The Legacy Café - A trial of intergenerational and sustainable learning in an early childhood centre in Liverpool.

Abstract

Early childhood is a transformative period where attitudes and foundations for life are laid (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2008). The principles of education for sustainability reflect a holistic and interconnected approach, similar to the ecological context of early childhood. This interconnectedness is further highlighted with the three pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental and socio/cultural), that they are all interrelated (Brundtland, 1987). The ecological context centres the child in their own contextual and cultural environment. Bronfenbrenner (1989) noted a key element of this environment or community was its "a dynamic entity which is constantly changing" (Keenan and Evans, 2010:35) reflecting flexibility and the bi-relational aspect when the child not only interacts with their environment, but influences it too.
The Legacy Intergenerational sustainable skill café is a socially cultural integrated model, bringing generations within communities together, building a more sustainable society, a "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991) researching through a "place of possibilities" (Dahlberg and Moss, 2006,p12). The elderly willingly share cultural traditions with families and children in disappearing or lost skills that are being 'divorced' (Langlands, 2018) from our identity or cultural heritage, reflecting a "collective responsibility" (Dahlberg and Moss, 2006:10) validating the position of the family as a socialising agent' (Mbebeb, 2009, p25).

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Introduction

Within the Bruntdland Report (1987, p 9) there is an urgent collective call to "all citizen groups" to work towards "furthering the common understanding and common spirit of responsibility so clearly needed in a divided world." This message of social responsibility is aimed at amongst others, educational institutes and early childhood has a responsibility to act. Seedsman (2013, p355) highlights that "major economic, social, cultural, political and demographic changes have altered and transformed traditional family, community and social structures". Society is seemingly more fractured with less emphasis on civic participation, community cohesion and the retention of culturally specific skills and traditions. Additionally, with a rapidly increasing elderly population whilst the birth rate is decreasing, Weckström, et al (2017) also notes the deterioration of communication between generations in nuclear families. The Cambridge Primary Review (2014) noted "family life and community are breaking down" and as a consequence "that respect and empathy both within and between generations" was also in decline. Early childhood is a time when fundamental attitudes are formed, emphasising the importance of good role models and sustainable

behaviours. Children learn through observation, by direct experiences of collaboration, participation and through books and the media (Bandura, 1977). Research, shows that children are "capable of sophisticated thinking in relation to socio-environmental issues and that the earlier ESD ideas are introduced the greater their impact and influence can be" (Siraj-Blatchford, Smith and Pramling Samuelsson 2008, p6).The Intergenerational legacy café demonstrates a socially cohesive community that endeavours to address this social imbalance and help communities to become more sustainable, whilst honouring their traditions and cultures. It is as Dahlberg and Moss (2016, p20) note "it offers a sense of belonging" within a "relationship of hope" to move communities down a more sustainable and socially responsible path.

Early Childhood

Within early childhood, children learn through socially constructing and reconstructing their worlds through experience and observation. Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of both cultural and historical tools that enable children to master and participate freely in their world. These tools reflect the culture and traditions of the history and community into which the child is embedded. Lave and Wenger (1991) highlighted the importance of developing 'communities of practice' and early childhood provides such contexts for opportunities that bind children, their families and communities together. Smidt (2009, p29) states this binding could be "their values, their religion, their feelings, their concerns", any principles and behaviours that have been developed through interactions. A 'community of practice' must reflect diversity and difference recognising that each child (and family) retains their identity, but bringing their own individual uniqueness, history, needs , hopes and cultural habitus. Within Early Childhood key pioneering giants have influenced aspects of current practice but elements of their original thinking and pedagogy needs to be retained and highlighted, as Froebel, Steiner and Montessori all stressed the importance of community, inclusion, family and peace. (Boyd, 2018) This 'community of practice' should utilise a "guided participation" (Rogoff, 1996) approach where "individuals transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation in activities and in the process they become prepared to engage in similar subsequent activities." The contributors to this process of meaning making, reflect the principles of Reggio Emilia when early childhood children are in "continuous encounters with others and the world, and the child and the teacher are understood as co-constructors of knowledge and culture" (Rinaldi, 2006, p6). Within Reggio Emilia there is an assumption that the child, adult and environment are interconnected and an equal co-constructor. Rogoff (2014, p124) also stressed a mutual interconnection stating that when the child is in the process of thinking that it is not a separate entity from "cultural functioning".

Theoretically the community and locality surrounding the child and their families provides a social/ cultural environment where knowledge is seen as a "process of meaning making" (Rinaldi, 2006, p6). Frederick Froebel is universally recognised as the originator of the 'kindergarten' where children are active participants in their own learning, an environment that is "an agent for learning" (Liebschner, 1993, p43). Froebel highlighting agency was innovative at this time, moving away from children just playing as a purely passive occupation. He developed a pedagogical system where children understood moral values, sustainable living and a deep rooted awareness of the four seasons, believing that children "benefitted from being exposed to a wider community" (Joyce, 2012, p52). He stressed that the environment must be a place where "social and moral values could be experienced by children" (Liebschner, 1993, p49) resonating with Loris Malaguzzi's view of the environment as a 'third teacher'. A key principle of Steiner Waldorf curriculum also

recognises and encourages all to "enable and value the *contribution* of individuals, groups and communities to the improvement of our common human culture" (Avison and Rawson, 2016, p16). This is also true of Montessori's prepared environment in which the child "absorbs knowledge … simply by living." (Standing 1998, p263).

Education for Sustainability

Davis (2015, p9) suggests that a "popularised description" of education for sustainability is meeting "the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," (Brundtland Report, 1987, p8). In 2015 following the Millennium goals (2000-2015) in Paris countries from around the world signed a declaration to try to work towards a more sustainable future. There were seventeen sustainable development goals (SDG) highlighted that over the next fifteen years Governments and non-Governments organisations (NGO) must strive to achieve. One of these goals (SDG 4) specifically focuses upon education, emphasising equality of opportunity and quality practice. This goal highlights the importance of "all learners" acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to campaign, for human rights, peace, gender equality and an "appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" (UNDES, 2015, p17). Bourn et al (2016) highlighted that although children are aware of 'global issues' it is mainly as a consequence of social media and digital images, and rather than engaging in actual experiential learning about global issues, whilst Hunt (2012) questions exactly how globally aware or literate they actually are.

In 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio the terminology of three interconnecting and influential pillars – Social/cultural, economic and environmental was introduced in regard to education for sustainability. It is important to acknowledge that these three pillars are "mutually reinforcing" (Siraj-Blatchford, et al, 2008, p5) and practice and policies developed to support ESD are weakened if they are considered in isolation. The Environmental pillar focuses upon aspects of current lifestyles and how they are affecting the environment, such as climate change, pollution and overflowing land fill sites. Early Childhood has always been closely associated with an understanding of and utilising the environment pedagogically, Davis (2009) however identified a "research hole" around early childhood education for sustainability. Her research noted that although there was evidence of both practice and research focusing on children 'in' and 'about' the environment there was very little emphasis on children as agents of change (education *for* the environment). She concluded that early childhood has something to contribute in the "development of human capacities that underpin" learning how to be sustainable (2009, p239) emphasising the need for more sustainable projects in early childhood communities.

The Social cultural pillar emphasises an ethos of diversity, compassion, inclusion, equity amongst genders and a peaceful just world, which are also the cornerstones of the pioneering ideas of early childhood. In early childhood behaviours, attitudes and an awareness of the world are formed and therefore a greater emphasis must be placed upon quality education through role models and advocating an anti-bias approach to the world. Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the importance of learning through socialisation and that children became part of the culture through their interaction with the cultural tools associated with it. When considering the influence of Paulo Freire, Smidt (2014) encourages practitioners to follow his lead and ensure children learn to 'read their world' with all the cultures , histories and stories attached to it, making sense of it and everything in it. The Social/cultural pillar also underpins all aspects of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, (UNESCO, 2001) and Article 7 highlights a key aspect relevant to the context of the legacy cafes, stating;

"*Creation draws on the roots of cultural tradition, but flourishes in contact with other cultures. For this reason, heritage in all its forms must be preserved, enhanced and handed on to future generations as a record of human experience and aspirations, so as to foster creativity in all its diversity and to inspire genuine dialogue among cultures."*

This focus on heritage and culture seems absent from the English EYFS (DfE, 2017:9) with a more generic definitions of awareness of "similarities and differences between themselves and others, and amongst families, communities and traditions," which is open to interpretation. This is in comparison to the other three curriculum of the home countries of the United Kingdom, which all have clear and specific geographic and cultural references to a positive identity (Boyd, Hirst and Siraj-Blatchford, 2016). Langland (2018) also highlights the need to recognise and celebrate our culture and likens what he perceives as a loss of traditional knowledge, to a 'divorce' from our identity or cultural heritage. These shared crafts or skills include knowing how to cook traditional recipes, how to sew a button on a shirt and simple knitting. Kuttner (2015, p75) asks what individuals in our society are "taught to value" culturally, reflecting that the EYFS (DfE, 2017:4) has no explicit mention of traditional crafts or skills rather a focus on ensuring they are "ready for school" with emphasis on more formal methods of learning(Ofsted,2017). Mbebeb (2009, p25) argues that education should be "part and parcel of culture", validating "the position of the family as a socialising agent" and the legacy café offers an opportunity to empower families and communities together.

The Economic pillar is seen as the least understood or recognised in practice (Siraj-Blatchford, et, al, 2008, p25) describing practitioners awareness of it as "extremely weak". The three pillars are interconnected and Robins and Roberts (1998) argue that all practice should reflect an awareness of these connections. Mbebeb (2009, p26) further stresses the importance of developing children with creativity and entrepreneurial mind-sets whilst highlighting that when schooling attitudes changed towards a "school- like cognitive competence" there came a disconnection from family values and cultural values. Loris Malaguzzi notes the same in his 100 languages of children poem noting that schools steal ninety –nine of the ways of being, seeing and doing, with the emphasis solely on the head (Malaguzzi, n.d) with Moss (2017) arguing that this style of education makes teachers "technicians." Dewey (1916, para 6) highlights instead the necessity of educational "aims and habits of the social group have to be rendered cognizant of them," as without them "the group will cease its characteristic life." Nsamenang (2007) suggests this leads to self –regulated and responsible individuals, resonating with Froebel's original idea of agency of children, key components of ESD.

Intergenerational learning

The Brundtland report (1987) also stressed the need to "look across cultural and historical barriers" and "reach the minds and hearts of people young and old" (1987, p8) which reflects aspects of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum (1996), likened to a mat with all elements of generations of family, community and society woven together, ensuring a "reciprocity of benefit" to all Nicholls (2004, p27). Dewey (1916) suggests that "communities and social groups sustains itself through continuous renewal, and that this renewal takes place by means of the educational growth of the immature members of the group". Seedsman (2013, p350) suggests that mixed intergenerational learning allows for "the coordination and engagement of diverse community groups…. through linking, joining, interacting and sharing".

Wyness (2015, p278) explores this community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) further with attention focused on the communication and dialogic skills necessary to build such a community, arguing for "*active* citizens" with an emphasis on "authentic participation". Arnstein (1969, p2) critiques this terminology however, stating that "there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process," resonating with Shier's (2001) model of participation used in education. There is much discussion regarding the rights of the child (United Nations, 1991) but less so on the rights of the Elderly. In 1991 the General Assembly recognised the "contribution that older persons make to their societies" with particular emphasis placed on opportunities "for willing and capable older persons to participate in and contribute to the ongoing activities of society". The Article highlights significantly that the elderly must "share their knowledge and skills with younger generations" resonating with Ballantyne et al, (2006) who suggested a 'unidirectional' approach where the elderly mentor and teach traditional skills and traditions to the younger children. However, Davis (2015) states children are capable of making choices and participation, and influencing their family and communities too, reflecting a more bi-relational (Vygotsky, 1978) approach.

There can be tensions in terms of intergenerational communication with Giles & Coupland (1991, p159) suggesting it involves "different internally differentiated cultural groups, who possess different values and beliefs about talk, different social and existential agendas, and different language codes". Their research around 'communication accommodation theory' (CAT) noted that the elderly tended to not make any accommodations for the young, whilst the young tended to over accommodate. Intergenerational community learning, such as the legacy café has a bi-relational approach, which encourages mutual respect and informality, with a focus on dialogue through meaningful work.

Intergenerational learning is a key component of the Te Whariki (1996) curriculum where the family and community is the central tenet of the relational practice. According to Nicolls (2004, p27) this learning environment enables opportunities "for each new generation to be nurtured and to grow in knowledge of the past" of traditions, skills and their culture, developing "a strong sense of identity." Whilst the Te Whariki (1996) has its roots firmly in New Zealand culture and history, the legacy café model offers potential opportunities for the same type of intergenerational learning. The elderly are demonstrating key sustainable traditions and practices which have meaning and purpose to them, their history and culture, as they are specific to each and every cultural context. Graue and Walsh (1995, p148) call this learning 'mediated learning' as it is "located within specific cultural and historical practices and time." Additionally, this intergenerational learning draws upon the principles of Reggio Emilia which "offers a sense of belonging to people, longing for other values, relationships and ways of living" (Dahlberg and Moss, 2006, p19).

Relationships are an integral part of intergenerational learning which develop organically through sharing of activities and skills, extended meaningful conversations and the feeling of belonging, through the cultural connections. Generations United (2007) evaluated intergenerational learning and noted that it had many values socially. It highlighted the enhancement of productive and engaged elders, with increased health and functional outcomes, with an emphasis on improved health for all participants. As a consequence of informal intergenerational learning, the Legacy café recognises and builds responsive and reciprocal relationships which provide opportunities for connections between generations. Boström (2003, p5) also reminds practitioners that learning skills such as sewing, knitting, mending punctures , can be facilitated by "people not trained , paid or acknowledged as teachers" reflecting a cohesion within a community of learners. This resonates with the

Sustainable development goal (4.7) (UNESCO 2015-30) which advocates for "all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development".

Context

The trial was for a six month period, starting in January 2018 until June 2018 running once a month. It was held in the public area of the children's centre to ensure public liability insurance covered all aspects of the trial. Full ethical approval was sought and granted by the university before commencement and all participants consented and agreement was gained at the onset.

The legacy Intergenerational Sustainable Skill café trial was situated in Everton a socio - economically deprived area of Liverpool, in the North West of the United Kingdom. The children consisted of two groups, - three – four year old children from the nursery at Everton with their key worker Julie and the second group consisted of two –three year olds that came from a private day nursery that rented space within Everton. The same children attended the café over the 6 months to ensure consistently. The elderly participants came from within the Liverpool 6 district of Everton and were brought and fro from to the centre on a mini bus.

The activities included cooking and baking from scratch using local produce, traditional meals (for example, scouse or short bread), sewing activities – threading, weaving , leading to using either binca or felt pieces, knitting with children's needles, mending punctures, wheels on bicycles and scooters. All these activities could be deemed to potentially be a lost art or skill. Each child participated in both a cooking and sewing type activity at each café session visited.

Methodology

The theoretical underpinning of the research is socio-constructivism with a strong Reggio Emilian approach. The trial being located in a children's centre resonates with the idea of their concept of school, as "a 'participatory' public event, as an ongoing process."(Rinaldi, 2006:146) Within this idea of co-constructing knowledge from within the children's centre itself, was the understanding that within this 'place' "culture is not only transmitted but produced." Robinson and Vaealiki (2015, p104) articulates the importance of ethical considerations within the (research) group, are based upon "collective understandings and /or cultural wisdoms." There was no attempt to privilege one culture over another in the trial, with ongoing dialogues around suggestions of activities or content.

During the trial there was a variety of participants that also reflected the theoretical aspect of Reggio Emilia. There was a genuine co-operation between all layers of staff participating within the trial resonating with their principles of "working *together*, indeed, *being* together, is deeply rooted in everything that is Reggio," (Abbott and Nutbrown, 2007, p6) and Rinaldi (2006) reminds us that Malaguzzi recognised that the "teachers professional development is a cultural education."

The trial was situated within the community public space likened to the '*piazza'* familiar within both the city and school of Reggio Emilia with access to the outside communal area reflecting "a living pattern" idea of interaction, as described by Alexander (1979, p10).Over the course of the trial the 'piazza' reflects time, place, days of the week, history and reinforce through these interactions of both animate and non- animate, the sense of identity and community.

The research reflects a socio constructivist approach with knowledge being "co-constructed, in relationships with others" (Moss, 2007, p128) but crucially recognising that the child is an

equal, and a "researcher actively seeking to make meaning of the world," (2007, p129). This 'equality' reflects Vygotsky's view of an "interactive reciprocal nature" or bi-relational approach to learning as all participants have potentially a part to play within this process making (Gray and MacBlain, 2015, p 98). Within the process, however, there were opportunities for the elderly to share and model their skills, with an 'enabling'approach with the young child being supported through the process by a 'knowledgeable other'. This was apparent with the differentiation of task and support offered during the trial.

The research had an ethnographic flavour with the researcher and participants mingling freely and openly during the trial. Brewer (2000, p6) notes that this type of research will "capture social meanings and ordinary activities" in an attempt to understand how the culture works. The actual methods chosen for this trial were participant observation through notes and photographic evidence. Lutz, (1986, p108) likens this approach as "participant observation of a society or culture through a complete cycle of events that regularly occur as that society interacts with its environment." Limitations of this are that there is potential for missed opportunities during the café sessions or a more biased focus from the one researcher recording. This café is also only a small representation of one children's centre within Liverpool, and therefore reflects this cultural context only.

At the completion of the trial an informal group chat (interview) with the participants was included to ascertain their feelings about the trial. The group element maintained a "community of practice" feel and it stressed a 'group' characteristic, rather than individual. Denscombe (2014, p188) suggests this is "more illuminating" as it offers participants a chance to "listen to alternative points of view" trading on the group dynamics. As a consequence of informal conversations, observations and the group chat, several themes emerged as a result which will be examined in the findings and discussion.

Findings and discussion

The action research cycle consists of both action and analysis (reflection) and looking for particular patterns or codes. Paige-Smith and Craft, (2008, p15) remind practitioners of the "ongoing complexity" of reflection embedded into early childhood contexts. Schön (1983) highlights both reflection 'in' the action, (what happened during the trial) as a consequence of observations and informal conversations, but also reflection 'on' the process, identifying through dialogue and consultation, different themes or codes. McNaughton and Hughes (2009, p174) suggest that codes are just "simply a label that you apply to your data" and that this can "simplify and standardise." But through analysing the codes and in reflection and with subsequent discussion, several codes or themes emerged as a result of the data analysis.

Intergenerational learning.

O'Brien (2013, p8) highlights the need for a new educational model that is not just preparation for "conventional employment" but instead arguing for a "vision that contributes to well- being for all, forever" (2013, p9), coining the term "sustainable happiness" (2013, p14). This 'sustainable happiness' was apparent in how all those participating had only positive comments to make.

"I was just saying how fab this is – this little boy is not usually confident, but working with this old lady Mary, he's really confident and come out of his shell." (Practitioner)

"I loved being with the children. I loved helping, talking to them and getting to know their names and learning how to knit." (Elderly lady)

Intergenerational learning bridges generations and by being bi-relational in practice, offers opportunities for all participants to contribute. Duvall and Zint (2007, p15) recognised that children can promote effective intergenerational learning, as well as "consumer choices made by parents". Observing the children enthusiastically engaged in preparation, cooking and eating 'new' recipes impacted upon some parents.

"It's laziness on my part. I suppose that I can give it a go now – cook some chicken, buy the veg with him , the whole thing ,rather than just give him hot dogs, noodles and nuggets ". (Dad)

Kenner, et al (2007, p220) highlighted the "transmission of knowledge or prolepsis between generations" as a consequence of intergenerational learning, recognising that "culture is seen as understandings shared between members of a community jointly created through shared practice."(2007:, p 22)

"Because I want to make my own clothes, design them and I have come here to learn those skills" (Mum)

"It's been really good. I have learnt how to thread the needle using a needle threader" (Mum)

The community feeling was apparent in the atmosphere created together, bringing different generations and cultures together with one agreed specific aim – to be more sustainable together.

"It's nice to see them mixed together- talking to them and learning about their experiences" (Children centre practitioner)

"It's important for all this- it's a life skill to be able to mix" (Practitioner)

Sustainability.

O'Brien (2013) challenges the idea that happiness is about material wealth or material consumerism. Economically there is a need for an awareness of how consumerism and the throwaway society it creates, impacts on the environment often being entangled with an idea of being happy. Kasser (2006, p200) cautions that society may confuse the "path to the 'good life' as the 'goods' life". This is a time of fast fashion and dangerous levels of plastic rubbish polluting the oceans and threatening our planet. This was apparent in comments noted during the trial.

"They can't be bothered to sew. They just throw away stuff." (Elderly lady)

"I sew buttons on but I don't think people do that anymore do they?" (Mum)

"Parents could not cut a real pineapple and had to be shown, as usually they pay more for a tinned one which is expensive" (Student).

What an amazing idea! It's really difficult to get past school admin officers. Sent seventy seven emails and had two responses. Here we feel involved ". (Uniform exchange)

Vaillant (2002) highlighted the true meaning of how intergenerational learning can support and ensure traditional skills and values are passed down through generations and therefore contribute to preserving the planets ecological systems ,describing them as 'keepers of the meaning'. Resonating with the principles of the UN rights for the Elderly (1991) Vanderven (2004, p85) suggests this approach "preserves what is meaningful from ones past life".

"I want Jamie to grow up doing these old fashioned things." (Mum)

"Look! Look at them! They are fixing our teddy. She is sewing but I am threading" (4 year old child)

"They cook in the nursery but they have never seen anyone sewing or knitting before" (practitioner)

""A necessary art" (Elderly lady)

Another dimension of the social pillar is an awareness of equality, diversity and challenging gender stereotypes which was was needed to challenge role assumptions of gender- mums only sew, cook and bake, and dads build and mend bicycles. This became a crucial element of the trial from the onset.

"Look at all the Grandma's sewing! Grandads don't sew but Grandma's do! "(4 year old child)

The little girl was later challenged cognitively when she saw a dad knitting with a furrowed brow evident of her perplexity, with even the dads recognising it was a gender challenge.

"Men think it's a women's role to sew and knit." (Dad knitting)

Health and well- being through reciprocal relationships.

Vanderven (2004, p78) proposes that Intergenerational learning "can help build and sustain a true caring community among generations who are in danger of being harmfully separated." An Age UK Report (2015, p11) highlighted that the elderly "valued the ability to talk, listen and share information with another human being… provid(ing) a sense of belonging". This resonates with Helliwell, Layard and Sachs (2018) which recognised that happiness has its roots firmly in social foundations and family connections. This was clearly demonstrated with the wide ranging comments around personal feelings and worth as a consequence of attending the legacy cafes.

"I feel like I have a purpose being here" (Dad)

"I came back to see the cheeky monkeys" (Elderly lady)

"It gets people together –it creates a community" (Elderly lady)

"*Coming here – you don't feel so alone" (Elderly lady)*

"As you get older and your grandchildren grow up – you feel not needed- out on a limb. We have more time now we are older to pass on these skills" (Elderly lady)

"This keeps me grounded – I like working with the community." (Dad)

"It's a good atmosphere. The smell of the soup. A nice feeling and I leave here with good energy. I like to be involved." (Dad)

There is evidence of how sewing and knitting are beneficial to the health of the participants. Knit for Peace (n.d, p3) researched the benefits of knitting on the elderly saying it has "positive health benefits, physical and mental." Brayshaw (2017) reported on how sewing and embroidery referred to as "meditative, transformative work" was offered to recovering servicemen after World War One, challenging the gender construct of that time. This was reflected in the trial.

"It (knitting) passes the time. It takes your mind off things – worrying. "(Dad)

"It keeps your hands busy" (Dad)

The importance of relationships within communities is highlighted when children became aware of and friendly with older generations as a consequence of the trial. One mum said it was nice for her child "as *we don't have grandparents here."*

Children noted differences and the café presented an opportunity to learn about 'others' in a relaxed and informal way.

"*You have grey hair!"(4 year old)*

And

"Why do you have grey hair?" (4 year old)

The elderly lady replied saying *"because I am old"* to which the young girl replied "*I have never seen anyone with grey hair before!"* This little girl has no grandparents in Liverpool and within her community it is rare for people to go grey demonstrating the need for children to see and observe differences in natural environments within their community and that surely is the social responsibility of early childhood.

Conclusion

This research trial of the legacy café supports the interconnectedness of three pillars of sustainability from a community perspective sharing social responsibility, with the evidence recognising it has positive benefits for all participants. As Dewey (1916) noted "where learning is the accompaniment of continuous activities or occupations which have a social aim and utilize the materials of typical social situations, from under these conditions, the school becomes itself a form of social life, a miniature community." This was evident in the intergenerational legacy café with a wide range of participants that attended voluntarily, a crucial component of the trial. Families that were normally seen as being 'marginalised' or even 'troubled' came willingly, dads found a 'purpose' and a 'more meaningful' way of connecting with their children and the elderly participants felt there was a reason to leave their flat and enter the outside world. Gender stereotyping was a noted theme and it was apparent the need to ensure all young children had an opportunity to observe a wide range of perceived role reversals. Dads cooking in the kitchen, mums mending scooters and punctures, dads knitting or sewing a button on and the elderly talking with the children and their families. This must be a continued element of all intergenerational projects, illuminating anti-bias and opening up equal opportunities for all, breaking down stereotyping organically and authentically in the early years, when fundamental values and attitudes are developed.

These findings also highlighted the need for further research into the health benefits of sustainable community groups, with a particular emphasis on mental health. At present in England it is noted there is an ever increasing and constant rise in mental health issues across all age divides, and the legacy café if established on a national scale would offer opportunities for all generations to support each other through conversation, companionship and sharing of historic and cultural tasks. There is neuroscientific research that supports the need to keep both the head and hands busy, and this again needs to be a focus of research. These elements will be a crucial aspect of the next phase of trials in Liverpool. Public health in England struggle under the cost of the growing elderly population and accessing universal health benefits. There is a growing awareness of the need for more support for both the elderly in terms of social isolation and being cognitively active, but also mental health issues

in younger and younger children, and this intergenerational community approach might be a potential solution. This café project is unique in that it opens up the potential for generational research and development rather than focusing on one particular age. There are already several developments leading on from this legacy café, with Liverpool City Council trailing the model in five children and family centres (three with dementia hubs attached) over the next year, particularly because it offers an authentic not tokenistic approach of cohesion and social responsibility. There are also four other culturally different trials starting in Finland, the USA, and Tasmania, and through a premier league football club in Liverpool. The café is a simple but unique research project, which represents a positive move towards "our common future" (Bruntdland, 1987).

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