

Professional Practice – Presentation

Hello, my name is Rebecca, my student number is 2209334 and the module code is ECEY4002/C . Welcome to my presentation, I am going to be talking to you about the development of professional practice within the early years workforce.

To be an efficient childcare practitioner it is essential that employees are professional. According to Brock (2015) when being professional ones own self-knowledge, professional standards, government requirements and professional bodies need to be taken into consideration. In England, Early Childhood Care and Education professionals should be accountable, articulate and advocates. MacNaughton (2003, cited in Brock, 2015) says that an early years professional title ranges from an early childhood educator, teacher, pedagogue or practitioner. An Early Childhood Educator professional has many responsibilities ranging from the delivery of the curriculum and pedagogy and directing the human resources of staff, families, children and professional services.

Multi-disciplinary practice is crucial as it broadens practitioners skills and knowledge and enables them to meet the unique needs of each child. According to Dunhill, Elliott and Shaw (2009) multi-agency training is beneficial to practitioners, involving a range of professionals specialising in different sectors. They train childcare practitioners enabling them to improve their communication skills and knowledge. Also providing staff with resources that can be used with the children for example a Speech and Language therapist may leave activities and games for the staff to use in intervention groups. Gasper (2015) states that ECEC professionals come from various backgrounds, specialists will have different perspectives and are valuable resources for practitioners to analyse. To ensure this happens staff need to be willing to communicate effectively and respect new ideas. The knowledge of these qualified professionals can enhance the qualities supporting communities of practice.

Professional practitioners need a range of different values and qualities for example being approachable, reliable, organised, patient, caring, trustworthy, respectful, fair and empathetic, just to name a few. Schon (2011, cited in Gasper 2015) points out that staff need to be unbiased, reflective practitioners that are good listeners, willing to share effective ideas and learn from their reflection in the past, to improve their practice and integrate it into future planning. According to Arthur, Davidson and Lewis (2005) to be able to teach effectively having a set of professional values is integral, these values effect their interaction with the children, how the curriculum is taught and their teaching methods. It is the job of the practitioner to influence the children. However, Hyland (1993, cited in Arthur, Davidson and Lewis (2005) points out that models of teacher training that are competence-based place no importance on professional values.

An important skill to have as a professional practitioner is good communication to form positive relationships. Oberhuemer (2005, cited in Dyer, 2018) believes that to be professional maintaining positive relationships is vital, to enable this to happen they need to be open and sensitive. Every child should contribute to what and how they want to learn as they are all valued and have the right to construct their own learning. Many settings call this 'child-led' learning. Unicef (NO DATE) states in article 12 'Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.' This emphasises that practitioners need to be flexible and empathetic, using their communication skills by gaining feedback to engage the children in their learning.

Positive relationships with colleagues and parents are equally important as the relationships with the children. It ensures the adults can work together to make sure each individual child's needs are met appropriately. Unicef (NO DATE) article 3 believes that 'the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children'. According to Department for Education and Skills (2007, cited in Wilson (2016) through in-depth research there is clear evidence that practitioners and parents working together and maintaining positive relationships is key. They should be willing to reflect and adjust their practice, taking on board the views and recommendations of the parents. Observing them whilst visiting the setting and ensuring they are satisfied and impressed with it. Blanden, (2006) and Field (2010, cited in Wilson, 2016) say that children are more likely to achieve their outcomes if parents are involved with their learning. Poorer children may

be at a disadvantage due to less parental support and involvement. UNICEF (no date) states in article 18 'Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children'. It is the role of the professional to guide parents, especially those struggling, to support their child with their learning.

Dunhill, Elliot and Shaw (2009) state that communication can be classed as both verbal and non-verbal. To be able to participate in effective communication staff must be able to listen and question. They must also be empathetic and display positive body language. This shows the children can trust them and create a good rapport with them. Practitioners should be experienced in interpersonal communication which is interaction involving two or more people and intercultural which is communication with people of different ethnicities, with different values and beliefs and who speak various languages. This can sometimes cause communication barriers. Unicef (No date) article 2 argues that 'The convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background'. To enable positive relationships between children, staff, parents and other professionals, good communication is paramount.

Collaboration is also vital in childcare settings as working as a team can be very beneficial to provide support for colleagues and make positive improvements to the setting. According to Ash and D'Auria (2013) when professional practitioners participate in collaborative working, aiming to achieve the same targets, this results in improved learning for the children. To be able to work in a team effectively staff need to be open to new ideas, good problem solvers and be willing to learn from colleagues. The quality of teaching is improved through collaborative working. Organisation is also an essential skill needed as a practitioner to ensure efficiency and targets are met.

As a professional practitioner the most important aspect of the job is safeguarding the children that you care for. According to Welsh Government (2020) every childcare practitioner in Wales had to undertake the responsibility of safeguarding the children and adults that are in their care. They must report any concern, not take risks and make sure the disclosure is dealt with and appropriate actions are taken. Each practitioner should be

aware of the Safeguarding policy in their setting, also who the safeguarding officers are. Unicef (no date) article 19 quotes that 'governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them'. This links with the value of taking responsibility and respecting the children. Collaboration with social services, police and the NSPCC is also crucial. The NSPCC offer 'Speak out, stay safe' workshops in schools which teach them about bullying, abuse and neglect. NSPCC (no date) argues that this programme has prompted some children to disclose their abuse in response to the session in a safe and supportive environment.' Unicef (no date) article 6 points out that 'every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.' The practitioners must respect and care for the children.

Professional practitioners need to have the ability to plan, based on observations. Barber and Paul-Smith (2010) argue that practitioners need to reflect upon observations and use effective methods to observe the children as this will result in the children having improved outcomes. They need a good understanding of why the observations are taking place enabling them to observe more effectively and ensuring they know what to do with the information collated. The planning cycle is largely linked with reflection as the practitioner makes a plan which may be child-initiated or adult led, engages the children in the activity and observes them and then reflects and assesses them. They can then use this to feed into their future planning. Barber (2010) claims that the planning cycle was created based on Vygotsky's theory which is the zone proximal development. He believed that each child has a natural capacity for learning and development, but with the assistance from both peers and practitioners, children have the capability to transcend beyond that capacity. Observing children ensures practitioners are developing this theory. According to Piaget (1972, cited in Thomas 2020) each learner must create knowledge via their own actions. He developed schemas for the purpose of knowledge construction, he believed that children arrange their knowledge and understanding, cognitively structuring it in a schema. Observations are important when children are partaking in schematic play.

In conclusion, everything that has been talked about ensure that staff working in the early years are quality practitioners. Campbell-Barr and Leeson (2015) point out that in addition to being a desired trait, quality is also a political tool,

a word with strong connotations that aims to influence perceptions of the goals and ideal characteristics of early childhood care. The skills, values and responsibilities that have been discussed, all raise quality within practice.

Thank you for listening. Any questions?