



*Organisation Mondiale pour L'Éducation Préscolaire*  
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*World Organization for Early Childhood Education*



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# The OMEP ESD rating scale and tool kit

Early Childhood Education for Sustainability  
and Global Citizen Education

Second edition. Adapted 2019 from the original ESD Rating Scale  
Endorsed by OMEP World Assembly and Executive Committee

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# Introduction to the OMEP ESD rating scale

Over the past decade, World OMEP has made education for sustainability a key focus for World and Regional conferences, research projects, practitioners and as key content for a yearly OMEP ESD travel award. The work has progressed quickly with the support of UNESCO initiatives and international funding, with Sweden being a significant contributor.

OMEP became aware of the demand from practitioners on how to make improvements in their early childhood practices as countries such as Sweden and New Zealand in the 1990's developed curriculum documents for early childhood. Early childhood pedagogy has since embraced sustainability, as it is compatible with our early childhood history, such as the teachings of Froebel, Montessori, Steiner, Freire and Malaguzzi: all encouraging children to be exploring nature and caring for the natural world.

New ideas and approaches have emerged along with early childhood pedagogies, mainly evolved due to a deeper understanding of socio-cultural approaches to early childhood education. Since 2009, OMEP runs a world project on education for sustainable development - ESD. It includes multiple parts, such as informal child interviews, ESD-projects with children in their preschools and settings, intergenerational dialogues, in-service and pre-service training, a resource bank, a yearly ESD-award and the OMEP ESD rating scale. These projects are still active, and all information is available at [www.worldomep.org](http://www.worldomep.org).

The original OMEP ESD rating scale was developed in line with principles of best practices in early childhood. It was developed in 2011-2014 within a research project covering seven countries; Chile, China, England, Kenya, Korea, Sweden and USA (see further information about the project in Siraj-Blatchford, Mogharreban & Park, 2016). The scale exists in many languages, see [www.worldomep.org](http://www.worldomep.org). Today, it is most often used as a 'beginning tool' to support teachers in identifying successes and concerns in early education and care, also giving guide for internal evaluation. The rating scale additionally serves as a common point of origin for research projects. The primary purpose is not to use the scale for comparisons between preschools or as a measure of quality. Rather, we consider the scale a help in building a common culture of sustainability for children and adults, as the scale enables educators and management to identify areas in need action towards sustainability. It may also serve as a record of development and progress.

## OMEP ESD rating scale as an evaluation document

Research on the ESD Rating Scale has shown that there are perceived benefits to using a review tool such as this; (Siraj-Blatchford, et al, 2016, p.18)

- bringing teams of early childhood professionals together and providing a common language for discussion and development
- monitoring of change and accountability
- transparency in terms of the criteria by which early years centres are being asked to improve
- minimal paperwork

The OMEP ESD rating scale is well suited as a self-review or internal evaluation tool. The tool kit (the rating scale and its rubrics) includes observations, ratings, reflections, discussions and action plans. It can be used as a guide to a process whereby teachers and management regularly reflect and focus on working with children and their communities to make a difference, a transformative change.

Thus, one additional aim with the rating scale is simplicity in the paperwork and the review process. The OMEP ESD rating scale relates to both content and curriculum, as well as to the educational approach, the pedagogy. Each preschool/centre/setting will find their own way of approaching the use of the tool. The toolkit includes a rubric section for individual and team reviews, where pages can be printed for goal setting, notes and reflection.

## Central principles behind the OMEP Rating scale

One central premise of early childhood education is that children are competent and confident contributors to society. Children are agents of change, so working collaboratively with adults, there can be some exciting growth in sustainability projects and practices. These factors are part of curriculum content in many countries.

Another central premise of early childhood education is that we prefer the holistic, integrated approach to curriculum. The OMEP rating scale uses the three pillars of sustainability as set down by UNESCO, to guide the review process to areas crucial for building cultures of sustainability, by individuals or teams of professional. No matter in what dimension of sustainability you start, it is easy to link to the other two dimensions in projects and activities. The evaluation process initially could start with one focused dimension, and then expand. The holistic approach, and the relationship to the UN Convention on the rights of the child, are clearly stated in the 7 Re-words, that were developed as guiding principles for the OMEP ESD project part 2. Here follows one way to understand these central principles in relation to using the OMEP rating scale.

## UNESCO Pillars of Sustainability

### **Social & Cultural Sustainability:**

- Promote participation and dialogue
- Counter inequality. Respect difference
- Peace and conflict resolution
- Sense of justice and fairness
- Diversity
- Intergenerational knowledge
- Cultural stories
- Empathy & compassion
- Everyday stories of other lives

### **Environmental Sustainability:**

- Experiences with nature
- Critical thinking skills
- Knowledge of local area – place-based education
- Understanding how people are interconnected with the environment
- The past, present and future of the environment
- Biodiversity
- Making informed decisions for now and later
- Children being active participants in gardening and food preparation
- Environment as an additional teacher

## Economic Sustainability

- Sustainable consumption
- Ethical production
- Sharing resources
- Poverty
- Social entrepreneurs
- Waste and impact on environment
- Basic needs met – clean water, health, education and housing
- Efficient appliances
- Energy consumption
- Transport
- Valuing the non-material

## Seven RE-words for sustainability

- RE USE – make more use of old things
- RE DUCE – we can do more with less
- RE CYCLE – someone else can use it again
- RE DISTRIBUTE – resources can be used more equally
- RE SPECT - the rights of the child
- RE FLECT – on the cultural differences in the world
- RE THINK – people today value other things

## Guide for teachers and management

Metaphorically, you can see the process as a fern tree, which unfurls in stages and is gradual. It opens to new ways of being, as a teacher and as a preschool. As you read across the rating scale indicators, the statements are on a continuum where each statement suggests further insight and action, with a space between for consolidation of that indicator. This gives the individual or the team the time for reflection to embed the actions into everyday practice. You may also decide to add some of your own indicators in the spaces, as there is room for additional indicators in the rubrics.

The OMEP ESD rating scale is divided in three areas, following the UNESCO pillars for sustainability; social-cultural, economic and environmental. The political dimension, the empowerment, is manifested by the indicators of the scale, and the ratings are to be done between the numbers 1–7.

### A qualitative set of indicators

The scale has five areas in each dimension, and there are four sets of indicators in each dimension. The different indicators represent qualitative steps towards cultures of sustainability; inadequate, minimal, good and excellent.

**1 – Inadequate** for children's education and care

**3 – Minimal** indicates that children are informed and develop knowledge

**5 – Good** indicates that children participate, influence decisions and take actions and

**7 – Excellent** indicates that the preschool is involved in transformative and including processes, enabling systemic changes towards a culture for sustainability.

Indicators are shown in the scale for numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7, and the numbers 2, 4 and 6 are used for observations that achieve all of the lower indicators but not all of the higher.

## Using the scale

### 1) **Individual ratings**

Educators and management individually observe their environment and education, and do their ratings in the different areas by choosing between numbers 1-7, using the rubric *Individual rating and planning*. The indicators serve as helpful guides throughout the process. You put a number between 1 and 7, and there is a place for individual comments about the reasoning behind the chosen number.

Then, each person reflects on their ratings and make notes in the planning column of the rubric with proposals for what could be developed in the preschool. In each dimension, there is also an indicator 5. Additional topic. Please use it for specific issues related to your context.

### 2) **Team discussions and ratings**

The team of educators meet and share their individual ratings, using the rubric *Team evaluation and planning*. The discussion among the co-workers thus originates from each individual rating, which enable all educators to participate and varied aspects of learning and development to be highlighted. There could be different ratings between the individuals about stronger and weaker areas in the preschool, and about how to continue. These discussions and reflections are important and may take some time and are documented by a joint rating and additional comments in the rubric.

### 3) **Developing an action plan**

The final step is to develop an action plan for where to start and what to do, with the children, as educators, with the parents and in society for a next coming period. The team also sets a schedule for the actions and when to finish and how to present the actions towards sustainability.

### 4) **Period for actions and projects**

This is followed by the planned actions for 6-12 months, realising education for global citizenship and for sustainability.

### 5) **Evaluation**

At the end of the activities, it is time for a new round of evaluation with the help of the OMEP ESD rating scale. This time, the ratings will mark development and progress and will additionally serve as the base-line plan for the next coming actions towards sustainability.

## Sharing the results

OMEP is very interested in your experiences with the OMEP ESD rating scale, and even more interested in what actions and projects you have made. Contact your OMEP representative, send in a report and/or write articles for our journals; *International Journal of Early Childhood* (IJEC) at Springer and OMEP: Theory into Practice (on-line at the OMEP website). There is also an annual ESD travel award for projects with children for sustainability. Look for more information, contact persons and addresses at [www.worldomep.org](http://www.worldomep.org)

## Resources and references

*International Journal of Early Childhood IJEC*; two special issues on ESD;  
2009, 41(2) and  
2017, 49(3).

*ECNU Review of Education (ROE)* is an international and open access scholarly journal initiated by the East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai of China with a special issue on ESD  
2019

*Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2013, 14(4), Special Issue: Social Justice in ECE

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## Other resources

**Resource Bank for Education for Sustainable Development** <http://www.eceresourcebank.org>

World OMEP - [http://www.worldomep.org/index.php?hCode=ACTION\\_04\\_01\\_01](http://www.worldomep.org/index.php?hCode=ACTION_04_01_01)

World OMEP Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/WorldOMEP/>

Children's picture books on human rights and social justice

Relevant national and local websites