



Imagination – 2

The healthy young child bubbles with imagination and loves to play in imagined worlds.

In the Steiner pre-school the children have access to open ended natural materials – blocks, sticks, cloths, seedpods, beads – these basic ingredients foster imagination for they can become a myriad of things!

Children don't need sophisticated toys. They don't need child size replicas of the adult world, miniature trees, money, etc.

Watch them. 'Where's the stove? I want to cook sausages.'

'Where's the stove' – is but the cue for activity. They make it. A few stones in a circle, some blocks, and it is an open fire, ready for a barbeque (pieces of wood as meat). A chair "stoked" with a handful of cloths and then "soup pots" and "pancakes" placed on top.

'Where's the stove?' In the moment of play it is a problem of living – a challenge to self sufficiency if you like! And so they learn to be innovative, creative, self sufficient and adaptive, flexible.

The six/seven year olds play in groups – conversing, planning, moving and directing themselves. There are few toys to be seen, few props used.

They now have, at their fingertips, so to say, a rich world of imagination. Previously they used the toys and were little masters of the farm community, the doll's house, etc. Now they play – virtually unaided by external props. They are masters of the environment, skilled in innovative imagery. They transform their surrounds as they wish, activating and developing relationships out of themselves, out of the rich imaginative thought activity that is now – their own – capacity.

Why does the child seek to play and play and play?

The community asks for people with initiative, workers who are creative, true, enthusiastic, confident. People who relate well to others. Compassion, trust, humour, responsibility. Concentration, purpose, love. These are the words we use to express our hope in the individual.

Pause and consider qualities – within – the activity of play.

The child explores his environment in play, and assumes responsibility for it. He practices responsibility.

Through serious participation in the activity of play he strengthens his concentration.

In many a situation he needs initiative, creativity is expressed, practicalness is tested. Independence and confidence are called forth.

The child is tuned and fulfilled in play. He knows the satisfaction of a "good day's activity." He can apply himself to life and living, to his environment – within the play situation. There is purpose and direction in his play.

Play prepares the child for the future.

Rudolf Steiner said: “Play works from within outwards, work from outside inwards.”

Play opens the doors on learning – for the child has learned, through play, to open himself to opportunity and to become a learn-er... a life-long learn-er.

Play fosters the development of imagination and this vital capacity is necessary in all fields of work, in all fields of living.

...Overheard at lunch...

As he poured a drink into his cup he said, ‘Look out, I’ll flood the table!’

Then he stood up to fill the cup as full as possible and he put the lid on the drink bottle.

He paused and then he said.

‘You know, the kindergarten is the cup to the world.’ -Liam

(He was referring, years ago, to the combined group – Kinders & Founders).

From Ruth (Education Coordinator)