Introduction

This chapter examines Froebel training in Colleges of Education through the lens of some of the Principals of the Froebel Educational Institute; a prominent supporters and advocates; and one of its influential graduates. It highlights key issues and challenges that have arisen, often recurring, across the years (such as teacher retention).

The early Froebel Colleges were Bedford, Clapham and Streatham Hill, the Froebel Educational Institute, Rachel McMillan, Maria Grey and St Mary’s London. Students took a 3-year course, studying for the National Froebel Union Certificate. 'As a certified teacher the Froebel trained students technically qualified to teach children up to 14+' (Lawrence c.1920: 3). Special Diplomas for the experienced Froebel trained teachers were a post graduate Diploma for those wishing to work with younger children, and special Diplomas in Handwork, Trainers Diploma, Nursery School and Natural History.

The Principals whose contributions are illustrated in this chapter are Esther Lawrence, Eglantyne Jebb, Molly Brearley and Peter Weston. Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore’s substantial contributions are outlined and Ella (Holden) Pratt is also remembered as one example of a significant minority of the Froebel trained primary teachers. The key influences that each one had on Froebelian education are highlighted.

Esther Lawrence, principal of the Froebel Educational Institute (1901–1931), by Tina Bruce

Key influences on Froebelian education:

- That privilege brings responsibility
- That Froebelians are internationalists with breadth of vision for making the world a better place
- That a Froebel training equipped graduates for more than teaching, It equipped them for life
Tina Bruce et al.

- Leadership needs a unity of philosophy enabling consistent, clear direction which brings people to work together.

This section draws heavily on the writings of Peter Weston (2002: 30–52). Esther Lawrence followed Madam Michaelis as Principal of FEI and under her wise yet energetic leadership of thirty years the training of Froebelian teachers made great strides. Her tenure demonstrates that in a constantly changing educational context, sustained effort and clarity of direction can bring impressive results. She was Jewish and this ensured that the College remained secular, which it proudly continues to be. She was determined in setting up free schools, financing them herself and with subsidy from FEI and staffing them with former students. A member of the FEI alumna Michaelis Guild recalled,

> Miss Lawrence would speak with passion of the needs of childhood, of the right of children, rich and poor, to share the good things of life – green fields to run on, trees to climb, contact with the clean earth, pure air to breathe. Such was the heritage of childhood, and it was for us to struggle to achieve this end.

*(Weston, 2000: 38)*

Esther Lawrence established the Froebelian tradition of a Demonstration school linked to the College. The period following World War I saw the closure of the free schools for financial reasons. She echoed the vision of those establishing the League of Nations, holding the view that privilege brings responsibility:

> the work of teachers, both in and out of the FEI, is as great and important as any work in all the world, we shall forge ahead and tackle it with renewed insight and courage. Work with and for children is in itself, and notwithstanding it difficulties, full of satisfaction and joy . . . Let us press forward and realise, through the children, some of the ideals for which the world is striving.

*(Lawrence in Weston, 2002: 42)*

In 1920, the Board of Education recognised the FEI training examined by the National Froebel Union (NFU). So training was increased to 3 years in length whereas in non-Froebel colleges the training was for 2 years. Parents needed to pay fees for the first year after which the Board of Education grant was given in line with other non-Froebel colleges. With financial and moral support from Claude Montefiore, FEI moved in 1922 to the spacious Grove House and beautiful grounds in Roehampton. Froebelian Diploma holders often became tutors in the Colleges. Esther Lawrence writes in the 1920s:

> It is important in the world of today that every woman should be able to earn her own living. Many of our Froebel students, however, marry; have children of their own, and give up their professional career. The training is of immense value to them as a preparation for intelligent and thoughtful motherhood.

*(Lawrence, circa 1920s: 4)*

At this time, women were not permitted to teach if they married. But there are also examples at a later time when married women were allowed to teach and of women making excellent use of their Froebel training without remaining as a classroom teacher (see Ella Holden Pratt, below).
Eglantyne Jebb, principal of the Froebel Educational Institute (1932–1955), by Louie Werth and Tina Bruce

Key influences on Froebelian approaches to education:

- emphasised the importance of the integration of principles with the practice of Froebelian education
- led reform of the ossified Froebelian training syllabus working collaboratively with Claude Montefiore
- worked to see qualified teacher status and inspection of all schools nationally
- kept a positive spirit during the years of war and sustained Froebelian approaches despite the challenges

Eglantyne Jebb became Principal at the height of the Great Depression (1930s). An English graduate of the University of Oxford, she trained as a teacher in 1913 at the University of London, before being appointed as Principal Lecturer at Somerville College and then the Department of Education, University of Birmingham. So she was not Froebel trained, but her cousin was, having studied at the Froebelian Stockwell Teacher Training College. She was the younger cousin of her namesake who was founder of the Save the Children Fund. She was influenced both by her cousin and the former Principal of FEI, Esther Lawrence and so she brought to her role as Principal Froebelian values and the strength of her academic training. Peter Weston (2002: 54–5) notes that she paid tribute to Claude Montefiore, Esther Lawrence and Rosalie Lulham (see below) who were key to the development of the ‘spirit that is part of our Froebelian heritage and has its roots in the respect for human personality which was the centre of Froebel’s teaching’.

She worked to bring about a more coherent Froebel training, with the practice and the academic aspects linking more effectively. This meant that from the beginning of the 3-year course students observed children and were placed in supervised practice. This was no small achievement in view of the rigidity of approach held by the National Froebel Union (NFU). The Board of Education continued to confer Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for the Froebel 3-year training.

By 1940, with the help of Claude Montefiore before his death in 1939, the Froebel Society (which promoted Froebelian principles) merged with the NFU (which maintained the standards of Froebel training) (see Chapter 9). Eglantyne Jebb was able to cut the number of subjects examined during the training of Froebel teachers, give greater opportunity to specialise and spend more time focussing on the important task of considering the needs of the children being educated.

Despite Eglantyne Jebb’s synonymity with Froebel and Froebelian training, she published little. This is typical of Froebelians. It was not until the late 1980s that writing books and articles on generalist early childhood education was seen as a priority. Literature specifically focussing on the Froebelian approach has only been in evidence in the UK in the mainstream since c.2004. Instead the focus was on practical training of Froebel teachers and handing on the baton of good practice generation by generation. It is therefore no surprise to find that when Eglantyne committed to writing an article, she considered what was important in a Froebel teacher’s training.

In the article (Jebb, 1945) she reflects on what Froebel Colleges and Froebelian teacher training is. It is fascinating and deeply revealing of the attitudes towards Froebel, reflecting the emphasis of the Froebel Society on Froebelian principles rather than the rigid and
prescribed practices of the NFU. The article highlights how the Froebel training course did not teach specific teaching methods and practices; it argues that Froebel’s advocated methods were set in his time. It also states that the Gifts and Occupations were no longer in use (see Chapter 6). Froebelian principles of respecting the individuality of each child, the importance of self-activity in the educational process and the close relation between college and student and child, theory and practice are emphasised as some of the core ‘Froebelian’ elements of the course and college. It goes on to highlight the breadth of the course and it was effective in meeting the teacher training standard outlined in the recent McNair Report on the Training of Teachers. The article also considers the benefits of students joining the course after sixth form rather than on completion of their school certificate. The second half of the article considers the opportunities for Froebel trained teachers in post war England. The tone is optimistic, highlighting the positive suggestions of the 1943 White Paper of Education Reconstruction; Eglantyne supported the proposals for all independent and private schools to be inspected, leading to a greater need for qualified teachers, opportunities to teach overseas and the commendation of married women working in schools as teachers.

Another interesting element of Eglantyne Jebb’s legacy is her work as acting chairman of the Save the Children Fund. Involvement with this fund resulted in a funded project in which Miss Winifred Harley was sent to identify the issues in the Italian Early Years sector and how nursery provision could be improved and provided to a better standard in Italy.

**Molly Brearley, CBE, principal of the Froebel Educational Institute (1955–1970), by Louie Werth and Tina Bruce**

**Key influences on Froebelian education**

- member of the Plowden Committee
- offering training for the tutors of the Play Group Association
- choosing high staff student ratios rather than new buildings
- integrating practical work with Froebelian principles linked to current theory and research

In her role as Principal of the Froebel Educational Institute, important Froebelian traditions were sustained. This was despite great challenges with the cessation of the *Froebel Teacher’s Certificate*, which was replaced in 1960 by the mandatory Ministry of Education 3-year teacher training course. Despite this, under her influence, there was a continuation of the Exploratory Course, through which students studied a topic that interested them for half a day a week for a term in their first year of training. Another continued tradition was the placement of students to live for a week with a family of a former Froebel student, so that they could look at the development and education of children in both the school and family context. Students worked as volunteers in contexts such as the children’s club (for children after school) so that children living on the newly built Roehampton Estate could experience the College grounds and go pond dipping and engage with nature.

International work continued to be valued, with a tutor on the staff specifically in charge of the care and wellbeing of overseas students. Once trained, many returned to their countries, such as Ghana and Jamaica, and were soon appointed to high level posts, taking their Froebelian principles with them. The practical nature of the training continued and enabled these teachers to provide leadership in curriculum and pedagogy even when teaching in fields under the shade of a tree or urban contexts of great poverty. The practical training was now enhanced
and informed through current research and theory. For the first time a psychologist, Elizabeth Hitchfield (see below), was appointed to the staff, and later, again for the first time, a sociologist, Lewis Howdle. But the History of Education programme continued, as did Health Education. The Trainers Diploma continued to be a source of tutors joining the Education staff of the Colleges of Education.

Molly Brearley accepted men students to become Froebel trained teachers with the intake of 1967. Once this occurred the women students became less likely to be voted Head Student. She also accepted married students with children, although the course remained full-time. She had to deal with the expansion of student numbers, opting for more staff rather than funding for buildings (when there was a choice of new science laboratories), continuing instead the tradition of nature study pioneered by Rosalie Lulham, using the beautiful grounds.

Molly Brearley, with the strong support of the Chair of the Governing Body, Dame Joyce Bishop, fulfilled the dream of Froebelians in the 1890s by re-establishing a free school in the grounds of the College. This was led by Chris Athey, Research Fellow, with Tina Bruce as Head (see Chapter 33). It was funded by the Leverhulme Foundation, the Gulbenkian Institute and the Froebel College Governing Body.

She made important links with the emergent and fledgling Playgroup Movement, the result of the pioneer Belle Tutaev, helping them to train playgroup tutors to train their members in setting up playgroups. The Playgroup Movement embraced Froebelian principles and the practical approach, and both parents and trained supervisors of playgroups worked together to open new settings.

Molly Brearley made an important contribution to the national dissemination of Froebelian education as an invited member of the Plowden Committee. Her Froebelian influence can be read on almost every page of what is known as the Plowden Report (1967) on primary education. Nursery education was given status through the provision of trained teachers. Active learning was encouraged, and the policy was inclusive with resources put into Educational Priority Areas.

However, sustaining a Froebelian approach to the training of teachers was increasingly challenging during the late 1960s. Weston (2002: 87) points out that the awarding body of the University of London Institute of Education Report questions the time tutors spent supervising students on teaching practice and giving tutorial support as part of the teaching:

> We would hope that this generous response to the needs of students will not prevent members of the staff from continuing their own studies and interests and making available the results to their colleagues and a wider public.

It was not a central part of the Froebelian tradition to publish articles and books to any great extent until this became, in effect, a requirement of those training teachers and lecturing in a University. Instead, the strong Froebelian tradition had always been to emphasise the importance of handing on knowledge and experience from one generation to the next through an apprenticeship and tutorial approach, informed by current theory, research, discussion and linked to the Froebelian philosophy. Eglantyne Jebb supported Molly Brearley in her difficult work in this traditional way of handing on the Froebelian baton. In other chapters of this book attention is given to the way that Froebelians working in the present era strive to continue this tradition, now limited to the post initial training, through continued professional development (CPD). The University of Edinburgh Froebel course, the University of Roehampton Froebel course and the Froebel short courses taught by Travelling Froebel tutors (Froebel Trust, promoted and managed by BAECE: Early Education) are examples.
Molly Brearley gave her staff an afternoon a week for their professional development and this resulted towards the end of her tenure as Principal in reflective study groups amongst the staff and publications, such as *Fundamentals in the First School* (1969). She also drew on the expertise of the psychologist, Elizabeth Hitchfield, in a joint publication *A Teacher’s Guide to Reading Piaget* (1966).

In *Number in the Primary School* (1954) she highlights the importance of seeing first the practical study within mathematics and the appreciation of the way in which mathematics can introduce us to the patterns and order of the universe. This conception of mathematics from a perspective of patterns and universal laws certainly resonates with Froebel’s fascination with pattern and the universality of mathematical ideas. Her conception of mathematics and how it should be taught incorporates a range of Froebelian approaches. She concurs that memorisation of facts is not true mathematics, but that instead it involves the development of generalised thinking and thinking in the abstract. She also states her belief in the importance of exploration and the value of self-activity for learning. The text offers suggestions for effective mathematics teaching, some of which resonate strongly with Froebelian concepts of learning. These suggestions include:

- Teaching at the rate children learn
- A child must see sense in what he learns
- The child’s activities and the purposes of arithmetic must harmonise
- Ensuring orderly development of quantitative thinking
- The way children think of numbers is as important as the result of their thinking

Another significant text by Brearley et al. (1972) considers teacher education. The text is critically reflective, considering the challenges of developing teachers and teacher education both during their training and beyond. The text highlights the thoroughness of initial teacher training, its emphasis on observation, of understanding childhood development and theory, and on experiencing working in classes on placement. It highlights the lack of opportunity for in-service training and the practical challenge of staff being released from school so as to attend a training course. The book argues that day and evening courses are most practical for many teachers. The disparity in the number of LEA advisors across counties is raised and the benefits of local teaching centres; and teaching resources available on TV and radio are discussed. Although there are Froebelian messages in the book, they are not explicitly identified as such, which was typical of the way Froebelians wrote about their work.

Molly Brearley’s period of office included the transition from the independent Froebel Educational Institute to gradual integration with its neighbouring Christian Foundation colleges: Digby Stuart, Whitelands and Southlands. The Froebel College retained its proud tradition (Weston, 2002) of secularity.

**Dr Peter Weston, principal of the Froebel College (1996–2003), by Tina Bruce**

**Key influences on approaches to Froebelian education:**

- Helping scholars, researchers and those in Froebelian practice to learn the lessons of history by developing the Froebel Archive Collection into a world renowned resource
- Documenting Froebelian history
- Building on existing structures and links with other Froebelian organisations to develop further Froebelian enterprises
In 1975 the Froebel Educational Institute, prompted by government policy for higher education, federated with three local colleges to form the Roehampton Institute of Higher education. Dr Peter Weston was Head of the English Department at the Roehampton Institute. He became Dean, Assistant Rector and from 1996 to 2003 was Principal of the Froebel College and also Senior Pro Rector of Roehampton Institute. In 2003, on the establishment of the University of Roehampton, he became Deputy Vice Chancellor, retiring in 2005.

In his role as Principal of Froebel College, he supported and encouraged serious study and reconnection with Froebel’s thinking and Froebelian educational principles at the College (known formerly as the Incorporated Froebel Educational Institute). During his tenure he wrote two books which have become essential reading in the story of the College. They are *Friedrich Froebel: His Life, Times and Significance* (Weston, 1998/2000) and *The Froebel Educational Institute: The Origins and History of the College* (Weston, 2002).

Peter Weston recognised the importance of the Froebel Archive Collection and supported its relocation within the University of Roehampton as a resource for teaching, but also its contribution to the work of scholars and its internationally respected reputation as an invaluable part of the Froebelian heritage in the world (see Chapter 3). He set in place governance and policies which strengthened the efficiency and impact of the Archive both at the time and for the future.

In his role as a Trustee of the Incorporated Froebel Educational Institute and Chair of its Research Committee from 2005, he asked colleagues to participate in a review of the grant giving programme. He listened to and acted on the need for a greater focus on developing research which explored specifically Froebelian areas of education. He successfully argued for greater funding to support research of this kind.

He made important links to the National Froebel Foundation (NFF) and with the Chair, Franciska Baylis, was part of the group establishing the International Froebel Society (IFS) and its first President. The success of the IFS biennial conferences in forging links with teachers, students, academics and institutions throughout Europe and beyond has been significant (see Chapter 38). He worked with leading members of the IFS (Dr. Brian Tubbert, Professor Kevin Brehony and Joachim Liebschner) to make permanent exhibitions of the development of Froebelian history in the Froebel College, University of Roehampton and the Dublin Froebel College (now part of Maynooth University, Co. Kildare).

His contribution to Froebelian education has meant that documentation and structures have been set in place in a variety of ways, which continue to exercise influence and ensure a lasting place for Froebel. His work is referenced throughout this book.

There are many significant influencers in the history of Froebelian education. Peter Weston’s writings give a thorough examination and critique of the contributions of most. They include Julia Salis Schwabe (see below), Madam Michaelis (first Principal of FEI), Baroness Von Bulow (ardent disseminator of Froebelian education), Claude Montefiore, Nathan Isaacs (scientist and husband of Susan Isaacs supporting the work of Miss Jebb), Dame Joyce Bishop and Rory Hands (each in turn Chairs of the FEI Governing Body).

**Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore, by Tina Bruce**

To indicate the need for sustained support to take forward pioneering or complex work of the Froebelian kind, the following account is given of the contribution of Claude Montefiore. This section draws heavily on the scholarship of Dr. Peter Weston (2002) in documenting what have become essential readings of the history of the Froebel Educational Institute.
Key influences on Froebelian approaches to education:

- The need for investment in maintaining a supply of highly trained and educated Froebel teachers
- The need for Governance that is informed and engaged with Froebelian education
- The need to support those leading Froebel training to reflect on how best to train and develop Froebel teachers

Claude Goldsmid-Montefiore first learnt about the educational approach and philosophy of Froebel when studying in Berlin and in 1884 (aged 26 years) through his mother’s introduction to Mrs. Salis Schwabe. He became a member of the Froebel Society Council. Julia Salis Schwabe was the reason why the Froebel Educational Institute was founded, and in bringing her vision to fruition she worked closely with Claude Montefiore who generously bought Grove House in Roehampton where the Froebel Educational Institute was established in 1922. Perhaps just as important was his generosity in funding further buildings. This helped to sustain and develop the training of Froebelian teachers, ensuring that there continued to be a steady supply into the educational system. It is one thing to launch projects, but it is quite another to sustain the work across time.

Although the Universities Test Act of Parliament (1871) removed legal barriers for Jews to study at the ancient Universities in the UK, his study at Balliol (where he gained a first class honours degree) was unusual. He later became ‘effectively the founder of the Liberal Jewish movement in England’ (Weston, 2002: 11). He also co-founded with the Roman Catholic scholar Baron von Hugel, the ecumenical London Society for the Study of Religion, ‘promoting understanding and rapprochement between faiths’ (Weston, 2002: 12).

Claude Montefiore put into practice Froebel’s belief that interconnectivity is important and, through his endeavours, the Manchester Kindergarten Association and the Bedford Kindergarten Association transformed into the National Froebel Union (NFU) in 1887. NFU approved the syllabi, set examinations and issued Froebel Teacher’s Certificates. These were jealously guarded, in order to discredit the pseudo-qualifications being issued by teachers who had no sound knowledge of Froebelian philosophy or methods.

(Weston, 2000: 12)

It seems to be part of the cyclical nature of history that although necessary at the point in time when a period of ‘jealously guarding’ is crucial (a situation that is a current priority for Froebelians in the UK), after a few years this turns to a situation in which ossification, rigidity and prescription in Froebelian practice creeps in and dominates. It then becomes a priority to do as the then Principal of the College, Miss Jebb, did in 1938, supported and encouraged by Claude Montefiore. Under his leadership the Froebel Society and the National Froebel Union merged so that Miss Jebb,

was able to introduce a ‘reformed curriculum’ in 1940, with cuts in the number of subjects for examination, more opportunity to specialise, and more time to consider the needs of children.

( Ibid: 57)

However, as the Froebel Society had found in the 1880s, it is one thing to develop and improve the syllabus and understanding of the best ways in which Froebelian teachers can be trained; it is
another to finance this. Because of Claude Montefiore’s generosity, Froebelian training of teachers developed and became established in the UK, first with the purchase of Grove House in its extensive grounds, and later with important additions and extensions to the beautiful buildings and grounds in Roehampton. He was too ill (almost 80 years of age) to attend the laying of the stone of the new buildings in 1938, but his son Leonard did so, and later wrote off the debt when he took on the role of Chair. In doing this, he consolidated the ground work of his father who was Secretary of the Froebel Society from 1884–1892, and then Chair until his death in 1938. He was Treasurer of the Froebel Educational Institute from 1892 and Chair from 1917–1938.

It is hard to overestimate the contribution that Claude Montefiore made to the Froebel Educational Institute. Without his generosity there is no question that an organisation such as FEI, without endowment and built on the ideals of committed liberal-minded women, would never have been able to start, let alone survive. As FEI was a purely private venture, no grants were available for tuition until 1918, and no capital grants for building were possible until 1945. He donated an asset which is worth millions of pounds today. But he gave much more than finance (and a library) to the College and Schools. He brought a cultured and discriminating intellect, leavened by a rich sense of humour.

(Weston, 2002: 59)

Froebelians have always understood the importance of a steady training programme of appropriately educated and well trained Froebelian practitioners, supported by a governing body which engaged with Froebelian values and practices. Claude Montefiore was a role model in this:

He visited the FEI College and Schools at least weekly for decades, and gave many talks, formal and informal to students and to children, with whom he was often on the floor, playing. He spoke at College assembly on Friday for many years, usually choosing a reading from an unexpected place. His learning was carried lightly, and was therefore all the more stimulating. His values, like those of Mrs. Salis Schwabe, were not partisan but liberal, ecumenical, progressive, and built on a conviction that freedom and social justice require struggle to achieve and vigilance to protect. And he, like Froebel, saw education as the means to empower the struggle.

(ibid: 59)

An example of a significant minority of Froebel trained primary school teachers: Ella (Holden) Pratt (1944–2017), by Anne Louise de Buriane

At the beginning of this chapter, reference is made to Froebel students who did not remain for long as classroom teachers, but who either married and became full-time mothers, or used their Froebel training in other contexts than education, equipped to do so through the richness of the Froebel course. Ella Pratt trained as a primary school teacher at the Froebel Educational Institute (1966–1969).

Certainly the Froebel training encouraged her interests in the creative arts, including photography, drawing, sewing (she made most of her own clothes), printing, lino and wood block and etching. While training to be a teacher she specialised in art alongside studying Education. However, her early childhood experience of sewing with her grandmother was a strong influence, possibly leading to her commitment to the art work she studied with great diligence as a student, becoming a serious and respected artist in time.
Although Ella did not become a classroom primary school teacher in the typical sense, she was nevertheless part of a significant and important minority of primary phase teachers of the Froebel Educational Institute. She took up her main subject with commitment and passion and applied this to children in primary schools, at first overseas in the earlier years of her marriage, and later in the UK working as a volunteer helper. She was deeply valued by both children and staff in the contribution she made. In the 1980s she taught English to the first wave of refugees who fled their country after the Vietnam War and ran after-school activities, recorder clubs and guitar lessons; she taught needlework for around 35 years to a variety of groups, clubs and organisations, both in England and in France. At the Froebel Educational Institute she learnt that education is broad, deep and fulfilling. She would not be comfortable teaching to a test or following a rigidly applied syllabus. This kind of Froebelian teacher contributed in deep and far reaching ways to the education of young children. They are not a group much acknowledged, but it is important to celebrate their work as part of the Froebelian tradition.