertrand
5/05/2003	UBC – HELP	Vancouver	Clyde Hertzamn
5/05/2003	Westcoast Childcare	Vancouver	Pam Best
5/05/2003	Children's Hospital	Vancouver	Dr. Ron Barr
5/06/2003	Squamish Nation	Vancouver	Gloria Wilson
5/06/2003	BC Aboriginal Childcare Society	Vancouver	Karen Isaac
5/07/2003	Evergreen School Santa Monica	Los Angeles	Alise Shafer
5/09/2003	UCLA Childcare Centre	Los Angeles	
5/09/2003	UCLA University	Los Angeles	Myra Kraus
5/12/2003	Chicago University – Erikson Institute	Chicago	Barbara Bowman
13/05/2003	Carole Robertson Centre for Learning	Chicago	Jill Bradley
13/05/2003	Office of Early Childhood Education	Chicago	Ron Whitmore
15/05/2003	Family Focus	Chicago	Kevin Limbeck
15/05/2003	Voices of Illinois Children	Chicago	Joan Vitale
15/05/2003	Chicago Metropolitan Ass. Educ. Young Children	Chicago	Thomas Layman
20/05/2003	Stottlemeyer Early Childhood Centre	Michigan	Lisa Wasacz

21/05/2003	Janus	Michigan	
22/05/2003	Palmer School	Michigan	Michelle
23/04/2003	Highscope Demonstration Centre	Michigan	Kay
23/04/2003	Highscope	Michigan	Clay Shouse
23/04/2003	Highscope	Michigan	Marjata C. Daniel-Echols
25/05/2003	Denmark University	Copenhagen	Henny Hammershoj
26/05/2003	Sankt Markus Menighedsbornechave Sogns	Copenhagen	Jens
26/05/2003	Denmark University	Copenhagen	Henny Hammershoj
27/05/2003	Nurse, kindergarten, Leisure time Home	Copenhagen	Connie Ostergaard
27/05/2003	Small Nursery	Copenhagen	Aagot Rosenkrantz
28/05/2003	Kindergarten Teachers Union	Copenhagen	Daniella Cecchin
28/05/2003	Nursery	Copenhagen	Jeanette
6/02/2003	Nyra Varvets Skola, Preschool	Sweden	Bengt Oden
6/02/2003	Gotenbergh Stadskansli	Sweden	Madelaine Lundstedt
6/03/2003	Vrango Island preschool/school	Sweden	Annika Levin
6/04/2003	Gotenbergh University	Sweden	Prof. Ingrid Pramling/Samuelsson
6/04/2003	Childcare Centre Visit	Sweden	Sonja Sheridan
6/05/2003	Nova preschool	Sweden	Christina Orrmyr
6/09/2003	Childrens Bureau	London	Sue Owen
6/10/2003	Guys Hospital	London	Prof. Hilton Davies
6/10/2003	Childcare/Sure Start Program	Bromley	
6/11/2003	Effective Early Learning Training Program	Birmingham	Sue Moxon
6/12/2003	Effective Early Learning Training Program	Birmingham	Sue Moxon
16/06/2003	Chapel Street Nursery	Luton	Julia Miller
17/06/2003	Coram Family Centre	London	Bernadette Duffy
17/06/2003	Coram Family Centre	London	Dr Gillian Pugh
17/06/2003	Coram Family Centre	London	Bernadette Duffy

18/06/2003	Hillfields Early Learning Centre	Coventry	Anne Clays
19/06/2003	Pengreen Research, Training Centre	Corby	Margy Whalley
23/06/2003	Cavenstede Early Years Centre	Peterborough	
24/06/2003	Maple Dean Early Years Centre	Hackney	Jan Turner