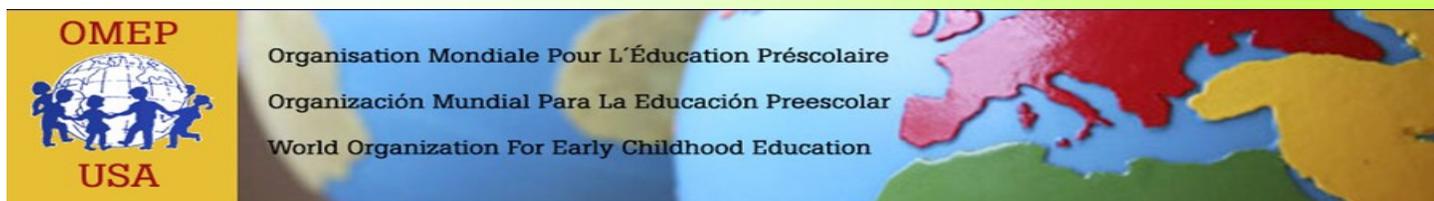


Fall
2019

OMEP-USA NEWSLETTER



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Message from OMEP-USA President

Judith Lynne McConnell-Farmer, Ed.D

Hello, OMEP-USA member...

OMEP-USA continues to progress as a result of the time and talents of our members. Many thanks from the Executive Board! Since the OMEP-USA newsletter was published during the fall 2018 (thank you to the editor, Donna Choi) so much has happened. On April 13, 2019, seven members trekked to San Antonio, Texas for our Spring Board Meeting at the historic Menger Hotel. The members in attendance include Jean Simpson, Susan Miller, Debbie Vera, Jana Sanders, Susan Peebles, Judith McConnell Farmer, and Judi Estes. In addition, the following four members joined us through ZOOM: Reina Park, Mary Duncan, Ebony Cray, and Jim Hoot. See the accompanying photograph. Many thank-you's to Debbie and Jana for making the scheduling arrangements for our Board Meeting at the Menger Hotel.

As you read in the minutes of the Spring 2019 Board Meeting, a variety of topics were discussed and voted upon. During the meeting we initially planned an OMEP-USA National Conference for April 4-5, 2020 to be held at the Menger Hotel. The logistics of such a conference have now become unsurmountable, so reluctantly, we have "tabled" the conference. We can discuss the possibility of hosting a national conference in the future.

Four noteworthy events of OMEP-USA which I want to share with you include our archives, an election for the position of OMEP-USA Secretary, our Peace Education Initiative, and a re-cap of our organization's new structure.

Editor's note

Please send your story to

Dong Hwa Donna Choi,
Ph.D

Professor

Park University

Kansas City, MO

E-mail:

dong.choi@park.edu

1. Our OMEP-USA's archives have been moved from their historic location. Archiving the numerous boxes and files is a lengthy and time intensive endeavor. All files are being digitally preserved. The process will be completed during our current fall.

2. Pamela Cook's term as OMEP-USA Secretary, expires in November 2019. Thank you for your service, Pamela. I recommend that Mary Duncan's name be listed on the fall 2019 ballot for the vacant Secretary's position. Please send me additional nominations for secretary by **October 10, 2019** and they will be included on the ballot.

3. Judi Estes has begun a Peace Education Initiative. Two ZOOM meetings have been held and another meeting is planned soon. If you would like to join our ZOOM meetings contact Judi. You are very welcomed and encouraged to join us!

4. The decision was made to disband the regional representational structure and replace it with a standing committee structure. Now begins the task of identifying the focus of each standing committee, their Chairs and members. Share your thoughts with me. What standing committees do you think would be most valuable for OMEP-USA? Consider volunteering to be on one or more committees and share your expertise with us being a Committee Chair.

An exciting and financially advantageous opportunity is available to us. OMEP-USA members has been invited to attend and present papers at the upcoming 11th Belizean International Symposium on Education, January 3-5, 2020 in Belize City, Belize, Central America. This symposium was developed and is directed by Pamela Cook. Annually since 2009, I have given papers at the symposium and my Washburn University students have attended and presented at the symposium. Pamela invites OMEP-USA to attend the 2020 symposium and for every OMEP member who attends she will donate \$50.00 per adult and \$25.00 per student to our organization's treasury. This is a win-win opportunity for OMEP-USA. See the posting of our invitation in this newsletter. In January I am hoping to see you at the symposium when you are not relaxing on the beach and soaking-up the Belizean sunshine!

Tabled! : 2020 OMEP-USA National Conference

Hopefully we can see you at BISE

(Belizean International Symposium on Education)

There will be OMEP –USA Panel Discussion.

January 3-5, 2020 in Belize City, Belize

Central America

OMEP Vice-President for the Region of North America and Caribbean

President of OMEP-Canada
Christiane Bourdages Simpson

Dear members!

I'm thrilled to have been invited to your newsletter, a way to communicate between the 3 OMEP national committees of North America and the Caribbean: USA, Canada and Haïti. I have just returned from Panama, where I represented our region at the 71st World Assembly (WA). I will give you an overview of the important decisions regarding future OMEP World projects and also the World Declaration on taking action following the Child Rights Convention (CRC).

- It was a productive WA which featured four new OMEP projects:
- A world project for ESD and Global citizenship focusing around the OMEP ESD Rating scale, version 2.
- A planned set of OMEP webinars on policy, practice and research within OMEP
- An OMEP Young Scholars award
- A new world project with children, who will be invited to participate in a creative art relating to different articles of the CRC

(More information in a future newsletter)

The 2019 OMEP World Declaration regarding the Childs Rights Convention was endorsed by the members of the Assembly and presented at the closure of the World Conference in three languages. Finally, as Professor Eunhye Park is not renewing her mandate for the presidency, the WA members elected a new World President. Mercedes Mayol Lasalle, presently VP of Latin America has been elected. Also elected as new World Treasurer for OMEP was Elin Eriksen Ødegaard (Norway) as well as a new VP for Latin America Desirée López De Maturana Luna (Chile). WA re-elected Vice-President for Asia Pacific Udomluck Kulapichitr. Their mandate will begin in January 2020.

The Historical Significance of an Educational Symposium in Belize, Central America

Dr. Pamela Cook

Introduction

While attending several national and international academic conferences; I had the privilege of visiting various preschools and orphanage schools in countries such as; England, Italy, Romania and Russia. The one orphanage and school that stood out the most to me was in a rural area and small village of Belize, Central America. The orphanage was built in 2004 and the school in 2005 which had been approved by the Ministry of Education for operation in 2006 (Cook 2010; Cook 2017). In February 2006, I visited Belize, Central America. I was invited to conduct an educational workshop regarding primary curricula for early childhood teachers from the orphanage preschool. I made new friends and learned many new things about the Belizean peoples and their culture. It was at this point in my academic career where the eyes of my intellectual self, met those of my professional self, and finally embraced within my soul to change my way of thinking in terms of research. I was to be simply a reflexive inquirer as an outsider as my desire to know and learn more about the Belizean culture became a driving force for a research agenda (Smith 1999; Smith 2017; Cook 2017). As I stood in this very unusual octagon shaped open-concept classroom in the school of an orphanage campus setting; thoughts went to my own childhood background . . . my identity, and the way that I understood order and social behavior (Madison 2005). I began to look upon my own personal background of being a child of an orphan and my professional career as an early childhood educationalist. I wondered about my roots and the type of disconnect or uncertainty that seem to haunt me both personally and professionally (Cook 2010). Like so many of the Belizean children that had been orphaned, I too, carried a query of unanswered questions. Where did my family originate from? Will I ever meet my biological grandparents? How will this curriculum be utilized? And, how will a non-traditional learning environment (Montessori) work in this type of context? I also began to ask myself . . . what has given me the right to invade this country, and take out knowledge from the Belizean culture?

Experiences of an Orphanage in Belize

Even so, an invitation was extended to me from the orphanage administration, to return back to Belize in 2007; to conduct a research study at the orphanage school. To me, this was both an honor and a responsibility. Essentially, this would be an opportunity for me to once again visit a very diverse culture as the invitation was based upon my background as a researcher and an early childhood educator. This was to be a formal organized exploration and investigation research study that would help me gain a much clearer understanding toward the Belizean ways of education and living. Insights would be made into the Belizean community and the culture would

become a vital working point as new experiences were obtained through the opportunities that were offered in this style of research study. There would be an exploration of non-traditional methods implemented to the orphanage school curricula along with the Ministry of Education National curriculum, as well (MOE 2000; 2010; 2018). Many arrangements were made, and I moved to Belize and lived on the orphanage campus for six-months while conducting an educational research study that was set before me. The desire within me became a reality which helped me gain a much clearer understanding of the Belizean culture. I began to empathize and sympathize with those of similar backgrounds. Many of the experiences of my journey allowed thru this study to open-up spaces for the silent and the voiceless. It provided an opportunity for students, teachers and staff personnel to articulate their own personal thoughts and ideas of their lived experiences and to offer suggestions for offsetting various layered issues within culture; educationally and within an institutionalized setting. Belize, like many other developing countries in a post-colonial context; has an educational system characterized through an extremely structured and instructional style of teaching pedagogy using traditional ways (Cook 2010). Thus, I became interested in the orphanage school's non-traditional, Montessori approach of early learning. Nonetheless, all of the diverse experiences allowed me to gain a better understanding of a non-traditional early learning environment within an orphanage context and institutionalized setting. Again, I reminded myself that even though I had encountered many opportunities to observe children in different and diverse ways; I did not have a knowledge base of the Belizean . . . culture, their curriculum, nor the learning environment of the school. I began to ask myself, "How can I so unobtrusively enter another culture and genuinely create friendships and establish new relationships?" I could not change what had already been, and I certainly could not change who I was. However, I could embrace this community and culture with a critical and reflective perspective by asking inquiries that could help me gain a much clearer understanding of their culture and a different way of valuing children within an institutionalised setting (Smith 1999; Cook 2010; Smith 2017). The Executive Director of UNICEF claims, "The state of the world's youngest children, citizens with the same rights as all others . . . will only get better when we alter current priorities and accept the sound economic, social and political sense it makes to prioritise the world's youngest" (Bellamy 2000, 4; in Cook 2010; in Cook 2017).

Conversations with the children were short dialogs however, certainly allowed me to feel as though I was still connecting and fitting-in. I wondered if this was due to the way the children viewed their own past, as I continued to reflect and position myself within this culture and study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Similarly, this type of study is referred to as a reflexive ethnography, which is considered, a way of turning back-on, "self for research paradigms, and for a moral responsibility relative to interpretation and representation" (Madison, 2005; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; in Cook 2010). Cooper (2004) acknowledges that it is only by raising awareness and radically altering the contexts that genuine care takes place to improve the personal, social, moral, and academic development for the future. I wanted to care—to learn—and more importantly, I wanted to share knowledge. True relationships were established which created real meaning for the knowledge shared. I won't ever forget my first experiences while as visitor in Belize and the invitation to return, as well (Cook 2010; Cook 2017).

The Belizean International Symposium on Education (BISE)

Essentially, it was because of this research study at an orphanage school and in a rural part of Belize, that became an idea and a plan to provide an on-going type of educational learning experience to educators, teachers and students. Thus, the Belizean International Symposium on Education (BISE) became a reality, founded and was initially launched in 2009; at the Princess Hotel (currently Ramada Hotel and Princess Casino) in Belize City. It was then determined the, International Symposium (BISE) would be an annual educational venue (BISE 2009). It was founded and based upon a framework to offer a way for Belizean administrators, educators, teachers, students, university professors, and other internationalists an opportunity for educational learning experiences and continued professional development (CPD) opportunities. Essentially, the yearly International Symposium (BISE) continues to bring scholarly influence to the country of Belize (see contact information below) and for many educational professionals from areas of the Caribbean and other countries, as well.

'BISE' Mission

The 'Belizean International Symposium on Education' (BISE), main thrust is to exchange knowledge between academics, educationalists, study abroad-university groups and all educational personnel from a variety of educational institutions and organisations. Many of the participants that attend and present their research at the Symposium believe in providing encouragement, valuable resources and volunteering of their time to schools and organisations working with the children of Belize (BISE 2009).

Summary

Throughout this article, several sociocultural learning experiences which came from a diverse setting have been discussed. These experiences have shown me, that by simply offering opportunities to the silent and voiceless; there are many ways to share knowledge from within other cultures. We must all continue to open-up ways to those who have not had the opportunity to be heard as this may be the only way to give others hope. It feels right to have the chance to help someone find their own voice and be heard. Perhaps helping others to find hope may shed some light on a path for me to continue finding other ways to help.

As I close this recollection of my journey and the discussion of my personal, professional, and intellectual ways of learning, I again want to ask myself: Who I am? I can only say that I am the child of an orphan, so I still wonder...however, it is good and healthy and allows for changes toward growth within myself. Let us all continue to learn from each other as we grow to be better people through our exchange of ideas and knowledge. For I believe that, "A true ethnographic study begins with humility, the meeting of the eyes, and the embracing of the souls" (in Cook 2010, 20). For more information of the, Belizean International Symposium on Education; contact: Executive Director, Pamela R. Cook, PhD : Email: prcook12@gmail.com.
BISE website: <http://sites.google.com/site/belizesymposium>.

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New Membership Chair

Dr. Jessica Essary



Jess is delighted to serve as the new membership director of OMEP-USA. “In my opinion, out of all the organizations for early childhood education, OMEP is best at advocating for policies and research which uphold the interwoven nature of care and education.” Who is Jess? Dr. Jessica N. Essary joined Cazenovia College as of Aug. 2019 --- Associate Professor of Education & the Program Director of Inclusive Education for early childhood and elementary teacher prep. Her history as an international researcher, dedicated to investigating issues and trends in education and diversity teacher preparation, is evident in her scholarship of 20 articles and 36 presentations (including 8 peer-reviewed presentations outside of the USA). Early in her career she taught 1st & 4th grade in a migrant community in Florida and wrote for the journal *Childhood Education* as an executive board member of ACEI. During graduate school at SUNY-UB, she spent 3 years as a lead teacher of the Early Childhood Research Center. In higher education, she has taught 11 graduate and 14 undergraduate courses at two Carnegie rated Research 1 institutions (i.e. UB & Ole Miss) as well as the first CAEP accredited international institution in the United Arab Emirates (Zayed University). During her teacher preparation work she has supervised interns in over 100+ early childhood and elementary classrooms. All of these experiences have led her closer to OMEP than ever before. “A young child’s compromised rights are often at the crux of the most palpable issues in education today. United, we can make a difference in the only country [i.e. USA] that has yet to ratify the CRC. Will you join OMEP-USA? Let’s stand for each child who wants a peaceful education and the opportunity to reach their full potential. Let’s help their voices be heard.” Please feel welcome to email jnessary@cazenovia.edu for more information about how you can become involved.

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**OMEP-USA members at the World OMEP
Conference 2019
Panama City, Panama**





11th Annual

Belizean International Symposium on Education (BISE)

Invites

OMEPA - USA

Where: Ramada Hotel, Belize City

When: 3rd – 5th, January 2020

Why: Exchanging Knowledge, Scholarly Presentations & University Poster Gallery

Discussion: What does 'Futuristic Education' Look Like in 2020 and Beyond?

Abstract: 150-200 words due by: 1st October 2019

Pre-Registration: Online by: 1st November 2019

'BISE' Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/belizesymposium>

'BISE' Executive Director: Dr. Pamela R. Cook

E-mail: prcook12@gmail.com

'OMEPA-USA' President: Dr. Judith L. McConnell-Farmer

Email: judymcconnellfarmer@gmail.com

72th OMEP World Assembly & International Conference 2020

Athens, Greece

July 13-17, 2020

OMEP Website & Facebook

The OMEP-USA website has a new look and is available for you to obtain information. Even though the website is evolving, you will find important links, history and events of interest to the student of professional with international interests. Many thanks to Ebony Cray Jones for her assistance!

The website address is: <https://omep.us/>

Join OMEP- USA on Facebook : **OMEP-USA**

Twitter : **OMEP-USA**

Members News!

Dr. Judith Lynne McConnell-Farmer will be facilitating two sections in the Oxford International Round Table Symposiums (formerly, Oxford Round Tables) at Oxford University in Oxford, England this March 2020: The Childhood Education and The Authors of Oxford symposiums. Please let her know if you would like an invitation to attend and present a paper at one or both of the Symposium.

- Website: <https://www.internationalroundtablesymposiums.com/>
- Email: judymcconnellfarmer@gmail.com