

# 'Experiential learning'

by Robin Booth



**M:** "This will do the trick."

**E:** "But it all keeps falling down."

**M:** "And my socks and shoes kept getting wet"

**E:** "and so did yours."



This intensity of play demonstrates an authentic learning process. As the children co-construct and co-experiment they share in exploring the medium of water and the process of building a tower and finding which pieces fit, and at what point it falls. Different objects are used and as they proceed, the children formulate their own understandings and theories about their experiences.

**M:** "There's a pump here. And if you go up and down, up and down, water comes out."

**M:** "And there's this little thing with a hole, and water comes out of the hole."

**E:** "If I hold it (the pipe), then no water comes out."

**M:** "Look at all this complex."



When asked to reflect on this process the following day, the children related their stories while building on each other's comments, developing shared meanings and forming a sense of community.

**M:** "I don't know how I managed to put that bucket on."

**E:** "You placed it on top and it fell over and caught."

**M:** "Look, that's dangling down."



Through this process we are able to make their learning visible to them, engaging them in exploring their understandings further. It allows for a sense of integration of their knowledge and the possibility of them extending on their learning further. They recall their delight and laughter from the day before, reinforcing their bonds of friendship and creating a greater sense of connectedness and belonging. There is a lot more going on here than the mathematics and sciences of gravity, balance or motion. We as teachers, parents and adults need to be continually reminded that education and schooling is more about 'learning' than 'teaching'. And what we learn is actually more about people, relationships, belonging and self esteem than subjects and information. Hence our starting point is "How can I support you and your learning?" opposed to "I am going to teach you about..."

These memories shared do not only relate to the obvious learning but to the things that are important to us and have special meaning. These are the moments of understanding who I am, who you are and who we are together.

**E:** "Robin, and I was wearing my hippo shirt. I like hippos."



We view each person in terms of wholeness and integrity, the uniqueness and unrepeatability of each individual and of his or her construction (self-constructed and socially constructed) as a subject, defined within a specific context and culture. Our individual construction exists with others and through others. We each have a right to be who we really are and we help make one another who we are by how we treat one another.