

Hello, my name is Lydia Webster and today I will be critically evaluating the development of professional practice within the early years workforce as well as covering the significance of effective communication multi-agency and partnership working, observation and planning cycles and the principles of the UNCRC in developing and improving outcomes for children.

Professionalism. What is a professional? By definition published by Collins Dictionary, no date, professionals have jobs that require advanced education or training. It is significant to recognise the unsettled debate about what makes someone a professional. Some argue that education and training aren't necessarily what makes a professional, rather than the attributes a person has. According to Herrity (2021), some of the qualities of a professional include; reliability, accountability, being organised and having ethical behaviour. This argument is supported by Gasper (2015 pg, 255), as he states that what is meant by 'professional' is more complex and less easy to define. He goes on to suggest that professionalism is not based on qualifications as opposed to the qualities individuals demonstrate in practice.

With this in mind, it is generally considered that professional practitioners require certain values in order to excel in their practice.

As stated by Mintz (2018), values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions.

Having values is consequential when working in professional practice.

Some of these values may include optimism or positivity, compassion, communication, and teamwork.

Being positive and having a positive attitude is crucial whilst working as a professional practitioner. According to Health Assured Team (2021), when people embrace a positive attitude in general they suffer less stress, have better coping skills during hardships and times of stress, have more confidence, show a better focus and manage time well. These benefits are important when working as an early years practitioner. Grunebaum (2020), claims that being a practitioner that struggles maintaining their stress levels has bad consequences within practice. This is because being stressed affects attention, reactivity to events and emotional connection to the children.

Compassion is another value that is needed as an Early Years Practitioner. The word compassion itself derives from Latin and means to suffer together. It is related to other emotions such as sympathy, empathy and altruism. Compassion is what happens when those feelings of empathy are accompanied by the desire to help, as stated by Cherry (2021). Compassion is a significant value to have as an early years practitioner. Rocketto (2017) believes that children are vulnerable to becoming upset and frustrated, without yet having developed the skills needed to communicate their feelings effectively. Morin, no date, supports this statement and states that showing a child compassion and empathy allows them to feel understood and supported and can also help them to be able to speak up for what they need.

In addition to compassion, developing a strong staff team is undeniably central to strong early years leadership, according to MA education (2016). Effective teamwork is essential if a setting is to be a happy place for young children where they feel comfortable and can thrive. Barnardos, no date, also states that good team work helps people to cope with stress as well as boosting morale and motivation. Additionally, it supports quality practice and ensures families in the practice can feel confident in their child's learning and care. Barnardos (no date) goes on to

suggest that it is important for a team to set ground rules, develop listening and communication skills, look at approaches to deal with conflict within the team and ways of reaching joint solutions. EYC (2017) points out that conflicts and disagreements all have a massive impact on the level of care and education that is received by the children. This could have detrimental effects on the setting and so it is crucial that these problems are rectified as soon as possible. Often, a huge reason for conflict within practice is due to lack of communication.

Khan (2021) shares the idea that poor communication may cause tensions to rise. Failure to communicate may cause colleagues making the wrong assumptions. Especially in a larger setting, failure to effectively communicate could cause divides. This may cause practitioners to become distracted or stressed, which will inevitably affect their work ability.

Despite causing conflict, communication is a core value that early practitioners require. Early practitioners should also communicate with other adults involved as well as the children themselves in order for the child to get the best education and opportunities.

Other adults include parents. Although Lindon (1997, pg 97) explains that the practitioner wouldn't always be communicating with the parents. Some children may be cared for by grandparents or other relatives. Some practitioners may find that they see little of working parents and so need to build a relationship and communicate effectively with the child's childminder or nanny. This communication is critical and benefits the practitioner, guardian and child. Lindon (1997, pg 107) also highlights the importance of this communication by stating that the parents who feel that nobody notices if they are there or not will be disinclined to think of the centre as a place in which they could become involved. Bucheeri (2021) claims that family involvement is considered a key predictor in the child's success. Practitioners and parents provide a vital support system to help students thrive and when they work together effectively, it can significantly impact the child's academic, social and emotional well being.

Communicating and building these relationships with the involved adults is important. Davis and Ryder (2016, pg 100) supports this by emphasising that both parties should work closely together to support the learning and development of the child.

One should not forget that communicating with the child is equally as important as the involved adults. This includes giving them the opportunity to communicate their views and expressions which ultimately adheres to children's rights. These rights are protected by the UN Convention on the rights of the child, which is a convention that consists of 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. (United Nations, 2015).

Communicating and allowing the child to express themselves follows Article 12, respect for the views of the child, and Article 13, freedom of expression.

If the child cannot verbally express their needs, there are other ways for practitioners to establish communication between them. The FCA (no date) suggests that there are multiple communication strategies for a non verbal child such as joining in with non-verbal cues; like hand gestures and eye contact. It is important for a practitioner to build communication with non verbal children to give them equal opportunities. By doing this the practitioner is protecting the child's right to education Article 28.

Article 29 states that education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. If early years practitioners were to adhere to this, it would mean doing everything they can to support their development. Observation and planning is a way of doing this. Observation is an

opportunity to look closely at the processes of learning, as well as its products. Observing children should help us get to know them better, and it is this 'knowing' that should inform both our planning and our understanding of how children learn best. An observation may be formal; which is planned in advance to look at a certain child or group of children, or informal. Bromley (2009). The importance of Observations and planning is highlighted by Early years matters (no date) as it states, Observations of children are vital because each child has a unique set of abilities and talents. The Welsh Government (2008, pg 4) supports this by further emphasising the significance of observation and planning by stating that practitioners should be able to plan a more appropriate curriculum that supports children's development according to their individual needs by observing them carefully to note their progress, involvement and enjoyment. They go on to state that through observing and listening, practitioners are able to gather evidence before and after children have been taught a skill. Which enables practitioners to assess how much progress the children have actually made.

This is not the practitioners only responsibility. Practitioners also have a duty to gain knowledge surrounding resources that would aid children and their families as well as have knowledge around safeguarding and legislation.

Practitioners must be informed about multi agencies and partnerships including social workers, flying start workers, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, and counsellors. It is important for practitioners to know what support is out there for children and their families in order to provide equal opportunities for different children in times where circumstances and living situations vary.

As stated by NSPCC (no date), Childminders and staff working in day care and early years care should have appropriate training in child protection and know what to do if they have a concern. It is important for practitioners to know the signs of any sort of abuse or mistreatment as well as know what steps to follow if discovering them.

In conclusion, practitioners need core values, knowledge, training and understanding in order to give every child the best opportunities within their education as well as protect children's rights throughout.

Thankyou for listening.

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