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Summaries in English

Summaries and translation by Dr. J. Hull

Introduction (Pages 29/30)

by Hans Flury

For years on end the Swiss read reports on residential silos and smog alarms as if they came from another world. We congratulated ourselves on having it better here, until the bitter truth emerged: Thousands of Swiss children are born every year into a world hostile to children. There was great astonishment at this discovery – and the annoyance was expressed in protests and stinging letters to the editors. The objects of these attacks were – and are – mainly building owners and architects.

Fortunately it was soon realized that the environment is by no means altered by the designation of a few scapegoats. What was needed was people who did not merely indulge in negative fault-finding, but were prepared to engage in personally risky campaigns.

The most various activities, instigated by and carried forward by private and often spontaneous groups indicate that a feeling of uneasiness and the enervating impression of helplessness are not at all strong enough to discipline people who are active only in consumption. Rather, it is becoming apparent in both small and supra-regional groups that even modest beginnings and the resulting experience of success constitute sufficient motivation to risk a joint effort to alter the environment.

In this connection it is no accident that pre-school upbringing plays an important role. The individual, is most strongly impressed culturally in the first years of his life. Certain physical and intellectual experiences have to be had during this early phase.

Adventure playgrounds. Campaigns in Switzerland (Pages 31–37)

by Hans Flury

The organizations and publications indicated below are exemplary. They have been supra-regional in effect and they all contributed to making the rainy summer of '73 a "summer of playgrounds".

impuls 3. 73

"impuls" is the name of a monthly devoted to projects with young people in the church. Under the direction of its editor, at the beginning of April a team of associates brought out a special issue on the theme "Play, playground, play campaign".

Aktion Spielplausch, St.Gall

Between April 4 and 14 the young people's St.Otmar organizations staged a concerted play campaign "against an environment hostile to children, against boring playgrounds, in favour of free, creative play, in favour of the rights of children".

Projekt '73

In the autumn of '72 a group of seniors of the School for Social Work in Solothurn decided to adopt the theme "children's playgrounds" for their final examination project.

Children's June Festival

The Lucerne "Aktion Kinderspielplatz" set as its goal the maintenance and creation of an environment friendly to children, its campaign running from June 13 to 24. But it was not forgotten that adult sensibilities also had to be appealed to.

Hagberg Robinson playground, Olten

Instigated by the play week of Projekt '73, there was formed in the course of the summer in Olten an association which built a model playground and which is continuing its good work throughout the winter.

Adventure playgrounds – first attempts in West Germany and in West Berlin (Pages 38–42)

by Claudius Habbich and Pit Möller

In 1967 the first adventure playground in Germany was opened in the Märkische Viertel in Berlin. The idea for such a project came from British social workers who were on an information exchange trip to Berlin.

In 1971 and 1972 there were three conferences on the problems of adventure playgrounds which led to

the foundation of adventure playground associations. The general aim of adventure playgrounds must grow out of the living conditions of the children. Traditional playgrounds are reserves for children where they cannot really play the way they would like to.

Investigations into the use of playgrounds by children have revealed that the play areas readied for the children are by no means used to the extent envisaged. Let us look at where and how children play: where adults work.

What is important is the coming to terms with the environment, with dangers, with the everyday world of adults, so-called reality, in which they too live and which they experience.

Adventure playgrounds are a living area for children in which no rules ought to be laid down.

Supervisors ought to offer children a chance to experience things so as to be able to come to terms with problems and difficulties.

The materials made available have to be varied and flexible, if the children's play is to become fully meaningful.

At the same time the teaching goal must not interfere with the spontaneous activity of the children.

The social context of a given adventure playground deserves special attention. Contact with parents must not be limited to loose and casual meetings and must not be purely formal; work with parents should seek to integrate adults in what is going on at the adventure playground.

Pre-school upbringing in Switzerland (Pages 49–52)

by Ursula Rellstab

The upbringing of small pre-school children became a timely topic a few years ago when the first pre-school experimental results reached us from the USA. Since then there has been no pause in the discussion. People began to wonder how things were in other European countries and in Switzerland.

We began to pay more attention to the figures from France, Belgium and Holland: In France 80% of all three-year-olds and 95% of all four-year-olds attend a kindergarten, in Belgium 84% of three-year-olds, 95% of four-and-five-year-olds, in Holland 74% of four-year-olds and 91% of five-year-olds. It is very difficult to obtain comparable figures for Switzerland.

As a matter of fact, the approach to pre-school upbringing in these countries – as in England and the Scandinavian countries – is very different from our notions. In these countries it is believed that the child, in addition to upbringing in the family, requires from his third year on guidance from trained specialists, while our belief is that the child is best left in the family atmosphere until his fourth or fifth year. Of course, day nurseries are available, but these are regarded as emergency solutions. It is a fact that in day nurseries bodily care, protection from accidents, feeding are the important things, and not – as is later the case in the kindergarten – the emotional and mental stimulation of the child. But it is precisely the latter which is now being demanded for small pre-school children. However, scientific insight is not enough. Practice has to be adapted to theory.

Along with endeavours to improve the training of staff for small children, attempts are being made to decide how "pre-kindergartens" ought to be organized. These are not governmental endeavours, for our day nurseries are private institutions. There have been created an astonishing number of new day nurseries and kindergartens in Switzerland. It is no exaggeration to speak of hundreds.

The female students' day nursery in Zurich. This nursery was opened in October 1970. The idea was to permit students and academic women with small children to finish their studies or practise their professions. The nursery is understood to be a model for the care of children between the ages of 2½ and 5.

Play and experience of reality (Page 53)

by Linde Burkhardt

The hostility to play in our society is well known, frequently lamented and yet grows worse. Attempts are made to counteract it by numerous public and private endeavours to create more and better play-grounds, day nurseries and sometimes a play street or a play house. But the situation of the children is modified but little.

The quality of play and its isolation from the adult world are vital for the development of children, but this fact is little known; we are happy if children only play or somehow keep busy.

Present-day play facilities are totally inadequate in that they do not begin to reveal how play is related to the world of reality. Nevertheless, they are the first answer to an environment that is hostile to children, is dangerous to life and limb and is largely closed to the playful attitude.

How children get acquainted with their world in play is made clear in the following article "Experience of reality in the kindergarten".

Experiment: Experience of reality in the kindergarten (Pages 54-58)

by Hans-Henning Borgelt, Linde Burkhardt, Wolfgang Hoebig, Ursula Barthelmess

Only when playing is a human being entirely himself, because he is then free from the compulsions of reality (work) and can to a high degree follow the dictates of his own free will.

Most adults think that children have a good time: they do not need to work, and their life is made up of play.

But can children really play?

Where have children the opportunity to take their actual environment as an occasion for play? In the streets, the shops, the factories, the excessively small flats? Why must they absolutely get certain things presented to them in order to be able to play at all?

Our group has taken up this theme in the prospect of an altered relationship between play and reality in the pre-school period.

The pre-school is a transition stage between the "free" play of children and the school, where the learning process is developed and guided.

The point of our pre-school experiment is to introduce play into reality, in order in this way gradually to abolish the dichotomy of play and reality.

The essential difference from existing conceptions of pre-school upbringing consists in the fact that the pre-school is stripped of its school-like character; there is a constant interrelationship between pre-school (kindergarten) and the surroundings as well as between theory and practice.

Our group has considered how in the everyday life of a pre-school group the above-mentioned processes can be introduced. A nursery in Berlin was encouraged to carry out the experiment with a kindergarten teacher and a group of 5-and-6-year-old children, with our support.

On a city map with a scale of 1:4000 the children discover the surroundings of their kindergarten and their homes. They can trace out their daily walk to

the kindergarten and mark it with self-made flags with their own names written on them. Excited by their experience with the map, the children seek to walk together over their daily route.

In this way they get to know the routes followed by their friends and where they live.

Because we wish to photograph the children every day, we buy them simple cameras. They photograph themselves and their houses.

Since the photos first have to be developed, the children paint pictures of their houses. Since all the parents work, the children could not show each other their houses, although they frequently expressed the wish to do so. On only one occasion was there a chance to visit one of the children, whose mother runs a café. The children are generously received and given refreshments.

Excited by the visit to Christian's flat, the children try to draw a picture showing the rooms and the furniture in their own homes.

In conversations with the children the wish is expressed by some of them to live together. They plan a house in common, so that even after kindergarten hours they can be together.

After the children have planned their house, they visit a building site.

In these discussions on furnishings the children get the idea of setting up their group room the way they like it in the kindergarten.

On walks in the neighbourhood the children get acquainted with the location of houses, shops, workshops, etc.

A few parents work in the vicinity of the kindergarten. We visit these parents in order to see how they work.

With the children we play at being barbers, bank employees, nurses and florists. A visit to a factory gives the children an idea of industrial work. The children are especially delighted by using the conveyor-belt to transport their lunch or their toys. On a big panel we try to plan a city, but this time in accordance with our own wishes and ideas.

Architectural examples

Kindergarten in Viganello TI (Pages 62/63)

Architects: A. Galfetti, F. Ruchat, I. Trümpi

This two-storey articulated complex of buildings is situated along an access road proposed by the architects themselves; the road crosses the slightly sloping area and connects the two separate districts of Viganello. The school is divided into three teaching units. Each unit consists of two independent divisions with room for teaching activities, a yard, cloakroom, plus common play room and dining-room. The bedrooms, one per unit, constitute the core of the plant and are grouped around the central hall. The dining-room and the kitchen are located on the upper level.

Kindergarten in Bissone TI (Pages 64/65)

Architect: Prof. Dolf Schnebli

This kindergarten was erected above Bissone, a fishing village on Lake Lugano. The building is

vertically adapted to the gently terraced site. The utility areas are organized in one single volume, on three levels, and are interconnected by means of a stairway. On the upper level, which was designed as a gallery floor, there are located the dining-room and the kitchen. The middle floor is used to accommodate the auditorium, play room and sleeping area. A sliding partition permits this area to be sealed off during nap time.

Kindergarten in Muri BE (Pages 66/67)

Architects: D. Reist, K. Aellen, F. Biffiger, B. Suter

This kindergarten was erected on the roof of an underground garage in the midst of an already existing residential complex in Muri-Gümligen. The building contains one classroom. The one-storey building is a light timber structure. The grid dimension is 140 cm. The skeleton construction is insulated with glasswool. Folded, storey-high sheet aluminium panels constitute the external skin, while boarding was used for the inside wall and the suspended ceiling.

Kindergarten in Gladsaxe, Denmark (Pages 68/69)

Architects: Bloch and Raaschou-Nielsen

This prefabricated kindergarten in a suburb of Copenhagen is based on the 15M building system. The square grid unit of 152 cm is expressed in the timber beams of the ceiling structure. The large intervals between the steel supports (608 cm) make possible the realization of large-scale rooms and covered areas. Façades and partitions are light, non-supporting timber elements.

Kindergarten and day nursery in Bispebjergbakke, Denmark (Pages 70/71)

Architect: Tutti Lütken

This kindergarten in the Copenhagen area is one of the more than 200 kindergartens that have been erected on the basis of the Ki-Ta-Dan system (Danish Kindergartens). The core of the system is a single house for 15 to 20 children, permitting variable subdivisions and capable of extensions.

Since the building system is based on Danish norms, a special system is also being tested for export.

The classroom as play area (Pages 72/73)

Stavnshtolskole, Farum, Denmark

Architects: Ole Park and Zander Olsen

This school, based on the building system 69, comprises all levels from pre-school up to tenth grade. Within the open plan there are many opportunities for play and casual encounters. The interior recess yards are equipped as play areas. Also the furnishings offer play possibilities.

Maglegaardskole, Roskilde, Denmark

Architects: Berg Bach and Kjeld Egemose

The special feature of this school is the common central zone: on the inside a multi-functional central hall, on the outside a hilly playground laid out in accordance with children's drawings.