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## **The Legacy café- the holistic benefit of reviving lost arts, crafts and traditional skills through an early childhood intergenerational sustainable skills project.**

Keywords: Intergenerational, Sustainable, Early childhood, Lost arts and crafts

### **The Legacy café- the holistic benefit of reviving lost arts, crafts and traditional skills through an early childhood intergenerational sustainable skills project.**

#### **Abstract**

A focus of the early childhood intergenerational sustainable skill café was to reverse the lost arts and traditions of our cultural heritage, which is seemingly impacting upon the planets ecological systems. Kuttner (2015, p 70) argues for education to provide “cultural citizenship” which emphasises the importance of sharing and passing them on. Historically, early childhood has always embraced traditional skills and crafts with the occupations, practical life and an awareness of a community ethos. Langland (2018) argues for nostalgia or old fashioned values, with traditional skills being rekindled and the legacy café offered such opportunity. Elderly residents shared and mentored families to develop an awareness of traditional arts. This bi-relational approach redefines culture through “symbolic creativity and interaction” (Kuttner 2015, p 71). Culture shapes our identity through shared histories and meaning making and the ‘Earth Summit’ (UNCED, 1992) rightly acknowledges creativity and crafts at the heart of cultural sustainability.

#### **Introduction**

Early Childhood is seen as a distinct but complex time of life and it has been discussed, analysed and evaluated for many years with differing views of both the child and curriculum. Nsamenang (2006) for example, highlights that Western Early Childhood Care and Education (EECE) promotes a distinct type of formulaic education where “children learn in contrived contexts remote from livelihood activities.” Sellers (2013, p 28) notes that education indoctrinates children with a “standardised and lock-stepped curriculum”, whilst Rinaldi (2006, p 131) further emphasises that “learning does not proceed in a linear way, determined and deterministic, by progressive and predictable stages.” Dahlberg, Pence and Moss (1999) argued that there seems to be an assumption that all children are ‘universal’ which fosters an institutionalising perspective on early childhood with little regard for time or possibilities, contradicting the Reggio Emilia philosophy that values children in creating connections and meaning making, and having the space “to rediscover the time of human beings” (Rinaldi 2006, p 207).

The dominant discourse of Western or the Minority world EECE highlights assessments, measurements and capitalisation and marginalises the family and the relational social

aspects of learning, which is prevalent in majority world ECE. Nsamenang (2006) argues for a more culturally oriented approach through understanding differences “in all the complexities and subtleties”, but also emphasises the importance of engaging in “ongoing cultural and economic activities.” Rinaldi (2006, p208) states that culture is paramount and there is a need

to “construct a culture of childhood.” Dahlberg and Moss (2006) suggest that this is possible in a democratic way, through emphasising the importance of otherness and emphasising interconnectedness and relationships, whilst rejecting the dominant lens of developmental classifications and psychology, with education as transmission with ‘normative’ outcomes. This view resonates with the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2016) that advocates for an education system that will foster creativity, skills and knowledges that will foster economic sustainable growth. O’Brien (2013, p 63) also suggests that a move towards a more creative innovative pedagogy is essential not only for our own individual health and wellbeing, but “for our collective ability to thrive.” This legacy café trial offered a new but simple innovative approach that celebrates communities, their cultures and traditional skill sets, whilst also improving all participants’ health and wellbeing, leading to “sustainable happiness”. (O’Brien 2013, p 63)

The term sustainable development was first recognised in 1987 at the Brundtland World Commission on Environment and Development, (WCED) which highlighted to international communities the urgency of being able to meet “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p.43). In Rio de Janeiro at the ‘Earth Summit’ (UNCED, 1992) the concept of three pillars of sustainability were introduced ‘economic, environmental and social, but Jacobs (1994) cautioned against assuming that sustainability has the same understanding and relevance when considering different cultural contexts. The Majority World and indigenous people viewed and prioritised ‘culture’ differently and as a consequence of this, culture was later added as a fourth pillar of sustainability. In 2017 UNESCO published guidelines recognising the importance of cultural heritage stating clearly that “the diversity of cultures and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind” whilst also highlighting the need to ‘protect’ and ‘enhance’ all heritages and that they should be “actively promoted” (UNESCO, 2017, p95).

## **Culture**

Research notes that the importance of early childhood as a time for helping children to become culturally aware of their own community and family which will enable them to develop an awareness of their identity within the world . (Pramling Samuelsson and Kaga, 2008). Within the English EYFS (DfE, 2017) one of the prime areas is ‘Personal, Social and Emotional Development’ (PSE) however, there is seemingly little or no evidence of an awareness of culture. A specific area ‘Understanding the World’ details that children should by the end of their reception year (4-5 years old ) be able to make sense of not only their physical world and but their community too. This is subjective and open to interpretation in terms of the quality, skills and knowledge of the practitioner and their ability to unpick these outcomes, not guaranteeing all children will necessarily have an awareness of the culture that underpins their community, country and globally. Practitioners and schools need to view the world through multiple lenses and be knowledgeable and confident to

openly discuss sensitive issues that arise as a consequence, whilst UNESCO (2015) highlights the importance of children being able to understand and connect with diverse communities both in the Global North and Global South.

At this time of mass consumerism and waste, society now needs to acknowledge its part in the potential destruction of the planet, as a consequence of the anthropocene. Paulo Freire recognised that for children to be “fully human” (Smidt, 2014, p16) they needed to have the right to be critical and active social participants, stating that “to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it” (Freire, 1996, p 69). Nsamenang (2006) however, suggests that education with an eurocentric narrative focusing upon the dominant universalistic claims of absolute truth, or readiness for school (Moss, 2005), there is further evidence of the Majority World being deprived of their “right to its own knowledge systems and practices” (Nsamenang, 2006, p2). Dialogue is an important cultural tool (Freire, 1993) and a necessity within early childhood but Haddad (2008, p 36) worryingly notes that this readiness agenda which is considered remotely and distanced from cultures and society, could lead to children being subjected to a “pedagogy of submission.” In his famous poem the ‘100 languages of children’, Loris Malaguzzi (n, d) highlights this tension of the school focusing just on cognitive aspects of learning, stating they “separate the head from the body”.

Parker (2017) articulates that child development is both biological and societal, with a cultural perspective, recognising not only different human communities but also any historic changes within the community. He further states that practitioners need to recognise the “dynamically unfolding process in which the child, as a material organism, is actively engaged with the environment as a humanly organised material setting” (Parker, 2017, p 5). Culture is deeply embedded into both the environment and the people within it, woven together with both the animate and non-animate aspects of ecology. Taylor (2013) argues for a non- dualistic approach to nature and culture, challenging the ideas of a divide between the two in early childhood, stating it is natureculture as one, interconnected and entangled. The Western dominant discourse of how children are constructed is associated with the ‘absolute truths’ and ‘regimes of power’ (Foucault, 1982) which highlights a need to contest and deconstruct the policies that situate children as “an object and a subject of knowledge, practice and political intervention” (Hultqvist and Dahlberg, 2001, p 9). MacNaughton (2005, p36) further suggests that if one truth becomes absolute or gets “official sanction” then it effectively marginalises and silences other perspectives, such as culture.

Gardener (1998) suggested that the success of the philosophy of Reggio Emilia was its ability to challenge false dichotomies of which one is individual v community. Rather than focus on individuality and competition as Western education frameworks suggest, the Reggio Emilia approach positions themselves as participants in cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003) with “collectivist tendencies” (Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1998, p8) with deep roots tracing back to the craft guilds and communes, resonating with a strength of pride and identity. Like the New Zealand curriculum Te Whāriki, Reggio Emilia is modelled on the concept of family, extended families and communities, with their physical environments built to specifically reflect opportunities for dialogue and co-operation, such as in the piazzas in the towns, reflecting a deep cultural awareness of communal life, responsibility, and sustainability and working collaboratively.

Gibson and Levine (2003) suggested that an important aspect of society is to prepare its citizens to be responsible by acquiring the right skills, knowledge and attitudes resonating with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UN, 2015-30) as well as ensuring all learners appreciate cultural diversity. Kuttner (2015) warns of the dangers of “cultural perspectives and practices marginalised” through policy and false legitimacy, whereas Malaguzzi (1998, p 96) notes that by embracing the view of a child as a strong capable protagonist, there will be opportunities to fight against “deception infiltrating” early childhood. Freire (2005) cited the role of the teacher was to be a socially active cultural worker, whilst Malaguzzi hoped that by liberating children from this ‘deception’ they could “climb their own mountains, as high as possible” with hopes for “a new culture of childhood” (1998, p77).

### **The Arts, Crafts and Handiwork of Early Childhood**

Key elements of the pioneering pedagogies of EECE was the development of practical skills and community based practice that supported all members and teaches children the values of sustainable practices. This view resonates with the Indigenous views that are interwoven into the Te Whāriki early years curriculum in New Zealand, which features a bicultural approach with a clear reference to the sociocultural theoretical position of learning. It acknowledges that the environment must extend “far beyond the immediate setting of the home or early childhood programmes”(New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996 p 19). The Te Whāriki curriculum was developed as a consequence of a recognition that Māori traditions and cultures were being lost and there was an urgent need to reconnect with the older native speakers and to pass on the ‘taonga’, the “highly valued and essential elements of (our) the indigenous Māori culture” (Lee, et al 2013, p 34). Although within the English early years curriculum (EYFS, DfE, 2017, p 9) there is a passive acknowledgement of children being able to “talk about” past events, there is a missed opportunity to signpost practitioners towards using practical handicraft tools or to develop traditional skills rather than just use “a range of technology.” This reinforces the argument that within English culture and early childhood many sustainable traditions or skills are being divorced from our society (Langland 2018) and the silencing of alternative truths. Within the Māori culture children are raised not just by their parents but by the community through kinship, highlighting the importance of intergenerational learning in communities. Internationally, both the Reggio Emilia approach and Te Whāriki are characterised by their own cultural identity and roots, but as Lee, et al (2013) note practitioners must always remain open to how they embed cultural identity and language that supports holistic wellbeing.

Livingston (n, d) suggests that within early childhood an awareness of and an ability to do traditional handicrafts, is critical to the holistic development of a child. Steiner Waldorf has always had handicrafts at the centre of its kindergarten pedagogy. Livingston (n, d, p11) states that this element was a “radical innovation” in 1919 when Rudolph Steiner founded his schools, believing that “handwork and crafts lead to the enhancement of judgement.” When considering indigenous cultures, this ability to be part of and contribute practically within the family was an integral part. Mbebeb (2009) states that education should have this philosophy for sustainable life, which priorities and draws upon their rich cultures or as Nsamenang (2006, p 3) opines “the wisdom of their timeless traditions”. Kuttner (2015) argues for education to provide a form of cultural citizenship which emphasises the importance of sharing diverse cultural traditions and identities intergenerationally.

Although, however it is acknowledged that there are Western universal stages of child development, Nsamenang (2006, p 3) notes that the different ways of parenting or guiding within ECE are in fact “rarely examined”.

In his pedagogical approach Fröebel devised the practical gifts and occupations, of which the eighth gift was ‘the straight line’ advocating that “knowledge of the linear lies at the foundation of the knowledge of each form.” (Fröebel cited in Wiggin and Smith 2011, p142) and this knowledge he felt, was as a natural prelude to sewing. Montessori in her practical life also advocated children needed to be immersed in reality before imagination, encouraging gardening and domestic activities, including knowledge of how to sew on a button, stressing the importance of young children not being isolated “from the society of the adult” (Montessori, 2012, p 53). In Steiner Waldorf Kindergarten children are expected to access a range of crafts using wool, felt, cotton and other natural fabrics drawing upon people from their community who are invited in to model a particular craft demonstrating their special skills (Avison and Rawson, 2016). The kindergarten children weave, sew, knit and are encouraged to mend toys if broken, contrasting with the Western plastic throwaway society of today. Nsamenang (2006) contrasts that children in the majority world have the ability to make and mend their own playthings from locally sourced materials, due to an unavailability of commercial toys, which Kuttner (2015) calls ‘cultural production’, as they are creative symbols of meaning making. Kuttner (2015, p 4) stresses that arts and crafts are an integral part of everyday life reflecting an “ongoing process of creating and redefining our shared cultural space through symbolic creativity and interaction.” Arts and crafts are embedded into the culture of each community and should define “actual people, under real social circumstances, in particular cultural contexts, and within specific material and symbolic relations” (Gaztambide- Fernandez, 2013, p. 226). Practitioners should encourage children to design and evaluate their own toys using recycled materials, allowing for greater opportunities to reflect and develop an awareness of how toys in different parts of the world are culturally different, providing a more authentic learning process. Siraj – Blatchford et al (2010) noted toys are a societal product and conversations around them opens up possibilities of discussing issues such as, gender, sustainable products and the importance of mending broken toys rather than throwing them away, resonating with all of pillars of sustainability (UNCED, 1992).

Margaret McMillan said “in every out-door nursery there is work to be done” (1919, p89) emphasising the need for a community that supports, nurtures and sustains itself. Within the original garden of the kindergarten Fröebel encouraged children to be responsible for growing vegetables in individual plots and then selling them to the local community, highlighting a key element of the economic pillar of sustainability. Steiner like -wise advocated for gardening in the kindergarten, ensuring children had a healthy understanding of the cyclical pattern of the four seasons. By caring for a plot children would be able to harvest and then use their home grown produce for meals, as well as using the recycling peelings to make their own compost. Although the English EYFS (DfE, 2017, p8) recognises the importance of a healthy diet, it misses another opportunity to embed sustainable practical skills into the framework rather than just highlighting children can “talk about ways to keep healthy”. If children were physically immersed in a kitchen garden alongside their elders and other community members, digging (using child sized apparatus as Montessori envisaged), hoeing, planting and picking vegetables to make their own dinners, it would

provide an authentic rather than tokenistic way of living sustainably, as well as hitting the outcomes for physical development.

The Steiner kindergarten like McMillan, demonstrated a “community of ‘doers’ supported through meaningful work” (Avison and Rawson, 2016, p50) rather than focusing on individuality. This sadly contrasts with the English statutory framework which seemingly promotes physical activities in preparation for holding a pencil, rather than sustainable life skills and using tools for everyday purposes, whilst stressing the “needs and interests of each individual child” (DfE, 2017, p 2 authors emphasis). Additionally, Steiner articulated that both boys and girls together would do the crafts and handwork, as there was no separation of skill or role reflecting a true inclusive community. In the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2016) there was a call for a new approach to education resonating with the same thinking of the earlier pioneering giants of early childhood, but it still remains an issue today (Boyd, 2018 a) .

### **Head, Hands and Heart**

Tracing the development of the human hand, wrist and brain from our primate ancestors over 2.5 million years ago, research indicates that this was as a consequence in the change of movement pattern emerging from tree swinging to ground dwelling. Humans needed to use their hand and wrist physically to develop tools and their brains needed to have the capacity for creative and innovative ideas (Ambrose, 2001). This was the emergence of metacognition, resonating with the expectations of the characteristics of effective learning (EYFS, DfE, 2017). Papineau (1998) argues that these specific manual powers needed to be recognised as what “drove our subsequent cerebral expansion”. Lambert (2006, p503) notes that key aspects of human hand development involved “tactile discrimination, bilateral coordination of hands and manual dexterity,” again resonating with early childhood pedagogy. Wilson (1999, p 2) argued for early childhood practitioners and policy makers to understand “the learning tools that evolution placed, quite literally, in the hands of children.” Ironically it is also universal how hands evolved into skilled tools for humanity but culturally, communities place different emphasis upon the use of the hand but the practises and emphasises differ. Mbebeb (2009) for example, stresses how in Africa there is more of an emphasis upon nurturing the child through hands- on family experiences, developing them naturally and in an organic way. This is a crucial cultural feature of how the Majority World or Indigenous people parent which is seemingly silenced (Nsamenang, 2006) as it does not fit into the neoliberal and neo-colonial aspect of a Western early childhood curriculum.

Langland (2018) notes the divorcing from our society of key skills that use the hand both bilaterally and unilaterally, whilst Kollatz (2005, p H16) highlighted that the “types of jobs where people actually make something” are disappearing, referring to traditional handicrafts and wood making skills. Kollatz (2005, p H16) suggests this is “fundamentally part of who we are as human beings” stressing the importance of bodily movement in the holistic development, resonating with both Montessori and Steiner who advocated for a “do-ing intelligence” (Oldfield, 2012, p 53). Loris Malaguzzi (n, d) also suggested that early childhood is about multiple physical and creative meaning makings, with the idea of a child having “a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking.” Chanarin (2009)

highlights key developmental processes required for dexterity which included bilateral integration, hand eye coordination and spatial awareness amongst them. These aspects resonate with the prime area of the English EYFS (DfE, 2017, p8) which states that “Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement.” Chanarin (2009) also emphasises that bilateral integration has a “rhythmical way” resonating with the Steiner pedagogy of early childhood noted as “untiring qualities of a rhythmical ordering” (Oldfield 2012, p 71).

The importance of movement and the application of practical skills in early childhood was recognised by all the earlier pioneers. To Fröebel “education in manual skills served to develop the whole child, it was much more than merely a vocational concern.” (Blatchford, et al 2008, p23). Sloan (1999, p 1) stressed the “intimate connection between the human hand and its activity and the development of creative thinking and language capacities, emphasising their significance in the holistic development of the child.” Malaguzzi (n, d) also argued that early childhood should not be a pedagogy of telling the child “to think with no hands.” Montessori believed that between the ages of three and six children consciously take in the world through their hands (Standing, 1998). Whilst it is noted tacitly in the EYFS (DfE, 2017, p 11) that children are required to “handle equipment and tools effectively” there is little emphasis placed on the sustainable capacities of tool use, with the exception of using a pencils for writing putting the emphasis back onto a more formal approach to learning. Lambert (2006, p503) noted that this use of and ability to manipulate tools also activated the “motive circuit” which led to satisfaction and being intrinsically motivated (Bandura, 1986). Standing (1998, p112) suggested that Montessori recognised the hand was “an instrument of the brain; and it is through the activity of his hands that he enriches his experience, and develops himself at the same time”. She believed that a young child was capable of concentrating for periods of time, but this was only when the child physically used their hands in practical life skills and activities, and as a consequence “brings profound attention” (Montessori, 2012, p 153).

Research also indicates that the use of hands in craft and tool situations has a benefit physically, emotionally and socially. Montessori originally used her ideas on children with special needs that had been categorised as uneducable. However, the results demonstrated that this was not true, and her pioneering ideas were then applied to ‘normal children’ advocating a move from formalised education, to an approach that would “set free their personality in a marvellous and surprising way” (Montessori cited in Standing, 1998, p 30). Huh et al (1998) also noted like Montessori, the lack of bilateral movements was evident in children with development coordination disorders, emphasising the need for this type of physical activity in early childhood pedagogy. O’Brien (2013, p viiii) suggests that engaging in such practical sustainable activities should promote “sustainable happiness- wellbeing for all” with an emphasis upon being a “choice -maker and change –maker” (2013, p x). Conner et al (2018) noted that being creative supported emotional functioning and flourishing, whilst Forgeard and Eichner (2014) suggested that handicraft activities could be a targeted intervention strategy in regard to improving wellbeing whilst Ryan and Deci (2001) highlighted how creativity can support that sense of relevance or purpose in life through meaning making.



## **Theory of trial**

The trial was conducted over a six month period with one intergenerational café happening every month from January 2018 through to June 2018. The context of the trial was within a nursery and family centre in Liverpool in the North West of the United Kingdom. Older residents of the surrounding community were invited to the centre to share their methods of sewing, knitting, cooking, baking and traditional sustainable skills that are seemingly being lost in our society. The participants ranged in ages from 2-80 years old. There were 2-3 year olds from a toddler group with their practitioners, and children (3-4) from one nursery within the centre with their corresponding key persons. Their parents and grandparents were also invited to participate in the trial. Ethics was supported through the University Ethics system and ensured all voices were heard within the trial, gaining both assent and consent were needed.

The trial was underpinned by socio constructivist theories of learning reflecting a Vygotskian 'more knowledgeable' other through interpersonal interactions. The patience and attributes of the older participants supported the children in their development of the necessary skills in mastering early sewing, weaving and other traditional tasks. This also reflected Bandura's model of social learning with a key aspect being on the role models with which the children were sharing the process of learning. Keenan and Evans (2010, p 31) suggest this attribute of the "nature of the role models" was a key strength of his social learning theory and was crucial for this trial.

The café trial also reflected two key and influential approaches of early childhood, drawing on elements of both the Reggio Emilia and Te Whāriki. Within the Reggio Emilia approach there is an emphasis placed upon the environment as a democratic learning space that reflects the locality and the community it represents, resonating with the theoretical ideas of Vygotsky. Malaguzzi emphasised the importance of an open space within the democratic spaces of the pre-school which provides "an irreplaceable model for meetings, negotiations and dialogues of various human encounters" (Edwards, et al 1993.p86).The café trial was situated in such an open space which Sellers (2013, p 130) notes as needing to be "smooth space" and with possibilities through "a network of interconnections processing from/through the middle continually coming and going." Within Te Whāriki there is a bicultural and birelational emphasis reflecting Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979) with strong links to kinship and the social /cultural traditions that continually impact upon the life of the child. The Elders form an integral part of the Te Whāriki demonstrating the importance of intergenerational learning within early childhood clearly noted in the curriculum, "parents, extended family and elders in the community should be encouraged"( New Zealand Curriculum, 1996,p 43) as did the elderly in this trial cafe. The café therefore drew equally on both theoretical approaches in early childhood education and care.

## **Discussion**

The initial focus of the Legacy café was the opportunity to 'pass on' traditional and cultural skills intergenerationally (Boyd, 2018 b). The older participants provided the wisdom and experiences for the families and children within the children's centre. These skills were culturally contextual to the community surrounding the children's centre and ranged from

sewing, darning, weaving, baking and mending scooters or punctures. A key element of this was the role of the 'elder' in the legacy café, as it was important that they were seen as the 'knowledgeable other' (Vygotsky) and 'scaffolder' (Bruner). In this context their role was not passive, but "authentic participation" (Wyness, 2015, p 278) and this was a key part of this intergenerational project, the older participants were leading not following. This was evident in the comments of the other participants; "When are the elderly ladies arriving? We need them!" (Practitioner) "I came today because I value your help and knowledge in teaching me to knit". (Mum) "We would be lost without them (elderly)" (Children's centre staff). Interestingly, one older lady noted that the ability to 'pass on skills' through the café, was "a necessary art", whilst another reflected upon it sadly being "a lost art". For the older participants it gave them a reason and purpose at a time in their life when they felt as if they had nothing to contribute; "I looked after my two granddaughters, but they are now grown up and I felt not needed anymore, no use to anyone." (Elderly lady). But what also emerged, was the recognition that it benefitted all of the participants mutually. The older participants felt valued again, dads who did not normally cook or bake with their children felt able to do so in the informality of the café, even considering where they could go afterwards to buy the produce to make dinners "from scratch".

An important element of the social/cultural pillar of sustainability is an inclusive curriculum and the café started to break down gender serotyping, crucial in the early years where attitudes are laid down. Early years children saw dads sewing on buttons or learning to knit and mums outside mending punctures. To the older participants it brought them out of their residential homes and into the community, whilst for some families it encouraged them to attend and join in as volunteers, not because they had been targeted by services. The Legacy café became meaningful and relevant, and families and children that participated noted the same sentiments,

"It gives me a purpose" (Dad) "It's really important that they learn to sew – I want to learn so we can do it together". (Mum) "They love it here! So much fun and he always asks when is it again". (Mum) Everyone that participated seemingly felt a social/emotional value from attending the cafes, which was evident of the atmosphere in the trial itself, with laughter, supporting and nurturing evident; "Really good to cook together. We should prep food together, even buy it together. Then he would really know where it's from." (Dad) "Love sharing my skills with the little ones! It makes me feel good!" (Elderly) "It's nice to see them mixed together – talking to them and learning and hearing about their experiences." (Elderly) "This is so fun!" (Four year old) "Can I weave again?" (Four year old) "He loves coming. He loves spending time with everyone." (Mum) "It's good that they can mix with everyone here. We cook in the classroom, but here it's has a community feel, we are all doing it together" (Practitioner) "It's important, its life skills" (Elderly). These 'life skills' are the necessary skills that must be shared and extended intergenerationally, to ensure children develop sustainable mind-sets. This was apparent with some of the noted comments as they started to realise the importance and necessity. "It's important coz we throw such a lot of stuff away. We need to show them we have to stop doing it!" (Mum) "He's now saying don't throw it away mummy!" (Mum) Rather than focusing upon learning goals and assessments in early childhood, the legacy café offered multiple opportunities to work organically and practically towards requirements of the statutory framework. The English EYFS (DfE, 2017, p 5) highlights "the early learning goals that providers must help children work towards (the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year)," and every activity included in the café supports the holistic nature of early childhood. Early childhood should promote a pedagogy that allows children to become independent and

creative thinkers or to become “masters of their environment and conscious of their power over it” (Standing, 1998, p 216) reflecting the earlier pioneering ideas.

It quickly became evident that there was another equally significant theme emerging as a consequence of the Legacy cafes. As noted, there is now considerable neuroscientific evidence of the benefit of using both the hands and head together in practical activities. The statutory framework (EYFS, DfE, 2017, p 7) requires practitioners and providers to “guide the development of children’s capabilities” with the aim of getting them “ready to benefit fully from the opportunities ahead of them”. These art and handicraft activities not only provide the necessary opportunities for both physical and cognitive benefits, but give the children the skills needed for their adult life, such as confidence, resilience, concentration and dexterity. This was reflected in the comments from the participants. “Weaving and sewing is good for little fingers. This is so much better for their pre writing development. It’s so fiddly and they have to concentrate”. (Practitioner) “It’s so hard but he’s concentrating!”(Mum) “Never seem them engaged for so long!” (Practitioner watching them weave) “Look at how hard he is trying?” (Practitioner) “Golly its hard work showing them how to hold needles! But they are so enthusiastic and want to learn. I feel so happy helping them”. (Elderly)

It was also apparent that it was introducing young children to new activities and they were active in demonstrating the need to continue with them at home too, thus supporting the sustainable aspect of the trial too.

## **Conclusion**

Davis (2015, p 23) reminds practitioners that early childhood is a transformative time, that children are “ problem seekers, problem solvers and action takers” and by creating an ethos of empowerment and participation in the setting, true authentic understanding of sustainable skills is possible. Early Childhood should provide chances for children to be involved in local social and economic practices within the community, engage with and learn from their elders to ensure traditional cultural values are not lost and to develop the key skills necessary of working together in communities and their locality. These traditional skills reflect the characteristics of effective learning (EYFS, DfE, 2017) and therefore could be easily applied to early childhood pedagogy, drawing on the historical pioneering values. Steiner advocated that the adult needed to demonstrate “a responsibility to strive towards an honest morality” (Avison and Rawson, 2016, p35) whilst Davis (2015, p 25) argues for a greater recognition of “collective rights” emphasising a demand for “social responses that serve collective interests” rather than for just the few. Evidence demonstrated that there was a collective good to the legacy café, with its recognition of the older participants sharing the necessary skills and traditions with families and children (Boyd, 2018b). But not only was this a bi-relational process of skill sharing, it was also a bi-relational social and emotional experience, which mutually benefitted all participants, at a time of societal social isolation and mental health concerns.

There is a need to move away from the rigid and constrained curriculum that is evident in Western society and consider a curriculum as “inextricably entwined relationships of living and learning.” (Sellers, 2013, p 31) or as Grummet and Stone (2000, p 191) articulate “curriculum is everyday life” resonating with Indigenous practices worldwide. Mbebeb (2009) reminds policy makers in Western early childhood that education should build upon the principles of indigenous knowledge and skills, resonating with the same principles of Te Whāriki regarding “the wider world of family and community” which is seen as integral to the framework (Lee, et al, 2013, p 21). By working together intergenerationally it reflects the key element of the Reggio Emilia approach of early childhood as a “place of encounter” (Rinaldi, 2006) with the Legacy café offering this opportunity to become a place for all citizens of the community, a place that encourages, motivates and embraces the shared values and embeds the cultural traditions into every day early childhood pedagogy and life. This is only the beginning of this early childhood intergenerational sustainable skill approach in England and more research is needed on how to embrace a more creative and sustainable approach to the lost arts and crafts of early childhood.

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