



Organisation Mondiale pour L'Éducation Préscolaire
World Organization for Early Childhood Education
Organización Mundial para la Educación Preescolar

Dear colleague,

Another year in the context of the pandemic is coming to an end, a year that was difficult and painful for most of humankind, one that was blurry and filled with uncertainties about when and how this tragedy that affects us, in so many ways, will conclude.

Everything that was malfunctioning in the world has been exacerbated and inescapable evidenced, and it has become more urgent to respond with concrete actions to the great inequalities, poverty, violence, climate change, human rights vulnerability, among so many other issues.

However, we have also learned and made progress, for example, with the new vaccines and medicines to face COVID-19. Moreover, new technologies offer various ways for us to communicate and bond, to discover other possible worlds, new ways to collaborate, cooperate and create.

In the educational field, we have learned a lot. Families and societies value centers and schools much more, and many teachers have given new meanings and strengthened their bonds with children and their families through multiple resources.

In this context, OMEP members continue to build hope, critical thinking, and proposals, developing strong political advocacy work to give visibility to early childhood and to improve access, inclusion, and quality in education, through more research and pedagogical development.

The main, *transversal area* of the **OMEP Strategic Plan** has been strengthening **communication**. As the Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti¹ said:

*mi táctica es
hablarte
y escucharte
construir con palabras
un puente indestructible*

(my tactic is to talk to you and listen to you, to build with words an unbreakable bridge)

At OMEP, we gather colleagues from 67 countries, and we talk with children, families, communities, educational and care centers, governments, world organizations, foundations, and other relevant actors worldwide, in order to advance the achievement of targets 4.2 and 4.7 in SGD 4, including everyone's participation.

The Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire² affirmed that the communicative process gives the possibility to each person to speak their mind freely and critically, **assuming with responsibility their participation in social processes**. This responsibility requires knowledge, sensitivity, and ethical clarity. There are interests coming from unfair political, economic, social, and cultural structures that threaten childhood as well as they create and strengthen inequalities and prioritize the market -thinking about children only as consumers-, rather than recognizing that young children are **citizens and human beings in the present**, not only in the future.

¹ "Táctica y estrategia" in *Poemas de Otros* [Poems of Others], 1974.

² September 2021 marked the 100th anniversary of his birth.



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Freire said that *“one of the greatest -if not the greatest- tragedies of modern man is that today, dominated by the strength of myths and led by organized marketing, whether or not it is ideological, he gives up, progressively and without realizing, his ability to make decisions. He is being excluded from the decision-making sphere”* (Freire, 1974)³

For this reason, OMEP sees the need to act and participate in building core criteria to make decisions regarding public policies aimed at early childhood. Our job is to reject stereotyped political and pedagogical actions, and overly simplified recipes and prescriptions that reproduce injustices, inequalities, and ignorance.

The new **Global Cooperation Mechanism for Education** will allow us to ensure our active participation in the realization of the goals of the 2030 Education Agenda, stemming from our commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

OMEP represents young children in forums where political decisions are made. Our members seek to create and get opportunities to participate, make decisions, think, and take action in order to protect the interests and rights of children and to create a fairer and more sustainable world for this and future generations.

In OMEP, no country, region or National Committee is more important than the next. We are all part of the OMEP community. **Each and every one of us is OMEP** and we practice the right to be heard, taking on the responsibility to keep active and strong our wonderful organization, which has been fighting for the human rights of young children for over 73 years.

Bear in mind that our work also demands **liberation and strengthened dialogue, constructive criticism and building consensus to take action**, which are necessary conditions for this organization to be dynamic and consistent with its goals and ideals.

As our founders did, we shifted the paradigm of reified childhood in order to fight for the acknowledgement of children's citizenship and the importance of education in the earliest years of life for a holistic development of human beings and the realization of their rights to education, participation, culture, play, health, free time, identity, among others.

In spite of the uncertainty and pain we are going through in these times, OMEP has worked hard during 2021 and we have made progress regarding world definitions for ECCE.

We must advance on the achievement of regional, national, and local actions which *“is only possible to do through authentic praxis, which is not activism or verbalism but action and reflection”* (Freire, 1974).

Many challenges wait for 2022, and we will continue working on our flagship initiatives, thus it will become more important to articulate them with the actions of the **Global Partnership Strategy for Early Childhood**.

I have no doubt that OMEP will rise to the circumstances and that all members will work tirelessly to fulfill our goal **“Rights from the start: Early childhood education and care for all.”**

I send my best wishes of health and well-being to you and your family. Have a great 2022!

Warm regards

Mercedes

³ Freire, P. (1985) *La educación como práctica de la libertad*. Argentina. Siglo XXI Editores.