

# OMEP World Project

Since 2009, OMEP World Project has invited member countries to participate in research focused on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). A new research focus is proposed each year with a report being sent to OMEP project leaders in Sweden. Aotearoa New Zealand has been involved in and contributed valuable data to each project.

**The overall aim of the ESD project** is to enhance the awareness of Education for Sustainable Development among OMEP members, young children and early childhood education at large.

**Phase 1: 2009/2010 – Children’s interviews.** Children’s perspectives and understandings on what was happening in the OMEP 2010 Congress logo picture showing children with cloths and buckets cleaning the World.

Researchers: Diti Hill, Lyn Foote & Fiona Ellis.

**Phase 2: 2010/2011 – ESD in Practice.** Children, teachers, parents or other adults choose together how to organise ESD practice projects; what can be done in everyday life and what to focus on.

Researchers: Lyn Foote, Fiona Ellis, Glynne Mackey

**Phase 3: 2011/2012. Intergenerational Dialogues in ESD.**

Children and teachers are asked to engage in intergenerational dialogues around three specific goals for a sustainable lifestyle.

Such dialogues can bring mutual benefits for the young children and their teachers and caregivers, based on the local context and including indigenous and traditional knowledge. The goals for Part 3 are chosen because we know that these kinds of activities involve all three dimensions of ESD (social-cultural, environmental and economic) as well as empowerment for the participants.

The project started by discussing the chosen goal with the children. Together children and teachers came up with questions to ask people of the grandparent generation.

Researchers: Lyn Foote & Fiona Ellis.

**Phase 4: Equality for Sustainability**

**Children as Social Agents** - We believe that the best tool for children in disadvantaged contexts is to give children agency and support their thinking around social justice, so that they become more confident and see themselves as capable agents who can affect social change now and in the future. ‘Children who are encouraged to express their views are better able to contribute towards their own protection’ (Lansdown, 2004). Using resources such as children’s picture books, teachers were asked to record in learning stories how young children explored issues of social justice.

Researchers: Lia de Vocht and Glynne Mackey with teacher researchers Helen Smith, Tracy Summerton, Beverley Smith, Jo Knudsen, Charlotte Robertson. (All OMEP members)

**Phase 5: 20132014 - Development of Teacher Training Resources for Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Education and Care.** Phase 5 involves the development of ESD teacher education materials designed for students in training institutions, colleges, or universities or for early childhood practitioners in professional development programs.

The contribution from Aotearoa New Zealand was on **Ecological Identity**. Pre-service teachers who understand their own ecological identity will be able to be more effective in encouraging this in young children. Attitudes and values form during the early years making this an important time for exploring their environment around the place where the family lives. Through pedagogies that embrace participation, belonging, exploration and communication children can play and learn alongside teachers, and explore with families. Experiences that are place based will often give children the values around care and guardianship, but also give space for children to exercise their agency by influencing others and making a difference for their sustainable future.

Researcher: Glynne Mackey