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THE UNIVERSITY LABORATORY SCHOOL: THE BENEFITS OF QUALITY PRACTICES

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Abstract:
This study investigated student teachers' perspectives on their experiences at the Joyce M. Huggins Early Education Center (Huggins Center), a university (ECE) laboratory (lab) school. The researcher examines whether or not training in a high quality, accredited ECE lab school assists students enrolled in the credential program, ECE option to grow professionally in learning to apply ECE theory to classroom practice. Sixteen student teachers were placed in ECE classrooms (infant, toddler, and preschool) at the Huggins Center. Prior to their experience, and after their placement, students completed a 10-item survey to determine if their student teaching experience met their expectations. The researcher also observed the students during student teaching. Their work, including a class presentation, written reflections and other assignments were also analyzed to look at their implementation of quality ECE practices in their teaching at the lab school such as: design of project activities, parent involvement, and use of documentation. Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis, results of the project *The University Laboratory School: The Benefits of Quality Practices* show that the student teaching experience provided at the ECE lab school was highly effective in helping student teachers achieve experience with NAEYC standards and yielded positive outcomes for the student teachers. An aspect that requires more attention is the student teachers' need for more feedback from classroom teachers to enhance their preparation for teaching.

Keywords: ECE practice, quality practice, student teacher, written reflection, project activities

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Early childhood lab schools are located university campuses and serve as a teaching environment for students in a teacher preparation program that provides students with practical experience working with children and serves as an outlet for research that

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examines various educational, social, and child development issues (Clawson 1999, McBride 1996). It is important that lab schools follow a three-part mission in order to be successful. These three parts are training students in the areas of child development and (ECE), providing an appropriate place for educational research to take place, and serving the children and their families with the best model possible (McBride, 1996). The most commonly reported issue is that the student teachers without a lab school experience usually do not discuss how their teaching is connected to the education theories and ideas that pre-service teachers learn about in their university classes (Monroe & Horm, 2012).

Not every university has a laboratory school for training early childhood students, but it is important for universities to have laboratory schools because they have many valuable benefits for both undergraduate and graduate students (Monroe & Horm, 2012). Lab schools benefit undergraduate and graduate students by allowing them to observe lessons, work first-hand with children, and engage in discussions with experienced educators (Monroe & Horm, 2012). They also benefit student teachers by allowing them to have conversations with the children and gain practice using educational theories in a supported context for teaching (Monroe & Horm, 2012). Students may have the opportunities to be included in professional development meetings with the director and teachers that contribute to the program quality of the lab school (Dennis & O'Conner, 2013).

Furthermore, student teachers learn the importance of communicating with the parents of their students (Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008). *Parents' participation* in improving the *quality* of schools in the learning aspect is manifested through parenting day activities as *parents* are actively *involved, observed* Sumarsono et al. (2016).Studies conducted in 2003 by Sandberg and Vuorinen (2008) show the positive results of teacher and parent cooperation. It gives parents chances to ask teachers questions about their children and their friend's children. The lab schools provide many opportunities for early education undergraduate students to collaborate with parents (Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008). Additionally, undergraduate students can also learn by conducting research and evaluating the lab school program at their university (McBride, 1996). Furthermore, the lab school is a great resource for teaching undergraduate students the benefits of reflecting on their practices. When they reflect on their practices and experiences, they can improve their teaching methods and become better teachers (Monroe & Horm, 2012). There are three approaches very important for ECE teachers to know. They originate in Europe: Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia. Each one was founded on principles of idealism to move society toward peace and renewal (Edwards, 2002). The study of Liu, Sulaimani and Henning (2020) recommended that "*parental involvement should be considered as an affluent resource and a useful tool because it could provide rich information about infants' individual needs and positively help infant teachers to improve their instructional skills*".

The first educational approach, the Waldorf method, was created by Rudolf Steiner who founded a school for children of employees at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory. Steiner explored the intersection between scientific and spiritual ideals and went against traditional models of education, that segregated children based on their gender and socio-economic backgrounds. His education model spanned preschool through high

school levels and structured the school so that the administration and governing body was independent of external control (Edwards, 2002).

Similar values that superseded class and background were also present in Maria Montessori's methods of education. Her school the Casa dei Bambini founded in Rome in 1907, became the basis for the educational methods known as the Montessori method. Unlike Waldorf, her methods were not entrenched in a well-articulated model, but focused on Montessori's philosophies and principles of human development (Edwards, 2002).

The ECE programs in Reggio Emilia, a northern Italian city, first led by Loris Malaguzzi, have a philosophy known as the Reggio Emilia Approach that involves a constant, evolving dialogue among educators, children, families and the community. The system began as a parent organized movement for municipal preschools and infant-toddler programs and became system that was used throughout the city (Edwards, 2002).

In schools using any of the three ECE approaches, children are engaged in the learning process and leading their own education and development. Under Steiner's model, unity of the mind and body of the child was achieved through an encouragement of play and the use of imagination. He believed that three cycles of 7-year stages occurred throughout the educational development of a child, moving the child through stages of imitation, imagination, and intellect.

For Montessori, there was an emphasis on a child's natural intellect taking the lead in their education and she brought forth a pattern of six steps that would move throughout the development of the child. Much like Steiner's view, Montessori's stages span several years of development. Malaguzzi's approach emphasized the relationships surrounding the child as the major influence on development and learning. The social construct that defined the child's environment was important in the symbolic transmission of ideas (Edwards, 2002). In this regards, Gilman (2007) stated that "All children are regarded as resourceful, curious, imaginative, and inventive, and possess a desire to interact and communicate with each other and their environment" (Gilman, 2007, p.24).

Teachers play a major role in all of these approaches, with each approach providing a different method for the teachers follow. For example, teachers of the Waldorf method are leaders in the classroom on many levels, and also provide a moral model for the students. Waldorf teachers have more command of the classroom and are more direct in teaching their students. Montessori encourages a teacher to be mentally present in the classroom, but not to be overtly involved or disruptive to the natural learning process of the students. The Montessori classroom should be a place of peace and serenity as well as learning. Teaching methods with Montessori are often characterized by long periods of quiet but intense concentration followed by moments of respite. On the other hand, Reggio teachers facilitate learning by listening to the children, engaging their students in the learning process, giving them attention when necessary and encouraging the children to resolve conflicts among themselves. In Reggio Emilia schools, importance placed on the teacher as guide who offers provocative materials,

ideas and experiences that allow the natural flow of knowledge to occur among the students (Edwards, 2002).

Assessment of the students is the natural conclusion of the learning process and with each of these methods; a detailed report is given to the parents of the child. In some cases, as in Reggio Emilia, documentation of learning in the form of photos, narrative descriptions or diaries may be used to show student progress and comments. Because of the interest in integrating these approaches into the public school system, there has been a call for a more empirical research on the benefits of these ECE approaches. With the exception of Montessori Method, limited research on these approaches has been conducted (Edwards, 2002).

1.2 Problem

My first contact with a lab school was when my advisor asked me to work as a volunteer with preschool-aged children in the Huggins Center; one of the three centres operate by Fresno state program for children and is located at the Kremen school of education and human development. The centre utilises the Reggio-inspired philosophy. I was observed my mentor three times a week for two months in order to build up my background.

I started designing my own lessons and discovered what a large difference there is between merely observing ECE methods and actually putting them into practice. It started to become apparent to me that having a theory only background was not sufficient background; actually, putting ECE theories into practice and observing the effects on children's learning in the classroom is essential to improving ECE professional practice and leadership preparation.

I spent my first two semesters in the ECE program divided between observation and actual teaching in the classroom. My understanding of the Reggio-inspired Preschool Laboratory's curriculum grew over the first year, as did my understanding of the roles of teachers, parents, and environment in the education of young children. During my first semester, I was nervous and sometimes confused by the ECE philosophy and methodology. Over time, I became more familiar with the ECE program at the Huggins Center, and strongly supported by the hard work I was doing in my graduate courses as well as practice teaching. By the end of the first semester, I found myself to be much more comfortable with putting these new ECE theories into practice.

In the second semester, I started making extra efforts to understand the importance of the Reggio Emilia philosophy in the classroom. I started seeing the effects of this approach on the children and I saw them become more independent, curious, and motivated to learn. I started to see the importance of making the child the center of ECE, rather than the target skill for an age group. This was reinforced when I began observing how much more confident and competent children were becoming in through the learning experiences offered in the classroom.

By the beginning of my third semester, I was able to see that the work I was doing at the Huggins Center was pivotal to understanding young children and the ECE philosophy. Part of the philosophy of the Joyce M. Huggins Preschool Laboratory is that the teacher is important element of a philosophical community dedicated to

understanding the connections between teaching and learning and who are seeking to use best practices. To use the best practices of teaching and learning, ECE teachers must have excellent preparation. The aim of this study is to examine how ECE student teachers can be equipped with the information and experiences necessary to understand ECE philosophy at an ECE lab school so they can become effective teachers that also use these high quality ECE practices.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine whether a preschool laboratory school that uses a theory approach model would be helpful in ECE teacher preparation. The study focuses on the experiences of ECE student teachers who are placed in a lab preschool classroom twice a week for six weeks. This hands-on lab experience is designed to assist students in achieving a variety of course objectives that contributed to their understanding of children and teaching in an ECE context. The intent of this formative, process evaluation study is to improve ECE teacher preparation as well as current practice at the lab school, with the belief that such improvements would facilitate greater learning of the students in the teacher education program.

1.4 Rationale

This project is necessary because it will help ECE undergraduate students understand the benefits of using the high quality ECE practices demonstrated at a lab preschool. It lets them get firsthand experience using the theories they are learning about in their university classes.

Therefore, evaluation by the undergraduate students is essential. It is especially relevant in university laboratory schools because they are training sites for future educators and because they have proximity and a unique relationship to university preparation programs.

This study employed mixed methods. Data were collected from sixteen credential students who are training in the Lab School at California State, Fresno over a three-week period. This study includes two –surveys: a pre-assessment survey on the student teacher's expectations about student teaching at the lab school and a post-assessment survey on the student teachers' experiences at the lab school and evaluation of these experiences. The undergraduate students were given the two surveys to complete in their university classroom, one before they completed their student teaching and one after they completed their student teaching.

Each survey had questions about their experiences in the classroom and how the students felt about their experiences in the classroom. This was done in order to determine whether or not these experiences were seen as beneficial to their preparation as teachers. Another goal of the survey was to collect and gather descriptive details that might lead to specific improvements in the student teaching experience and ECE program.

The two surveys were designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data. Using a 4- point number scale, students were asked to choose (1) not at all important, (2)

not very important, (3) somewhat important, or (4) very important in response to a series of 10 items related to student teaching. They also were asked to write about their priorities for student teaching on the pre-assessment and for the post-assessment, whether their expectations for student teaching were met.

Observations of the student teachers at the lab school were also conducted by the researcher, during their student teaching in the lab classrooms and through informal dialogue. The student teachers were encouraged to speak freely and honestly about the positive and negative outcomes of student teaching at the Huggins Center. The researcher observed in the four preschool classrooms for a 2-hour period each time from 9 am till 11am for three sessions.

The researcher also participated in informal dialogue with course instructors and student teachers and recorded information from these course sessions.

2. Definitions of Quality in ECE

In promoting physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development, all classrooms are not the same (Rimm-Kaufman, La Paro, Downer & Pianta, 2005). There are two types of ECE quality that are comprised of structural elements and process elements. Structural elements are tangible, such as the ratio of children to teachers, curriculum, and classroom atmosphere, and class size.

The process elements are intangible and include things such as language use, lesson plans, assessments, and teacher-child interactions that are responsible for the division between low quality and high-quality programs (Ghazvini & Mullis, 2002).

Some structural elements are regulated by the government in an attempt to increase quality and prevent abuse, but these licensing requirements only enforces the minimal quality standards for child care centers. For instance, licensing regulates the teacher-child ratio but not teacher quality. Additionally, there may be requirements for teachers to reach a certain level of education, but no regulation that requires teachers to achieve a grade above a C. For these reasons, licensing is not included in my discussion of ECE quality, as licensing does not ensure quality.

Organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the Association for Child Education International (ACEI) have their own standards of ECE quality for ECE programs, NAEYC standards are comprehensive and ECE programs may apply for accreditation to validate that they have achieved these rigorous standards for program quality. To meet NAEYC standards fully, assessment by parents is used a primary data source, because they have firsthand knowledge of their children's progress, activities, and interactions. Only schools that are rated by parents at a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest) receive accreditation. However, even these standards of quality have been questioned by critics who state that some ECE classes receiving accreditation do not adequately support to literacy and language acquisition (Dickenson, 2002). Dickenson states that a program may be called high quality even though it only minimally provides for children’s literary needs.

Quality can also be called into question by political groups or individuals who may not have the interest of the children at heart. Starting with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964, legislative policy requires that all publicly funded programs be evaluated for quality. It was found that quality was based on the benefits that preschools offered the students, adherence to a strict curriculum, or the use of developmentally appropriate practices (Lee & Walsh, 2004). Quality was judged quantitatively, meaning that a scale was used and a specific score assigned through a formal assessment. There was no unified method to measure quality in ECE programs that covered all necessary aspects.

In this project, quality is defined according to research on the ECE program factors that have been found to benefit students. Organizational quality of ECE programs, for example, is included, as it was found to be a significant factor affecting children's learning (Gorey, 2001).

2.1 Definitions of Documentation

Documentation is a method for studying children's learning from Reggio Emilia (Rinaldi, 1998).Using observation, photos, teacher comments, parent comments, and explanations of children's activities, examples of children's work and records of work in progress. According to educators in Reggio Emilia, high-quality documentation is fundamental to ECE and for enhancing and maintaining a quality ECE program. Documentation enhances children's learning, because it demonstrates what children have achieved, and shows that their work is taken seriously by interested adults, encouraging them to keep learning working on educational projects. It helps teachers to plan lessons that target the actual needs of their students. In 1995, there was Research about the cognitive development and the process of learning for the children between Harvard Graduate School of Education (Zero Project) and the educators of Reggio Emilia. The outcome of this Research was the importance of documentation and how the teachers can use to documentation as an assessment (Giudici, Krechevsky & Rinaldi, 2001). In Reggio project documentation is given importance because it is considered as an assessment documentation also encourages teacher and parent awareness and helps both to understand their roles, and it makes children learning visible to the public (Katz & Chard, 1996).

Documentation is especially important because it displays to the public the capabilities of children and demonstrates what a successful ECE program is about. It is important to use documentation, because there is so much emphasis on learning and achieving goals that is put in place by policymakers that teachers are not able to encourage children as much. It's important to concentrate on the thinking of the children so that a high quality program can be developed, and it's not productive to just set goals and demand that teachers and children reach them without evaluating their progress along the way. This allows for a better learning experience for the students (Gandini & Kaminsky, 2004). Another powerful factor in the Reggio Emilia philosophy is the environment: "*Place is a source of meaning, belonging, and identity largely due to the relationships facilitated by bonds to place*" (Strong & Ellis, 2007).

According to Strong and Ellis (2007), three "teachers" participate in a child's education: the teacher in the classroom, the parent, and the environment. The experience that children have is limited by their location. Certain materials are set up so that they get the child to explore. For example, brightly colored objects, transparent jars filled with buttons, a pizza box in an unexpected place, and different scents are all things that get children to explore the classroom. In addition, placing the children's art on the walls builds up their confidence which is a part of developing leadership skills. It also allows visitors to the classroom, such as parents, to become more involved with the students' work (Strong & Ellis, 2007). It's important for children to have a natural, consistent place because it gives them a community and sense of identity in that place.

Having a sense of place helps children develop a sense of autonomy and social support. It also gives children a heightened sense of awareness and helps develop their reasoning skills. Not only this, but it helps them to develop their observational senses. All of the factors discussed here affect cognitive growth and help facilitate teaching (Strong & Ellis, 2007).

3. Benefits of ECE Programs

Even though ECE wasn't considered a professional field until well into the 20th century, parents and some others realized the value of the education of the young child and its contribution to the later academic success of the individual. The Perry Preschool Project (PPP) is probably one of the longest-running studies on the benefits of ECE, dating back to 1962 and still being tracked until today. It shows that ECE "*reduces health behavioral risk factors by enhancing educational attainment, health insurance coverage, income, and family environments*"(Muennig, Schweinhart, Montie, & Neidell, 2009, p.1431). Another study done by Norris, Schweinhart, and their colleagues (1995) demonstrated that every dollar invested in an early childhood generated a return of just over seven dollars for the individual and the community. In addition, thirty-six major studies that have been proven to be reliable have shown that the IQ of children in programs has increased by anywhere between one and twenty-five points; it has also been found that these programs produced a significant increase on standardized test scores, and effect that lasted into the third grade for some children. In fact, an analysis of 80 programs established a direct correlation between the hours spent in such a program and the positive effects of enrolment. This evidence shows that there are several strong benefits for children enrolled in these programs.

3.1 Limitations

The main limitation of this study was time. The student teachers work at the center once a year in the fall semester, so I was only able to observe them in fall, 2014 and not over a longer period of time. The other limitation of this study was that it took place only in one lab school, the Joyce Huggins Early Education Center located at CSU, Fresno and only with student teachers who were working with toddlers in the preschool program, not with infants, ECE is a term that refers to educational programs and strategies geared

toward children from birth to the age of eight, and in this study we were only able to focus on teachers who teach the age between 4 and 6 years old.

4. Conclusion

It is important for universities to have lab schools because of the benefits they have for education students. Lab schools allow student teachers to become more familiar with the parents and families with the children as well as the curriculum so that they may apply the theories they are learning to the actual practice of teaching. Lab schools allow students to have conversations with the children and practice educational theories. I quickly learned through my first contact with the lab school that there is a large difference between merely observing these approaches and actually putting them into practice. Putting these theories into practice and observing the effects of them in real time in the classroom helps to improve the quality of the practice. After my first two semesters in the program, I became much more comfortable with the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

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Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interests.

About the Author
Jawahar Fahad Alghofaili is currently a PhD candidate. She obtained her master's degree from the California State University, Fresno, USA. She is a trainer in the area of early childhood education. A very visionary and passionate teacher, Ms Alghofaili has a few research papers to her credit. She has been interested in exploring knowledge, therefore she has already visited many schools and institutions in various countries and regions such as Italy, Sweden, the US, the UK, Finland etc. She has been actively researching in the areas of teaching strategies, culture integration in teaching, literacy etc.

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Appendices

Appendix A: ECE Student Teacher Survey (Before Student Teaching)

a. To match before and after responses, please put the first two letters of your first name and a color you can remember for next time:
.....

b. Please indicate your expectations for student teaching. Use the following rating system:
1 - strongly agree,
2 - somewhat agree,
3-disagree,
4 - strongly disagree**.**
As a student teacher at the Huggins Early Education Center:
- I want to learn how to write anecdotal notes about children's activities. 1 2 3 4
- I want to learn how to apply ECE theoretical concepts to classroom situations. 1 2 3 4
- I want to gain practice giving positive guidance to children. 1 2 3 4
- I want to become an effective observer of children. 1 2 3 4
- I want to learn how to facilitate appropriate play experiences. 1 2 3 4
- I want to learn how to be professional and responsible while working as a teaching team.1 2 3 4**-** I want practice in writing a lesson plan.1 2 3 4
- I want feedback to improve my teaching.1 2 3 4
- I want practice teaching small groups1 2 3 4
- I want to learn to assess children's skills1 2 3 4
- Of the ten listed expectations for student teaching, which three are of greatest importance to you? Please prioritize, giving the number and the statement of most important to you as #1, next importance, #2, and next after that as #3.
1.....
2.....
3.....

c. Are there any other expectations you have not on the list? Please describe these additional expectations below:
.....

Appendix B: ECE Student Teacher Survey (After Student Teaching)

a. To match before and after responses, please put the first two letters of your first name and a color you can remember for next time:
.....

b. Please indicate your expectations for student teaching. Use the following rating system:
1 - strongly agree
2 - somewhat agree
3 - disagree
4 - strongly disagree

As a student teacher at the Huggins Early Education Center:
- I learned how to write anecdotal notes about children's activities.1 2 3 4

- I learned how to apply ECE theoretical concepts to classroom situations.1 2 3 4
- I gained practice giving positive guidance to children.1 2 3 4
- I was able to become an effective observer of children.1 2 3 4
- I learned how to facilitate appropriate play experiences. 1 2 3 4
- I learned how to be professional and responsible while working as a teaching team. 1 2 3 4
- I practiced writing a lesson plan. 1 2 3 4
- I got feedback to improve my teaching. 1 2 3 4
- I had practice teaching in small groups 1 2 3 4
- I learned to assess children's skills 1 2 3 4
- Of the ten listed expectations for student teaching, which three are of greatest importance to you?Please prioritize, giving the number and the statement of most important to you as #1, next importance, #2, and next after that as #3.

1.....
2.....
3.....

c. Discuss your experiences documenting children's learning using observation, technology, etc. at the Huggins Center? What is the value of documentation to you as a student teacher and future teacher?
.....

Appendix C: ECE Student Teacher Observation Form

Teacher: .....
Classroom:.....
1. Applying a theory to a classroom situations.
2. Supports individual culture and diversity.
3. Observes children from 0-3 years.
4. Observes children from 3-5 years.
5. Professional and responsible while working as a teaching team.
6. Using a lesson plan and documentation.
7. Gets feedback from professors and mentors.
8. Appropriate and effective activities.
9. Use of Reggio Emilia approach.
10. Facilitates appropriate play experiences in groups.

First Observation

It is a bilingual classroom (English and Spanish). The children sat in a circle while the teacher read the Spanish story. Then the teacher asked them what the names of the characters in the story. After that she, showed the children what the names looked like by showing them prewritten cards. Then she asked comprehension questions.

They made pancakes in a group of five children. The teacher taught the students mathematics measurements of liquids and solids using a measurement cup. The teacher gave each individual child as chance to use the measurement cup. Each child made their own pancake mix. It was a kinesthetic activity. After they made the mixture, the teacher cooked it for them to protect them from getting burned. Then, they shared the pancakes together.

This was a science lesson. The teacher brought real snails, a magnifying glass, a story about snails, pictures, blank paper, and makers. The children were afraid of the snails. The teacher taught them how to touch them gently and not to be afraid. Other children were busy using the magnifying glass to explore the snails' bodies. Another child drew pictures of snails. One child asked why snails have shells. Another teacher documented what they did by writing down the conversation between the teacher and the children and taking pictures.

Second Observation

Before the storytelling activity the teacher played a song related to the story title. For the storytelling activity the teacher started by presenting the author's name and the title. She then did a brainstorming activity asking the children to predict what the story was about. After that she started to tell the story which was written as poetry. She chose the story with the purpose to teach them that different words can have similar sounds. Then she asked comprehension questions about the story.

The second activity was about shadows and light. The teacher used the Reggio Emilia approach for the children to explore how to use light, shadow, and their imagination to tell their own story.

Another teacher used a table light and colored shapes to help the children learn about colors and shapes. In another unique activity, which also used the Reggio Emilia approach, the teacher helped the children explore their imagination. They watched a projected video about animals, played with toys that were related to the animals in the movie, and told their own story.

All of these teachers used Vygotsky's theories about thought, language, and play and Piaget's theory of cognitive development to support each individual child's needs and to develop their scheme.

The student teachers worked together as a team. Some did the activities and some observed. They used documentation to write the children's stories and to help the children to improve their language and literacy.

Third Observation

For the first activity the children and teacher went outside in a sunny area to explore shadow and light. They played and they worked in groups to explore the light and how shadows move. Some kids stood still in one place, while others used multi-colored chalk to trace the outline of their shadows on the ground. They learned that the position of the shadow changes based upon the direction of the sun. While they played, they learned that their shadows disappeared when they went into the shade. At one point the weather changed between sunny and cloudy. Because the weather changed, the sun was covered by a cloud. This helped the children begin to make a connection between the sun and shadow. When the sun and the shadow disappeared, the sun disappeared at the same time. When the light is blocked by an object it creates a shadow.

The second activity was with colors and light. The teacher brought different colored shapes, but only in the primary colors: red, yellow, blue, and green. The shapes were made of see-through colored plastic so that the light could shine through them. First the teacher asked the children about the names of the shapes and then the names of the colors. After this, the teacher asked the children to explore and create new colors with the shapes. For example, when they put the red with the yellow together, they created orange. And, when the put the red with the blue they made purple. Each time they created a new color the teacher asked them what it was and if the children did not know, they helped them. The children worked in groups and helped each other.

The last activity used a box to explore light. It was also outside in the sun. Two teachers collaborated together to do a small experiment with the children. They brought a colorful box. It was painted black and had colorful rainbows. They put some children inside the box and carefully closed it. They made sure the children were safe and comfortable first. Then they asked them several cognitive questions to explore the relationship between shadow, light, and the sun.

For example, they asked them, "Can you see shadows inside the box? Why?" When the child came out of the box, they said "Oh, look the shadow appeared again. Why?" After that they started to use the same method, but with a different activity. They used a CD and a mirror to make rainbows and to explore the colors of a rainbow and how they are formed.

In every activity there were two teachers. They used appropriate group practices. One teacher observed, documented and made comments to help the other teacher and herself/himself. The other made sure the children were safe and asked the questions. They worked together as a professional team. They helped and responded to each other. They worked with mixed (age, culture, level) groups of children and supported their individual needs. They also used different strategies to make sure they crossed the children's backgrounds, cultures, and learning styles. For example, some kids learn by drawing while

others learn from doing the experiment. Still others learn from working in a social group. The theory they used was a project approach from the Reggio Amelia Method.