

Folque, M. A. (2018). Yes we can! Young children learning to contribute to an enabling society. In Huggins, V. & Evans, D. (eds), *Early Childhood Care and Education for Sustainability: International perspectives* (pp.67-81). London: Routledge.

Yes we can! Young children learning to contribute to an enabling society

Maria Assunção Folque

Departamento de Pedagogia e Educação - Universidade de Évora

Introduction

In this chapter we will address the possibility and the relevance of young children learning to participate in society going beyond a view of children as merely fragile in need of receiving the society's attention, protection and fulfilment of needs, into a view of children as citizens, being active contributors to the common good of communities. A pivotal UNESCO paper (2015) takes up the ideas of earlier researchers (Cofield, 2002; Ranson, 2004) in considering a relatively narrow educational aim of "engaging in lifelong learning" without encompassing another important aim of educational systems in democratic societies, namely the development of democratic citizens from an early age. In recent years many researchers, ECE experts and practitioners have been focusing on democratic approaches to ECE pedagogy (Lansdown, 2001; Moss, 2007; Linington, Excell, & Murriss, 2011). This approach requires that we adopt the view explicitly stated by Huggins and Evans in this books' preface that children have:

(...) potential for decision-making and problem-solving (...) linked to children's rights and responsibilities involving a democratic approach and collaborative work rather than to individual learning and development. It sees children as competent, to be empowered to act as agents of change within society.

Such a view is central to the movement supporting Early Childhood Education and Care for Sustainability (ECECfS) which requires that a specific focus be given to children's learning to participate in society, in order to strengthen the social and cultural fabric that sustains social networks as well as to support them in caring for the environmental and economical equilibrium that ensures our common future. If democratic societies are concerned not only with individual fulfilment but also with the cohesion and sustainability of our common good we ought to view education as a

shared social endeavour, which encompasses shared responsibility and commitment to solidarity (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, ECECfS should consider how young children become active participants in this process and should help them “develop an effective sense of participating in an enabling society” (Bruner, 1996:76). Indeed, recent educational publications assume the need to locate sustainable development at the core of a vision for education – Sustainable Development: A central concern (UNESCO, 2015).

In the first section of this chapter we will focus our reflection on early dispositions that can contribute to young children learning to participate in an enabling society. In the second section of the chapter – “Yes we can!” - we will point out some practices that promote such ways of thinking and acting, and this will be clarified with two practical illustrations taken from research projects in which we’ve been involved: “The Council meeting” - children’s learning to solve problems together; and children’s engagement in intervention projects.

Dispositions to contribute to an enabling society

Dispositions have been defined as ‘habits of mind’ (Katz, 1993) or ‘participatory repertoires’ (Carr, 2001) or habits of thinking and doing (Da Ros-Voseles & Fowler-Haughey, 2007). Lilian Katz (1993) defined dispositions as “relatively enduring habits of mind or characteristic ways of responding to experience across types of situations” (Katz, 1985 cited in Katz 1993, p.16). Without diminishing the importance of knowledge in Education for Sustainability, we choose to concentrate here on dispositions that young children must and can develop in order to actively participate and contribute to a sustainable world.

We can take a socio-cultural view of education and learning, which understands learning as change in participation in cultural activities in which children have the opportunity to join (Rogoff, 1998). In this perspective, dispositions are not fixed traits children are born with but rather, dispositions can be developed and strengthened in a particular sociocultural context. “One does not ‘acquire a disposition’, one ‘becomes more or less disposed’”(Claxton & Carr, 2004; p. 88) depending on one’s experiences.

While it seemed at first that there was a need to identify the critical abilities and dispositions to an active citizenship, the complexity of the task soon became apparent and no attempt is made here to identify a comprehensive list that answers all educational needs.

The following list comes from the literature on citizenship and sustainability but also from our reflection about some research projects we have been involved in concerning EfS. We consider/propose as critical abilities and dispositions to an active citizenship: relational agency and active participation, critical thinking and critical participation, and moral development and responsibility.

Relational Agency – active participation

Agency refers to the individual capacity to make choices, in expressing preferences and constructing personal meanings, and to actively participate in society not only by conforming to it but also by acting to transform it (Ranson, 2004). Agency in ECE programmes is exercised with some degree of choice by the active child but within a bounded scope defined by adults. Furthermore some researchers and teachers have been advocating and transforming their practices in order to give children not only choice but also voice (Pollard, 2000; Fieldman, 2004). This view significantly expands children's possibilities to experience their agency and so to transform the communities they live in (Pramling, 2004; Clark & Moss, 2005).

It is also important to recognise that within a democratic framework individual agency – active, expressive, or interventive agency– expands to a group agency where individual actions and points of view are acknowledged and confronted and where, through negotiated consensus, shared values and creative changes are achieved. That means that agency is always relational to the material and social conditions of each culture, which condition children's opportunities to act in different contexts (Ratner, 2000; Esser, Baader, Betz & Hungerland, 2016). Ratner (2000) discusses the interplay of agency and culture and defends the view that agency is not something that can be enacted individually. Criticising some psychologists who put an emphasis on the individual's active role in making and remaking culture, Ratner (2000) states that agency can only be experienced within a culture where social relations facilitate such expression. This implies a democratic culture.

The above perspective calls for an ECEC culture grounded on a social organisation and on social relations that are democratic and which promote the relational agency of all its members (Edwards, 2004). Participation in decision-making, discussions, curriculum management and evaluation gives opportunities for children to be empowered and to contribute not only to their own learning process but also to the collective processes of knowledge generation and ensuring the common good in the classroom (Osterman, 2000; Watkins, 2005; Rogoff, Turkanis & Bartlett 2001; Folque & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001) and also in the community.

Importantly linked with this relational agency is the need for children to display reciprocity, which Carr and Claxton (2002) define as the ability and willingness to engage with others and to co-construct practical and theoretical knowledge. Central to this disposition are collaborative and communication skills, which children develop as they interact with others and are invited to talk, to act, and to engage in collaborative activities and projects, co-constructing shared meanings and purposes.

Critical thinking and critical participation

Critical thinking is the ability to explore and appreciate different possibilities and viewpoints and to use criteria to formulate judgements (Wilson, 2000; Cofield, 2002). Such thinking is of major importance in modern democratic societies where active citizenship is required. Jane Davis-Seaver (2000) criticises viewing critical thinking as either a group of skills acquired separately through instructional programmes and then combined (reductionism) or as some form of formal thinking only acquired later in adolescence (developmental). The author advocates the constructivist viewpoint, where critical thinking abilities are built when children and teachers engage in discussions of problems that are relevant to their lives. This latter view sees critical thinking as including the abilities to ask questions, to wonder about the world, to discover and to criticise (involving negation, contradiction and refusal), where a child is not a passive receiver but an agent of change and political action (Apple and Beane, 1995; Giroux, 2001). Such critical thinking has been emphasised in programmes of personal, social and moral education, education for citizenship (Dewey, 1966; Davies, 1994), inquiry and philosophy for children (Lipman, 1991; Costello, 2000).

For an active citizenship, though, critical thinking is not sufficient if we are not also disposed to participate in addressing the problems we face. *Critical participation*

involves the disposition to think critically and the willingness to express individual views (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) but also to cooperate in transforming one's reality through active intervention. If children are to engage in intervention actions, they need to believe that transformation is possible and that they have the power to change the conditions of their current life. Crucially, they have to feel safe to take risks. For this to happen children need to experience an environment where disagreement is possible and criticism is taken positively as an opportunity to take another's point of view and not interpreted as an act of aggression.

Moral reasoning and responsibility

Critical participation requires personal and social responsibility, and in this context it involves the socio-construction of moral thinking. Lillian Katz (2002) states wisely that not all dispositions are positive in themselves. For instance, being willing to persist despite frustration, to approach situations with imaginativeness and playfulness or to be sensitive to others' intentions and perspectives, and willing to engage in common goals, might also result in some unacceptable behaviour such as ganging up to shoplift, or to vandalise a public space. Critical participation requires the development of the ability and willingness to go beyond individual goals and values and to consider higher forms of moral reasoning. Deakin Crick (2005) places moral and social development at the core of citizenship education. From this perspective, reflection about shared values, human rights, and issues of justice and equality can start to be addressed into ECEC classrooms, creating a Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) where the children's need to consider others' views become relevant and start to emerge grounded in dialogues about meaningful issues.

Some researchers in the early years field (Paley, 1992; Siraj-Blatchford (1994) have shown how young children can actively exclude others from their everyday activities, showing prejudice. Conflicts in pre-school offer a great opportunity to discuss people's feelings, motivations, abilities and rights and to help young children acknowledge differences, begin to develop moral reasoning and progressively self-regulate their own behaviour in relation to the community to which they belong. One of the results of the REPPY research project (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002) shows the importance of conflict resolution and behaviour management strategies involving "talking through conflicts" towards positive social/behavioural outcomes in young

children. Conflict resolution is an important part of some ECE pedagogical models such as the High-Scope Curriculum or the Modern School Movement (MEM) pedagogy (see section on Council Meetings).

Very young children show awareness of other people's feelings and states of mind, and also of issues of justice. The work of Judy Dunn (1998) shows how 2- and 3-year-olds, in the context of their families, display a "grasp of the feelings of others, of their intended actions, and how social rules are applied to other people and to themselves" (Dunn, 1998, p.103). With the acquisition of language, providing that they have the opportunity to interact with adults who themselves talk about feelings and intentions, children become progressively competent also to talk and reflect about others' states of minds and to consider different points of view (Dunn, 1998, Bruner, 1996).

To complement relational agency and critical participation, in democratic societies individuals are also accountable to the community and responsible for its good and progress (Morin, 1999). This social responsibility entails community involvement i.e. being connected with the problems of the community and society and feeling responsible for contributing to the common good (Deakin Crick 2005; UNESCO, 2015).

The involvement of young children in the city – Polis - challenges some views about what the appropriate experiences for young children are, and how far they should be protected from the problems humans face in the world. In 2015, in the context of an international summer course in Évora - *The Crossroads of Development, our world, our dignity, our future*, I had the opportunity to ask Sakiko Fukuda-Parr¹ what, in her view, should be the most important learning for a 4 year old child, if we want to build up sustainability. After one minute thinking about what she considered a tough question she answered: learning to collaborate and to live in the public space.

Encouraging young children to take responsibility for the common good requires some reflection about the appropriate levels of responsibility as well as the meanings of such actions to them. The community can be: the classroom – where they assume

¹ Sakiko Fukuda-Parr is Professor of International Affairs at the New School. She is a development economist who has published widely on a broad range of development policy related issues including poverty, gender, technology, capacity development and agriculture. She is best known for her work as director and lead author of the UNDP Human Development Reports 1995-2004. <http://sakikofukudaparr.net/c-v/>

responsibilities in cleaning up; the school – where they take care of the garden; the local community – where they are involved in a recycling campaign; or the global community – where they start to adopt water-saving strategies despite having enough water supplies in their own country. Such actions can help children to feel they have the power to contribute to the common good.

The question we want to help answer is: how do we conceive ECE pedagogies that will promote young children’s abilities and dispositions to engage with the world in a caring and responsible manner? How can we best help young children to be empowered and feel confident in contributing to a better world?

Pedagogies for participating in an enabling community

The idea of schools that empower children in engaging and participating in the world goes back to the ideas of Dewey (1966), who saw education as deeply linked with democracy. Central to his ideas was the need to involve children with real and meaningful problems that are part of their everyday lives. Many researchers, concerned with the way schools engage with the lives of citizens and the development of communities, follow Dewey’s idea, advocating for a curriculum based on life and inquiry which ensures that students use subject knowledge towards a better involvement with the community and the world they live in (Deakin Crick, 2005).

While considering what learning to live in a democratic society means, it is also important to reflect on the social organisation of the school communities, the interplay between the individual and the group, and the distribution of power between the teacher and children. The increasing interest in classrooms as learning communities (Watkins, 2005) provides a framework for discussing some of classroom characteristics and the learning processes that enable participatory dispositions. Such classroom characteristics are: *inclusivity, an ethos of respect and support, shared responsibilities and shared power and control and dialogue.*

In democratic communities, differences are welcomed and diversity is valued for enriching experiences and viewpoints (Apple & Beane, 1995). The feeling of belonging, personal relatedness, trust in others and safety is fundamental to the functioning of any community (Osterman, 2000; Watkins, 2005) – “Members of a community feel that the group is important to them and that they are important to the

group” (Osterman, 2000:324). Democratic communities ensure the membership and participation of all; individual voices and views are respected and brought to discussion and decision-making (Ranson, 2004).

We want to stress the idea of multi-age classrooms in ECEC settings as a powerful organizational characteristic that promotes children’s learning to care for each other, to acknowledge each other’s needs, capabilities and feelings, and to develop social responsibility (Mendonça-Silva & Folque, 2016).

In classrooms that operate as democratic learning communities there is a shared responsibility, and power is distributed between both children and adults (Watkins, 2005; Rogoff et al., 2001; Folque & Siraj-Blatchford, 2011; Folque, 2014) in conducting the curriculum and the every-day life of the group. This of course relates to things like leadership styles, how staff and parents talk to each other, about each other, and about the children! As well the extent to which they collaborate, or not!

I still encounter too many examples of practitioners and parents using a specially simplified artificial vocabulary and tone of voice with young children, and talking about them ‘above their heads’, which is both deeply disrespectful and weakens the children’s sense of power and agency.

Dialogue is a paramount component of democratic learning communities. As stated before, dialogue is involved in negotiating, discussing, conflict resolution, building relationships, sharing knowledge and points of views, critical participation and collaboration.

Alexander (2004) argues for the use of dialogic teaching in classrooms not only as grounds of better learning but also for citizen education:

“Democracies need citizens who can argue, reason, challenge, question, present cases and evaluate them. Democracies decline when citizens listen rather than talk, and when they comply rather than debate; ... talk builds relationships, confidence and sense of self; ... talk creates and sustains individual and collective identities” (:33).

We share Bruner’s ideal view of the contexts schools provide for children in order to encourage them in participating in an enabling community

“I conceive of schools and pre-schools as serving a renewed function within our changing societies. This entails building school cultures that operate as mutual communities of learners, involved jointly in solving problems with all contributing to the process of educating one another. Such groups provide not only a locus for instruction, but also a focus for identity and mutual

work. Let these schools be a place for the praxis (rather than the proclamation) of cultural mutuality.” (Bruner, 1996:81/2).

In the next section of this chapter we will provide practical examples of children learning to feel they can contribute to the common good, by drawing on some research projects that we have been involved in, including the work of the AfS Project “Building-up Sustainability from early childhood”² (Folque & Oliveira, 2016; Folque, 2016).

Yes we can!

“The Council Meeting” - children learning to solve problems together

The *Modern Education Movement (MEM)* pedagogy is a well-disseminated Portuguese pedagogy, developed by teachers from all levels of education. Aiming to contribute to a democratic society, the exercise of cooperation and solidarity in the school community challenges both adults and children to construct themselves as democratic citizens. In their weekly schedule the teacher and the group of children³ have regular Council Meetings where they talk together about their lives, they plan and evaluate their learning and they jointly regulate the group life. They have a ‘piloting tool’ called Diary with four columns: “We didn’t like”, “We liked” “We did” and “We want” where children and adults write down during the week (Folque, 2008; 2014; Folque & Siraj-Blatchford 2011). In the “We didn’t like” and “We liked” columns the children register individual or group complains or appraisals about other children’s behaviors or attitudes⁴; in the “We did” column they register (during the end of the day Council Meeting) the most significant activities and in the “We Want” column the plans for new activities.

² The project “Construir a Sustentabilidade a partir da Infância” is a comprehensive action-research project, which started in 2012 with an invitation to participate in the OMEP International Education for Sustainable Development Rating Scale (OMEP, 2013). The project in Évora has a specific focus in teachers’ training and in improving quality ESD practices in ECE through action-research projects. The partners of this project are: University of Évora, Centro de Atividade Infantil de Évora (CAIE), Centro Infantil Irene Lisboa (CIIL) and Escola Básica Manuel Ferreira Patrício.

³ MEM classrooms have multi-age groups with children from 3 to 6 years old. The groups can go up to 25 children. Every year the group has new children as well as children that are already socialized into this organisational structure. The older ones help the new children to assimilate such practices as they come to understand their functions and processes.

⁴ Usually an adult writes down what the children want to register. Although, often children start to independently register by writing the names of the children involved.

For the purpose of this chapter we will focus on the conversations the children and the teacher have, based on critical negative incidents. When children find difficulty in solving their conflicts they are encouraged to write in the diary's columns "We didn't like" and to postpone until the "Friday Council Meeting" the discussion about the incident. In the meeting and with the support of the Diary, children talk through what has happened, they clarify their behaviour, and with the support of the group and the teacher, they try to find ways to prevent further conflicts.

"The sources of conflict are discreetly identified: what happened, where, and how it happened what was recorded, without any judicial policing atmosphere, but rather carefully seeking to understand the jolts of life, as someone who fraternally shares a cherished transformation project" (Niza, 2007, p. 4)

In these conversations the children have the opportunity to become aware of, and to discuss, their feelings, motivations, capacities and rights. They also learn to consider different perspectives and to make judgements based not only on the morality of the behaviour but also on the situational conditions from which the problem developed. The main idea is that together they can go through and solve their problems, talking and negotiating ways that will prevent future problems from occurring, as children are supported to progressively regulate their behaviour in relation to the community where they belong. Social rules usually arise from these discussions and are displayed in the classroom. At other times, the children introduce changes in the classroom (e.g. space or materials) that prevent the problem from occurring; children often take responsibility for helping each other in remembering some agreed rules; and in several conversations, just having the opportunity to talk to each other and to clarify what happened is enough for the problem to be solved. Through these discussions the regulative discourse and norms are constructed, building up the ethos of the community.

A deep analysis of the interactions (video-recorded) during CMs and the children's interviews (Folque, 2008; 2014) provides us with some differences in terms of the children's understanding of the regulative process co-constructed during the CMs and the use of the diary in two different classrooms. Learning to solve problems, versus seeing who behaves and who misbehaves, were the two different perceptions that children held about the purpose of the Friday CM discussions of the 'we like' and "we didn't like" columns in each classroom. Briefly we go through some of the elements

of the teacher's pedagogy that were found to be critical for the progress children made in their personal and social development: first, discussing each incident at time, avoiding evaluative generalisations (i. e. we are not respecting each other); second, giving time to the children involved so that the event is clarified and the intentions and contextual features are understood by the group; third, inviting the group to comment, by clarifying and evaluating the behaviour without judging the person, thinking about ways to solve the problem (without punishments) with the support of the group and, finally, giving the children involved the power to say whether the problem has been solved or not without the teacher's manipulation. During these processes the teacher's attitude was paramount in holding a neutral, non-judgemental approach towards the children involved, supporting the child whose action was under criticism so that he/she did not feel accused as a person, encouraging a supportive but critical assessment of the event, respecting children's feelings and not imposing a quick resolution of the problem (Folque, 2008; Folque & Mello, 2015). Such factors led to a clear improvement in children's abilities to discuss behaviour without questioning the person's value, and to understand the role of the group as a supportive factor in solving their problems. Collaboration and cooperation episodes between the children increased and the disputes and competing attitudes decreased throughout the year. By contrast, in the classroom where children saw CMs as a place to establish who had behaved and who had not behaved children showed a less sustained progressive pattern of positive interactions.

Therefore, we stress the need to have “ teachers able to understand the children through a deep understanding of the human nature, able to talk with the children about complex problems and to accept the human being, teachers who understand and accept the children difficulties’ and who also believe in their capacities” (Folque & Mello, 2011; p. 101). When this happened, children's voices were such as this:

Mr (5y 10m) And then, when it is meeting day, we eee ... the presidents go and get the 'Diary' and then, ... We're going to to solve everything!

R - How do you solve things, Mr?

Mr (5y 10m) It is like that: we have to find a way so that we will never hit children anymore .

....

R- ... and that meeting what is it called?

Dg (5y 8 m) - The solving meeting!

(Folque, 2008; 2014)

(The teacher asked the children what they do when they face a problem in the classroom)

I. (5y) - We speak about our problems

P. (4y) - We write what we agree and then we sign.

M. (5y) - We write letters to the Mayor⁵.

(Melo, 2015)

Children's engagement in intervention projects

Children's engagement in projects is widely recognised as an important learning strategy both in ECEC and at other levels of education (Dellors, 1996). In Portugal, as well as in some other countries, there has now been a long tradition of Project work (Vasconcelos et al. 2012; Sylva, Ereky-Stevens & Aricescu, 2015) and this type of work children do in Pre-school is associated with Quality ECE (Ministério Educação, 1998). Projects can be of different kinds: *investigations* in order to answer a question; *production* of some idealised cultural oeuvre (Bruner, 1996) such as a theatre or a wooden play house for the school yard, and *intervention* projects directed to solve (or contribute to) an identified problem in the community (classroom, school, local community or wider community).

In the "Building-up Sustainability from early childhood" project in Évora, we devoted particular attention to promoting such an ethos of intervention in the face of problems of a diverse nature: changing the school playground (Melo, 2015); fixing the classroom library; cultivating vegetables for self-sufficient consumption in the ECE centre (Folque, 2016); All these projects emerged from the children's identification of a problem and they involved small groups, the classroom or the school with the adults and community members (including politicians) working together.

As an example, in the project "*The Street is Mine!*" children from 0 to 6 and their families and teachers organized a rally campaigning for traffic control and city mobility. The gradual removal of children from public spaces has its origin in the increasing concern of adults with children's security. Also, as cars have progressively occupied the public space of the cities, the restrictions on pedestrians' use have followed, reducing their enjoyment of the facilities. Despite a considerable awareness

⁵ The children wanted to make some changes in their playground, as it had some problems: no shadows, and they hurt themselves when falling on in the ground.

of this problem in some countries or cities, in Portugal this is still a problem, which affects children's lives and their participation in the public spaces.

The Centro de Atividade Infantil de Évora (CAIE) is a charity ECEC setting located in an old building of the historic city of Évora. With long-standing experience in working with children from 0 to 6 years old, Education for Sustainable Development is at the core of its educational project. CAIE has been part of the ECO-schools project⁶ since 2003, and a full partner in the "Building-up Sustainability from early childhood" project since 2012 (Folque & Oliveira, 2016; Godinho, 2015). One of the main intentions of the staff is to promote children's integration into the community by using the local resources in the city (gardens, public library, communal vegetable gardens, local swimming pool) instead of trying to have their own private resources inside the centre. This conscious practice contributes to the children's participation in the public spaces – social sustainability - as well as to environmental and economic sustainability through sharing resources of the community (OMEP, 2013).

This option implies going out of the institution frequently, which carries a number of implications such as issues related to accessibility, mobility and safety. The narrow streets of Évora do not have sidewalks for pedestrians, and when CAIE children go out they often make comments such as "cars should not pass on our street!" The teachers and assistants have to adopt - and involve the children in - very strict security measures in their frequent outings.

During the European Mobility Week, the CAIE's staff encouraged children to develop various actions to promote the improvement of mobility and accessibility, and to explore issues such as pollution and excessive fuel consumption. In reflecting about the conditions for pedestrians inside the historic centre – of which children had extensive personal knowledge - they once again expressed the idea that "cars should not pass on our street!" From that, "The street is mine" action was developed in partnership with the local authority and the Police. It involved the temporary closure of the street to car traffic in the street of the setting, and aroused the interest of the community and the media. Tricycles, bicycles, scooters, walkers and baby strollers filled the street that morning. The children showed up shouting "The street is mine!" holding campaign banners. The municipality collaborated, promoting a Hip-hop class

⁶ Foundation for Environmental Education. Eco-schools programme. <http://www.eco-schools.org/>

on the street that managed to capture the attention of passers-by who were sensitive to the problems concerning mobility. The initiative was published on the local newspaper “Diário do Sul”’s first page - "Children Marked the European Day Without Cars". In the pre-school classrooms, the teachers showed the newspaper to the children and they revisited and commented on what happened and discussed further the meanings of their own actions and the importance of this initiative, and talked of the potential environmental and social implications for the future. After this event, parents got more involved and motivated to collaborate in solving the CAIE accessibility problems. There was a meeting with the local authority, where various parties made wider “commitments”! The municipality is considering the change of the traffic rules and defining areas where the cars have to slow down their speed and give priority to pedestrians. The CAIE parents started a pool system in order to reduce car traffic in taking their children to school.

Intervention projects are not so common in ECE, perhaps due to the difficulty in adopting what is a relatively recent view of children as citizens (already discussed in this book). Nevertheless, we want to emphasise its relevance in helping children build up a sense of responsibility and also in empowering children in their lives. Through intervention projects, children learn that in face of a problem they can do something about it, instead of either feeling helpless or dependent on adults.

Yes - children can contribute to change some of the problems that affect our daily life! These were the lessons learned by the children in Évora

In this chapter we hope to have contributed mainly to understanding some social and political dimensions of sustainability, debating how to promote young children’s dispositions to act for change, as they get involved in decision-making and problem solving. We started by identifying critical dispositions, which children can develop from a very young age and which will allow them to face problems with confidence and to find ways to solve them in cooperation with others. We saw how young children did this in relation to their every-day, common problems (i.e. conflicts, disputes) in and out of the classroom, and also to more complex problems which they identify in their communities. By doing this we claim that they learned to consider other people’s points of view, the material and economic constraints, and to critically appreciate ideas and values in order to find ways to contribute to an enabling society. Most importantly, they learned that YES, THEY CAN face these problems not by

themselves but by collaborating with others (peers, teachers, families and members of the community), through dialogue and mutual work.

Bibliography:

- Alexander, R. (2004). *Towards Dialogic Teaching*. Uk, Dialogos.
- Apple, M. W., & Beane, J. A. (Eds.). (1995). *Democratic Schools*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Carr, M. (2001). *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning stories*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Carr, M., & Claxton, G. (2002). Tracking the development of learning dispositions. *Assessment in Education*, 9(1), 9-37.
- Clark, A., & Moss, P. (2005). *Spaces to play: more listening to young children using the Mosaic approach*. London: National Children's Bureau.
- Cofield, F. (2002). Skills for the Future: I've got a little list. *Assessment in Education*, 9 (1), 39-43. DOI: 10.1080/09695940220119157
- Costello, P. J. M. (2000). *Thinking skills and Early Childhood Education*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Da Ros-Vossles, D., & Fowler-Haughey, S. (2007). Why children's dispositions should matter to all teachers. Beyond the Journal-Young Children on the Web. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children <https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200709/DaRos-Voseles.pdf>
- Davis-Seaver, J. (2000). *Critical thinking in Young Children*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Davies, I. (1994). Education for Citizenship. *Curriculum*, 15(2), 67-76.
- Deakin Crick (2005). Citizenship Education And The Provision Of Schooling: A Systematic Review of Evidence. *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education*, 1(2), 56-75.
- Dellors, J. et. al. (1996). *Learning the treasure within*. Paris: UNESCO
- Dewey, J. (1966). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Free Press.
- Dunn, J. (1998). Young Children's Understanding of Other People: Evidence from Observations within the Family. In M. Woodhead, D. Faulkner & K. Littleton (Eds.), *Cultural Worlds Of Early Childhood*. London: Routledge
- Edwards, A. (2004). Relational Agency and Disposition in Sociocultural Accounts of Learning to Teach. *Educational Review*, 56(2), 147-155.

- Esser, Florian (2016). Neither “thick nor “tin”. Reconceptualising agency and childhood relationally. In Florian Esser, Meike S. Baader, Tanja Betz & Beatrice Hungerland (Eds) *Reconceptualising Agency and Childhood: New Perspectives in Childhood Studies*. (48-60). New York: Routledge.
- Fielding, M. (2004). ‘New Wave’ Student Voice and the Renewal of Civic Society. *London Review of Education*, 2(3), 197-217.
- Folque, M. A. (2008). An investigation of the Movimento da Escola Moderna (MEM) pedagogy and its contribution to learning to learn in Portuguese Pre-schools. PhD Thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.
- Folque, M. A. (2014). *O aprender a aprender no Pré-escolar: o modelo pedagógico do Movimento da Escola Moderna*. (2nd Ed.) Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Folque (2016). Construir a Sustentabilidade a Partir da Infância. Poster presented at the “a formação de Educador@s e professor@s na UniverCidade de Évora”. Universidade de Évora 19 february.
- Folque, M. A. & Oliveira, V. (2016). Early Childhood Education For Sustainable Development in Portugal. In **Siraj-Blatchford**, John, **Mogharreban**, Cathy, **Park**, Eunhye (Eds.), *International Research on Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood* (pp. 103-122). New York: Springer. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-42208-4
- Folque, M.A. & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2011). Fostering Communities of Learning in Two Portuguese Pre-school Classrooms Applying the Movimento da Escola Moderna (MEM) Pedagogy. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 43(3), 227-244.
- Folque, M. A. & Mello, S. (2015). Criar uma comunidade com crianças dos três aos seis anos: o desenvolvimento pessoal e social na infância. In Cleriston dos Anjos (org.) *Infância e Educação: olhares sobre contextos e cotidianos*. Pp 89-104. Maceió: Universidade Federal de Alagoas.
- Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Godinho, F. A. (2016). A rua é minha!. *Cadernos de Educação de Infância*, 106, 16-19.
- Katz, L. (1985). *Dispositions in Early Childhood Education*. ERIC/EECE Bulletin 18(2): 1-3.
- Katz, L. (1993). *Dispositions: Definitions and implications for early childhood practices*. Catalog No. 211 Perspectives from ERIC/EECE: Monograph series no. 4. Online: <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/eeearchive/books/disposit.html>
- Katz, L. (2002). Not all dispositions are desirable: implications for assessment. *Assessment in Education*, 9(1), 53,53.
- Lansdown, G. (2001). Promoting children’s participation in democratic decision-making. Florence: Innocenti UNICEF.
- Linington, V., Excell, L. & Murris, K. (2011). Education for participatory democracy, *Perspectives in Education*, 29(1), 36-45.**
- Lipman, M. (1991). *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Melo, I. (2015). *Aprender a resolver problemas em conjunto*. Paper presented at Seminário internacional Construir a Sustentabilidade a partir da Infância, 11 April Universidade de Évora.
- Niza, S. (2007). Editorial, *Escola Moderna*, 30 (5ª série), 3-4
- Mendonça-Silva, A. & Folque, M. A. (2016). Processo de Aprendizagem em grupos heterogeneos. Papper presented at II Seminário Luso-Brasileiro de Educação de Infância. Braga.
- Ministério da Educação (1998). *Qualidade e Projeto na Educação Pré-escolar (Quality and Project in Pre-school Education)*. Lisboa: DEB-GEDEPE.
- Morin, E. (1999). *Seven complex lessons in Education for the future*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Moss, P. (2007). Bringing politics into the nursery: early childhood education as a democratic practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(1), 5-20.
- OMEP (2013). OMEP Environmental Rating Scale for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood (ERS-SDEC). <http://www.worldomep.org/en/esd-scale-for-teachers/>
- Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' Need for Belonging in the School Community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323-367.
- Paley, V. G. (1992). *You Can't Say You Can't Play*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pollard, A., Triggs, P., Broadfoot, P., Osborn, M., & McNess, E. (2000). *What Pupils Say: Changing Policy and Practice in Primary Education*. London New York: Continuum.
- Pramling, I. (2004). How Do Children Tell Us about Their Childhoods? *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 6(1). <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v6n1/pramling.html>
- Ramson, S. (2004). Configuring School and Community for Learning: the role of governance. *London Review of Education*, 2 (1), 3-15. DOI:10.1080/1474846042000177447
- Ratner, C. (2000). Agency and Culture. *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30(4), 413-434.
- Rogoff, B. (1998). Cognition as a Collaborative Process. In D. Kuhn and R. S. Siegler (eds), *Handbook of child psychology: Cognition, perception, and language* (Vol. 2, pp. 679-744). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rogoff, B., Turkkanis, C. G., & Bartlett, L. (2001). *Learning together: children and adults in a school community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pramling Samuelson, I. & Kaga, Y. (Ed.) (2008). The contribution of Early Childhood Education to a sustainable society. Paris: UNESCO.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (1994). *The Early Years: Laying de Foundations for Racial Equality*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

- Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R., & Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years* (No. 356): Department for education and skills.
- Siraj-Blatchford, J., Smith, K. C. & Samuelsson, I. P. (2012) *Education for Sustainable Development in the Early Years*. Sweden: OMEP.
- Sylva, K. Ereky-Stevens, K. Aricescu, A. M. (2015). Report D2.1. Overview of European ECEC curricula and curriculum Template. In CARE project - Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).
- UNESCO (2014). Sustainable Development Post-2015 begins with Education. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2015). Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good? Paris: UNESCO.
- United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015.
- Vasconcelos, T. (Coord.). (2012). Trabalho por Projetos na Educação de Infância – Mapear Aprendizagens, Integrar Metodologias. Lisboa: Ministério da Educação – DGIDC.
- Watkins, C. (2005). Classrooms as learning communities: a review of research. *London Review of Education*, 3(1).
- Wilson, V. (2000). *Can Thinking Skills Be Taught? A paper for discussion in Education Forum on Thinking Skills* (No. Spotlights 79.). Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*: Harvard university Press

Further reading:

Siraj-Blatchford, J., Mogharreban, C. & Park, E. (Eds.), *International Research on Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood*. New York: Springer. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-42208-4

Education for Sustainable Development OMEP web-page: <http://worldomep.org/en/education-for-sustainable-development/>

Questions:

1. From reading this chapter, what kind of ideas do you think relevant to your practice? Which ones do you think more difficult to take on board?
2. In face of a problem, do you involve children in thinking and finding ways to solve it? If so, in what kind of problems does this happens? If not, why?
3. How do you think young children can contribute to the common good of their own community?

