

## Froebelian Journeys.

### Accident and intention on the road to becoming Froebelian

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#### Abstract:

In this keynote I use the notion of journey/journeying to explore the process of becoming Froebelian. Whilst this sprang from personal reflection which followed the invitation to present the Kevin J Brehony Memorial Lecture, it then seemed to me that it would offer opportunity for attendees to consider their own personal journeys to this 10<sup>th</sup> Biennial IFS conference at Maynooth University in Ireland. The keynote will first consider the nature of journeying, whether characterised by deliberate or intentional choices, or by the role of accident – what I term serendipity or happenchance. Starting with Friedrich Froebel's own personal journey from his unfortunate childhood in Oberweissbach to the opening of his institute for young children in the late 1830s in Bad Blankenburg and the invention of the term 'kindergarten' in 1840, I then offer segments from the rich tapestry of the story of how Froebelian pedagogy travelled across time and space. I start with examples of the women who played, and continue to play, a crucial role in the transnational spread of kindergarten pedagogy by undertaking personal journeys, leaving their homeland to establish kindergartens and training programmes across Europe, in North and South America, Asia, Australasia and Africa. Others did not venture beyond their borders but played/play an equally critical role in challenging contemporary educational practices in their own countries. Without the development and support of institutions promoting Froebelian pedagogy, the efforts made by these women may have faded over time – and institutions have also undergone their own journeys so I consider the role their transformation has played. I reflect on the journey made by kindergarten pedagogy itself. Translation, interpretation and modification have been essential for its successful implementation in the many countries it has reached. It has been challenged by new theories of child development, by research – and by the political interests of nation states wanting to use education for the moulding of its young citizens. Finally, I end with a brief reflection on my own journey and take stock of how Froebelian journeys are currently being supported in the UK.