This chapter critically evaluates and discusses three key beliefs of Froebel that underpinned many of his key pedagogical approaches. The chapter proposes that a deeper understanding of Froebelian ideas and of Froebel himself can be developed by looking at his beliefs on the role of women in early childhood education; the importance of parents and the community in children’s learning; and the concept of unity as an underpinning tenet of pedagogy. These themes also highlight a key point argued throughout many chapters of this book: that we must understand and engage actively and critically with Froebel’s more complex thoughts and beliefs if we are to better understand his motivations and practices for supporting children in their development.

The role of women and professionalisation of the early childhood workforce

This chapter will briefly illustrate Froebel’s own writings on women and his belief in the need to educate women as teachers before considering what the recent literature raises in regard to this important issue.

Froebel held what may be considered by some as outdated innatist views on the role of women and motherhood. However, his innatist views on mothering are crucial to understanding his approach to justifying women as teachers and the importance of training them for this role. The quote below illustrates this view:

especially to begin to labour to introduce all educators, especially those of the feminine sex (first of wives and mothers, but also their perhaps already grown-up daughters, and educational helpers), into these principles [His educational principles]. That is easy, because one needs only to clear, to strengthen their sure, natural instinct, then to raise this instinct to consciousness, and so to firm, logical, continual accomplishment, and to provide the necessary means for rightly following that which is understood.

(Froebel, 1899: 175–6 translated by Jarvis, 1902)

Louie Werth

Women, parents, community and unity

Connectedness in Froebel’s philosophy

4
Here Froebel highlights the importance of introducing female educators, particularly, to the educational principles of the Froebelian approach. What is most revealing is his assumption that this would be easy to do as women possess (in Froebel’s mind) a natural instinct for mothering which merely needs to be raised to consciousness. This is a central reason behind Froebel’s support for training women as teachers. He believed that women have a dormant natural maternal state that needs to be enlivened and activated to enable them to become excellent mothers and educators. Whilst the underlying assumptions may be very traditional, the practical implications of these beliefs were very radical and considered untraditional for the time in which he lived. It is this perception of innate but latent mothering that led Froebel to argue that women should be trained for the role of looking after young children. This principle is exemplified in the following quote from the *Education of Man*:

Without any teaching, without any demands, without any learning, the natural mother does this spontaneously; but that is not enough: it is necessary, besides, that she should do it as a conscious being . . . Therefore, placing before her what she has unconsciously done according to its nature, its significance, and its connection, may bring her to consciousness. True, the most simple mother could do this; but observing mothers could do it still more truly, completely, and deeply: yet through incompleteness man mounts to completeness. So this bringing forward the mother’s work may awaken true, silent, thoughtful, and reasonable parental love, and bring us to an insight and consciousness of the course of development in our childhood in an entire presentation of its expressions.

*(Froebel, 1885: 34 translated by Jarvis)*

Froebel’s belief in a natural maternal state and an ability for mothers to instinctively parent well is evident in this quotation. However, Froebel wanted this to be ‘conscious’. It seems Froebel wanted women to understand in more detail the role of caring for children and its significance and he believed that training and ‘bringing forward this work’ would enable parents, especially women, to care for children more successfully. Therefore, an innatist view of mothering (Froebel et al., 1886) heavily underpinned Froebel’s reasoning for training women as early childhood teachers with the primary goal of enhancing children’s experiences of learning in the company of caring adults.


Within contemporary literature, the issue of Froebel’s introduction of women into the workforce is a complex and well documented area. Froebel’s belief in the importance of women working with young children is often cited as a central and distinguishing tenet in Froebel’s educational philosophy (see Van Drenth and Van Essen, 2003; Moore, 2002; Manning, 2005). It is stated that Froebel’s belief in the central role of the mother in educating young children grew out of his time working with Pestalozzi (Read, 2003) and it is noted that he willingly faced strong criticism from his male peers to enact his ground-breaking belief in the importance of training and educating women to be teachers (Ailwood, 2007; Manning, 2005).

Pestalozzi’s influence and Froebel’s view of the ‘mother made conscious’ teacher figure (Penn, 2009) are just two of several reasons for his desire to train women teachers. Hewes (2005) suggests that Froebel’s respect for women’s abilities may have stemmed from his having been enrolled in an all-girls school (Hewes, 2005), while McPherson (2009) proposes that Froebel viewed industrialisation as a catalyst for the devaluing of motherhood and the importance of child rearing (McPherson, 2009). Ultimately, however, Froebel’s ability to embed and interweave
discourses of teacher and mother was how and probably why Froebel injected legitimacy into the training of women teachers (Ailwood, 2007).

There is however, some disagreement on the motivation of Froebel and whether or not he adhered to more liberal and forward thinking views concerning women and the workforce. A minority of writers such as Adleman (2000) posit Froebel as declaring ‘universal emancipation’ through his beliefs in the mother figure teacher. Rabe-Kleberg (2009) cites Froebel as stating in 1841 that he had failed in uniting education and work in the way it was for male professionals, suggesting that this may have been Froebel’s intention. Conversely, Ailwood (2007) explicitly states that the employment of women was not part of a Froebelian belief in the emancipation of women, but was linked to discourses of motherhood and childhood. Read (2003) extends this, claiming that Froebel was not a supporter of women’s rights or of the professional role for the kindergarten teacher. Instead, she argues that Froebel saw kindergarten training as training for motherhood. She gives evidence of Froebel’s non-support of the women’s movement by quoting an account of an address given by Froebel at the house of Doris Lutkens, a former pupil, in which he:

explained clearly and emphatically that his desire for woman was not to make her learned, nor to provide her with increased social advantages, but to win for her the development of her best and noblest qualities.

(Franks, 1897: 192 cited in Read, 2003: 20)

Van Drenth and Van Essen (2003), while not necessarily commenting on Froebel’s own views, highlight how the kindergarten movement’s role in developing women’s self-consciousness resulted in it being explicitly linked to female emancipation and professionalism. It was the high value Froebel put on mothers that attracted women to the kindergarten movement (Read, 2003), with the movement itself resulting in women moving from the home to the public sphere of social reform (McPherson, 2009). The social maternalist ideologies espoused by Froebel and his followers eventually resulted in the entry of middle class, and occasionally upper class, women into the public sphere and paid labour market (Brehony, 2006). The movement paved the way for women to work in an unprecedented way, though some of this was spearheaded by Froebel’s female followers, perhaps to levels beyond Froebel’s anticipation.

There was, of course, controversy around this issue. Rabe-Kleberg (2009) states that the ideas of highly qualified female teachers failed in Germany after the 1848 revolution, whilst Hewes (2005) claims that the kindergarten Verbot [Prohibition] declaration of 1851 was fuelled specifically by concern about Froebel’s preparation of women teachers (although Brehony, 2009, argues that the reason was a fear of children being taught socialism and atheism). The ensuing role of women in helping to take Froebel’s message to other countries following the ban in Prussia (Ailwood, 2007) and their part in the Froebel diaspora (Adleman, 2000) is another major theme within contemporary Froebelian literature. Manning (2005) cites the missionary zeal of the women he had trained as key to the movement’s international expansion (see Chapters 8, 11 and 27). McPherson (2009) highlights the work of Elizabeth Peabody and her promoting of kindergarten as an American vocation for women; Bakker (2013) documents the role of Elise Van Calcar in bringing Froebelian practices to the Netherlands; Valkanova and Brehony (2006) in their covering of the development of Froebelian schools in Russia highlight the how
Baroness Von Bertha Von Marenholtz-Bulow contributed to the establishment of Froebelian schools in Russia through advocacy and supporting three Russian trainees; as well as considering the effects of Elizavetta Vodovosova and Liza Schleger in the development of Froebelian practices in Russia. From a UK perspective, Read (2013)catalogues the development of Froebelian schools in London through a detailed treatise on the roles of female head teachers Elizabeth Shaw and Francis Roe (see also Chapter 32). Through these essays, the concept of a Froebelian movement which resulted in a large network of women (Van Drenth and Van Essen, 2003) is clearly illustrated.

Finally the issue of professionalisation and just how professional women were and became through Froebel’s kindergarten system is also discussed in contemporary literature. Read (2013) describes the freedom Froebel gave to the role of women in the workplace as conservative and restricted as it was related only to early childhood care, but that it also contained the potential for greater change, particularly through the professional role of the early years teacher. Brehony (2006) states that the field of early childhood education became an area in which a professionalisation strategy was deployed with varying success by a range of women. However, Rabe–Kleberg (2009) identifies Froebel’s discourses of motherliness and maternalism as integral to teacher identities as problematic in dominant, contemporary conceptualisations of professionalism. For example the ethereal nature of motherliness was used as a reason not to require examinations for kindergarten teachers because of the impossibility of examining such a concept. This may underpin the observation by Ailwood (2007) that women began to use the science of psychology and childhood studies to legitimise their profession, a move that Brehony (2009) documents as a key negative element of the revisionist movement.

Despite barriers and varying success, Read (2013) uses the example of Elizabeth Shaw and Francis Roe to illustrate the power of women’s agency afforded by the kindergarten system both through their abilities to challenge and change curriculum in the UK and through the high status they both achieved as female head teachers in the early twentieth century. This agency, however, is also juxtaposed and contextualised honestly with explanations of ways in which men still maintained leadership over them and the other women who worked in the field of early childhood education. These discussions do, however, demonstrate the claim that for a minority of women, living outside of marriage and developing leadership roles was afforded through the Froebel kindergarten system (Ailwood, 2007).

In conclusion

Froebel is mostly presented in the literature as valuing the role of women as teachers due to their natural maternal qualities. This does not necessarily shed light on any liberal or progressive views of women in the workforce, as much of his beliefs about training women as teachers are centred around believing in the importance of mothers in early childhood development (Ailwood, 2007). The role of women in spreading Froebel’s message and establishing Froebelian schools is well documented, as are some of the barriers. The issue of professionalisation is also discussed in the literature. An interesting final point to note is regarding practical application. Most of the above related to the positioning of women in Froebel’s work and Froebelian pedagogy is written within the context of historical studies of Froebel and narrative accounts rather than any links or discussions regarding the professionalisation of early childhood education today. Professionalisation is a topic which is of increasing importance today in light of the varying early childhood courses, statuses and roles that have been created. However, the one practical implication for current practice raised on this is by Ailwood (2006: 11), who raises concerns that the ‘good and
Connectedness in Froebel’s philosophy

womanly mother/ teacher’ model may present a stress to women who work in the current daily, often pressurised and difficult early years environment.

Parents and community

Froebel’s conception of the role and importance of the family in a child’s education is closely related to his ideas about motherhood and the teaching workforce. An interesting and in depth discussion on this issue can be found in Mottoes and Commentaries in relation to song XIX, entitled ‘The Family’. In this commentary, Froebel enthusiastically states:

If there is one thing which more than any other demands to be rightly apprehended and reverently cherished it is the life of the family. Family life! Family life! Let me be frank and outspoken. Thou [family life] art more than school and Church! Thou art greater than all the institutions which necessity has called into being for the protection of life and property! . . . without the reflection which thou (family life) doth foster, the school is but a sterile egg – an egg which contains indeed nourishing material but lacks the germ of life.

(Froebel, 1902: 155 translated by Eliot and Blow, 1902)

The quote above demonstrates Froebel’s commitment to the link between family and educative life. Family life is positioned as absolutely crucial to enlivening the school life, though no particular reason is given.

The specific song which this commentary accompanies is entitled ‘Grandmother and Mother Kind and Dear (The Family)’. The introductory paragraph which denotes the purpose of the poem reads:

That many things make up a whole
Soon dawns upon a childish soul;
Therefore let Mother teach him carefully
To know the circle of the Family.

(Froebel, 1888: 46)

It is noteworthy that, whilst a poem labelling family members is not necessarily unique, the concept of the child learning about the family from the perception of connectedness demonstrates interweaving and co-dependent Froebelian principles. The child is to be encouraged to see his place and connectedness to his family and the connections among the individuals that make up his whole family. It is interesting that, in a discussion on the success or otherwise of Froebel’s Mother Songs, Froebel vents frustration in relation to children’s position in family life:

But as often as the life of the mother and child and the reciprocal life of both is repeated with each newborn child in each family experience has shown that the life of the child in relation to the whole family through all conditions of life is, alas, only too little observed.

(Froebel, 1902: 53 translated by Eliot and Blow, 1902)

Froebel depicts the child and their positioning and relationship to the whole family as ‘little observed’ – presumably by the child’s parents. It seems again that this comment relates to the child being shown and understood from a viewpoint of interconnectedness as explored in the ‘The Family’ song.
Froebel’s Early Years Philosophy is described by Read (2003) as growing out of the aftermath of the revolutionary wars, with Froebel believing that a reforming of the family was an essential part of the restructuring of society to sustain and stabilise Germany. This statement provides helpful clarification and historical contextualisation for Froebel’s comments.

Further evidence to support this view is found in one of Froebel’s letters, in which he states:

From out the faithful cherishing of the family life springs the true national spirit, and from out a truly national spirit finally arises the conception of the universal brotherhood of man.  
(Froebel, 1896b: 18)

Froebel’s links between family unity, family life and national spirit demonstrate a potential reasoning behind the strong and central place Froebel put on the role of the family in children’s learning.

Finally, Froebel also envisioned a clear link between the family and the community. When giving a list of contemporary examples that demonstrate a progression of his thought with regard to education, Froebel states:

Fifth, the acknowledgment of the life of the family as a part of the life of the community, the reiteration and acknowledgment of the constant reciprocal relation between the two.  
(Froebel, 1902: 166 translated by Eliot and Blow, 1902)

Here Froebel clearly supports close relationships between families and communities and the concept of a family as a part of the whole community.

It is clear that Froebel perceived the family as central to a child’s life and their learning. Froebel also recognised family not as a microcosm but as part of a larger community and these two principles had an effect on his kindergarten pedagogy.

Recent literature (2000–2014)

As an area for study and discussion, Froebel and his views on family and its central link to educating is not widely discussed, though references and acknowledgements are made.

Read (2003) states that the centrality of the mother in raising children was first demonstrated to Froebel through his time with Pestalozzi. However, McPherson (2009) comments on the public perception of Froebel and his views on the wider family in relation to the views of both Pestalozzi and another educator, Fichte. Whilst Pestalozzi considered mothers and the home as the ideal environment for educating children, Fichte envisioned children being removed from the home to a privatised institution to be trained and taught. McPherson (2009) claims that, within this educational climate, Froebel was seen as a middle ground – one who was using a kindergarten environment to supplement rather than supplant the family. Brehony (2013) explains the role of the kindergarten as occupying a position between the family and the school, wherein the school would assist parents in educating their children. Ultimately it was this approach to the kindergarten – as an institution which supplemented but did not replace the family – that led to its popularity (McPherson, 2009).

However, Baader (2004) highlights the interesting difference between American and German twentieth-century accounts of the history of education and the role that Froebel plays in them. It is argued that (likely due to the Prussian Kindergarten Verbot declaration) Froebel is mentioned critically by German education writers of that time as one who attacked family ties through his kindergarten system. It is argued that Pestalozzi was seen as a hero because of his
home centric views on education, and that such views were grounded in Lutheran views on the centrality of the family (Baader, 2009).

Tovey’s (2013) interpretation of Froebelian principles and home/kindergarten partnership promotes a sense of harmony and unity between the two settings. She suggests that educators need to find links that unite the community together, demonstrating unity in diversity. Tovey also mentions family within the issue of connectedness, highlighting the Froebelian principle that the nursery setting should be closely connected to the life of home, culture, family and community.

Bruce (2012a) highlights the importance of context and culture when discussing issues of family and parenting. She suggests that Froebel’s lack of direct instruction on how parents should bring up their children is evidence of his acknowledgement of diversity. Attention is drawn to the observation that Froebel did, however, recognise the daunting nature of parenting and the need for parents to feel empowered and encouraged to raise their children within a community. A Froebelian approach to integrating parents, professionals and schools is then explained in terms of each recognising the other as part of the community. An interesting reflective discussion in the chapter centres around the link between early education pioneers’ perceptions of the importance of family, and their own experiences of family during early childhood. Froebel is included amongst other pioneers as educationalists who, out of difficult childhood experiences (see Chapter 1), sought to improve family life for others and ensure children experienced loving relationships. Such a sentiment is expressed by Gatrell (2014) who explains Froebel’s purpose in setting up a kindergarten as providing an environment that was an extension of the family life that he believed all children should have.

In conclusion, though this is a significant area for Froebel, it is primarily treated from a historic perspective in the literature. Tovey (2013) Athey (1990) and Bruce (1987, 2012b) link elements of Froebel’s family approach to practice, however, more focussed discussion on Froebelian perspectives on the home/kindergarten/community relationship are needed (see Chapter 33).

Unity

The importance of unity and of children learning, understanding and experiencing the unity of all things permeates Froebel’s work in almost every aspect. Education of Man (1885) begins with a chapter entitled ‘foundation of the whole’ which lists a number of ‘sections’ or tenets that are key to Froebel’s educational philosophy. Section 1 highlights and succinctly puts Froebel’s view on unity, its source and its purpose:

An eternal law acts and rules in us all . . . An all working, self animating, self knowing – therefore eternally existing – unity necessarily lies at the foundation of this all ruling law . . . This unity is God.

(Froebel, 1885: 1 translated by Jarvis)

The chapter goes on to state the importance of education in deepening understanding and experiencing this profound and mysterious unity:

Education in its totality is to raise to consciousness in man, and to make efficient in life, the fact that man and Nature proceeded from God, are limited by him, and rest in him. Education is to guide man to clearness about himself and in himself, to peace with Nature, and to union with God; therefore it is to raise man to the recognition of himself and of humanity, to the recognition of God and Nature, and to the pure, holy life thereby conditioned.

(Froebel, 1885: 3 translated by Jarvis)
It is clear, then, that unity with God and with nature as a philosophy flows out from Froebel’s belief in the creator and our linkage with him being central to true life.

Unity had its expressions, as demonstrated in the previous quotation, in his beliefs in nature. Man was to experience unity with nature as a form of unity with God because both nature and man were of God and expressions of himself.

Froebel’s introduction to ‘Mottoes and Commentaries’ which was to support parents in singing with and developing intimacy with their child also begins with a discussion on unity:

Your soul is inflamed by an intuition of the truth that in this dear little one the Father of all being grants you a revelation of himself. You know that God is One, and since your child is in his image you are sure that he, too, is a unity indivisible and indissoluble. But while you are thus assured of the unity of your child’s being, there streams through your soul a presentiment that this unity must develop into and manifest itself through manifoldness and particularity. Nor is this all; but with this prophetic anticipation of the form of your child’s self-revelation your soul thrills with the certainty that in his manifestation of unity in the manifold you shall behold as in a mirror your own spiritual image.

(Froebel, 1902: 53 translated by Eliot and Blow, 1902)

This complex statement essentially suggests that, as God is one and this child is in God’s image then he too is ‘one’ and whole, a united being, but that whilst he is a whole and a unity, he must now develop into this and allow his wholeness to further manifest itself as he develops and grows. Froebel goes on to explain how this fostering of unity is the ultimate aim of the parent:

Illuminated by this insight, it becomes your highest joy, your most sacred duty, to educate your child as a unity, whole and complete in himself and yet related essentially to Nature, to Humanity, and to God.

(Froebel, 1902: 56 translated by Eliot and Blow, 1902)

We see, therefore, how Froebel’s belief in unity with God affects the role of the parent and conception of the growth and education of the child significantly.

Finally, a key area in which Froebel discusses unity is with regard to the gifts and occupations and block play. In Pedagogics of the Kindergarten (Froebel, 1895c), discussing what should be presented about each play thing, Froebel states that the text:

Will especially state the firmly, beautifully, and clearly formed truths of Nature and life obviously contained therein, for the purpose of self-discovery, self observation, and further self-development, in order to unite man more and more in and with himself, as well as with Nature and life, with the unity and fount of life.

(Froebel, 1895c: 21 translated by Jarvis)

All of the ‘playthings’ were intended to bring about a form of unity and self-realisation of the individual with himself, nature, life and the unity and fount of life. We again see here how unity is not just a pedagogical aspect or subject to learn, but is in fact conceived by Froebel as a learning process. Children should not only ‘learn about’ unity, parts and wholeness, but through learning are to experience for themselves that unity and wholeness through becoming more self-aware and identifying and uniting themselves with nature, others and God.
Recent literature exploring Froebel’s approaches to unity (2000–2014)

The concept of unity and Froebel’s pedagogy is often acknowledged but rarely investigated in great detail in the recent literature. In particular, the concept of unity is referred to within discussions on block play and the gifts and occupations. For example Read (2006) states that Froebel’s gift of the sphere embodied Froebel’s central philosophical tenet of unity and that these philosophical and religious belief imbued the gifts and occupations that he had created. Moore (2002) extrapolates this idea and states that Froebel felt that through block play children could be introduced to the concept of unity and eventually begin to learn the unity of the world, and they could unite with God, whom he perceived as the divine unity. Read (2006) however makes an important point with regard to what Froebel actually conceived children as learning about unity. She states that, whilst ultimately there was the intention of opening up children’s minds to concepts of German nationalism, he did not see children as having an understanding of the interconnectedness of men and women (regardless of social status), the wider world and ultimately God, but that they might begin to have some intuition of these issues.

Reflecting on the current state of the concept of unity in early childhood, Manning (2005) highlights how Froebel’s philosophical belief in unity underpinned his approaches to block play and the gifts and occupations, but suggests that the revisionists and others may have ‘thrown the baby out with the water’ by disregarding the gifts along with what he terms Froebel’s ‘arcane philosophy’ (376). This raises a central issue with the Froebelian approach to unity – namely that it is a philosophy that many have rejected. This is problematic to an extent as it underpins so much of Froebel’s work, the dichotomy is perfectly put by Whinnett (2012):

> The search for unity is a driving force in Froebel’s interpretations of children’s actions. Unity is a challenging concept if it is defined in the narrowest sense that Froebel intended it. The child’s attempt to create was seen as a metaphor for mankind’s attempts to imitate God the creator. For atheists this is a challenging concept. In logical thought, can the whole philosophy be accepted if one vital part of the equation is not proven? Conversely, can practice be totally eclectic and still have meaning? Who constructs the meaning?

(Whinnett, 2012: 62)

Whinnett’s statement raises important pedagogical questions: can we keep a practice if we disregard, disbelieve or cannot substantiate a fundamental part of the philosophy that underpins it? Do we reconstruct the philosophy and meanings that underpin a particular practice as good pedagogy?

Another area of discussion in the recent literature is on the origins of Froebel’s belief in the tenet of unity and how it relates to and has influenced other thinkers. Adleman (2000) considers the relationship between Froebel and Pestalozzi and suggests that the greatest change that Froebel made to Pestalozzi’s approach to teaching and learning was an emphasis and search for ultimate unity. Unlike Pestalozzi, it is claimed that Froebel was looking for an educational theory that incorporated his philosophical criteria of metaphysics, logic and pragmatics with the aim of creating a theory that linked inner unity with outward comprehensiveness. Adleman quotes Froebel’s own works to demonstrate that this interest and belief in ultimate unity found its roots in Froebel’s studies in mineralogy, crystallography and physics. These studies led to a belief in the inter connection of all things in the universe.

Another interesting article on the theme of unity considers whether Froebel’s ideas of unity and the whole may have had an effect on the work of the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst,
Carl Jung [1875–1961] (Russell and Aldridge, 2009). Similar arguments are covered in Adlem-
man (2000) on Froebel’s dissatisfaction with the lack of unity in Pesto1ozzi’s work. It then sug-
gests that both Froebel and Jung sought to bring the concept of unity and wholeness to their
respective fields. Froebel wanted to teach children about interconnectedness, while Jung wanted
people to experience unity and wholeness in the human psyche. Russell and Aldridge (2009)
also state that the works of Froebel and Jung used similar language with regards to unity and
wholeness, though they were writing for very different audiences. It is also suggested that both
had some conception of God and unity with God as the ultimate goal and destination of any
true form of unity.

In conclusion

Froebel’s emphasis on unity is understood and acknowledged frequently, but it certainly raises
significant issues. Many would prefer to acknowledge it and leave it there, if it is to be probed
then it is to be probed from the perspective of historical analysis rather than its use or application
as an early childhood philosophy. Where this approach reaches difficulty is when the philosophy
underpins a key part of practice as with the block play and gifts and occupations. It was the
metaphysical elements of these objects and activities (according to Froebel) that led to them
being dropped or heavily modified during the revisionist period (Read, 2006).

Potential future studies

It could be suggested that a thorough investigation into Froebel’s perceptions of women and
teachers and professionals using primary sources, contrasted with Froebel’s (predominantly
female) followers’ perceptions of women as professionals could be investigated within the con-
text of the tension between nurturance and professionalism. Such a study would need not to
be undertaken within the construct of a wholly historical approach as this is the current pre-
dominating discourse in which the role of women in Froebelian pedagogy is discussed. Instead
it would be worthwhile to study these areas so as to create a contemporary Froebelian approach
to the professionalisation of the early years sector. This might include responses to discourses of
professionalisation from a Froebel/Froebelian view. Such a study would also need to consider
the roles of men in early childhood practice, an area Froebel also wrote about, and how this links
with ideas of the ‘mother made conscious’ and associated suitability to teach young children and
concepts of professionalism.

Further studies might also investigate how early years settings currently integrate home, set-
ting and the wider community. Successful approaches could be discussed and analysed using a
Froebelian framework and some practical principles that are clearly based on Froebelian writings
could be identified and utilised to better enable settings to develop these relationships. It would
be also useful to reflect upon the theme of nursery workers as professionals and setting-parent
partnerships, considering the potential tensions that can emerge, and how a Froebelian perspec-
tive could potentially lead to more positive understandings of the inter-relationships between
settings and families. This might be linked to Froebel’s beliefs in wholeness and interconnection.
Rather than avoiding seemingly troublesome concepts, an alternative approach might embrace
a rediscovery of the Froebelian themes of unity, a critical evaluation of the metaphysical and
religious roots and a reconsideration of what these mean for Froebelian projects and approaches
to unity in contemporary early childhood pedagogies.