

1. PRESENTERS NAMES

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2. CATEGORY OF PROPOSED OFFERING

Presentation (20 min., plus 10 min. Q&A)

3. DESCRIPTION

Title: The Power of Observation and Reflection: An International & Historical View, 1900s -1960s

Systematic data collection about young children—whether through observation methods or other means—is central to twenty-first century early childhood research and reflective practice; however, this was not always the case. Using mainly archival documents, this paper describes exemplars drawn from four case studies of schools at the forefront of a 20th-century transformation in the relationship between teacher/practitioner and child, a transformation which happened in the context of empathy-infused child-centred settings on the one hand, and scientific, observation-based research-informed pedagogy on the other.

The case study schools - The Hampstead War Nurseries (London), The Dewey School (Chicago), The Malting House School (Cambridge), and the Caetano de Campos Kindergarten (São Paulo) are from our current Froebel Trust-funded project, 'New Education and the Researched Child: 1900s -1960s'. In it, we investigate how ground-breaking individuals, informed by Froebel, Dewey, Anna Freud, and Susan Isaacs, worked as researchers and carer-educators of children. We seek to identify the scientific, social, political and other dynamics and their influence on how research with children was undertaken and understood in these particular schools and in their broader local/national and transnational contexts.

Our paper discusses a sample of the technologies used within and across these schools, which include: observation in (un)structured situations; psychologically-informed attention to behavior and/as indicators of emotion, cognition, and learning; efforts at data triangulation; psychoanalytic interpretation of observation data, and more. It then connects these with the conceptualization of the child as subject and object of research in these schools, and (re)consider the status of research-based knowledge about children within the institutions and the field.

4. Keywords: observation, young children, experimental schools, research

5. Technology request: digital projector with computer