

Leadership and management for systems of quality.

This assignment will critically reflect and analyse how two methods measure quality and the impact it has on ensuring quality care goes above statutory requirements. The methods that will be used are the Sustained shared thinking and emotional well-being scale, which will be referred to as SSTEWS, and the second method, Questionnaires.

According to Martin (2020) when quality is defined it is described as a concept where expectations or requirements are met, or even exceeded. In education quality care can be broken down to two areas. Structural quality, which relates to the environment, policies and procedures and staff ratios. The second area being process quality, which considers staff interactions, communication, and a child's educational experience. These areas provide the structural elements that will provide a quality setting to operate effectively. (Martin, 2020, and Teager, 2018). In contrast to this Hussain (2006 p 157-158) argued that quality is multidimensional, therefore there is no clear agreement of 'quality', especially in education, as it reaches so many dimensions. Including teachers' knowledge and their understanding of how to support children, pedagogy, and the curriculum.

Despite this, quality is essential in education across multiple areas. Procedures need to be in place to ensure settings reach standards that are effective, excellent, and distinct. This can have a huge impact on how children develop and the skills they learn, increasing confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to communicate effectively. (Hussain 2006 p 157-158, and Kelly, 2016).

Kelly (2016) states that when looking to make quality improvements to a provision, practitioners should be informed and have an in depth understanding of what works well and what does not work well within the setting. Evidence gathered using formal methods such as the SSTEWS scale are reliable evidence-based methods that focus on the setting environment and how staff interact with children.

Hoare (ND) and Siraj (2023) back this up and suggest that the SSTEWS scale focuses on the pedagogy of a setting and how adults support and enhance children's learning and development. The scale is split into five sub-scales which include, building confidence and independence, a trusting relationship, critical thinking,

language, and well-being. Once the scores on the sub-scales are added up an overall judgement on staff interaction can be made.

This method allows for reflection and improvements to be made that can go on further to increase the quality and care children receive (NICE, 2018 and Brodie, ND). However, according to McLeod (2023) when using Questionnaires as a method to assess and improve a provision this is a much less formal approach. Rather than gathering evidence based on what is seen in setting, like SSTEWS, Questionnaires ask purposeful questions to gain opinions of parents, staff or even children. It is a way to collate information that can then be used to evaluate a provision, leading to reflection that can provide next steps into increasing or exceeding the quality of care provided (North Yorkshire County Council, 2017).

SSTEWS scales are a Qualitative method of gathering information and measuring quality, it is a descriptive observation of how a child may engage in certain tasks, unlike questionnaires which can be either used in Qualitative or Quantitative measures, despite this, research suggest that a qualitative approach works better when collecting quality-based information in the Early years (Creaney, 2015 and Jarvine, 2015).

Moreover, when providing questionnaires for families, practitioners should be mindful not to be bias and include leading questions that could influence an answer.

Therefore, questionnaires need to be clear, easy to understand and contain open-ended questions that allow for detailed non bias responses that could then increase the quality of a provision (North Yorkshire County Council, 2017, and Tickle. et al., 2007).

When looking to improve the quality of a setting there are key areas that are essential to consider. One of these areas include Curriculum planning. According to Gov.UK (ND) this means ensuring that activities and the curriculum are planned to suit the individual needs of a child, this is a method that can be monitored using SSTEWS, as the SSTEWS report monitors language and interaction with children. Teager (2018) and Gov.UK (ND) state that when professionals monitor interaction between children and adults, they are able to see if the correct language and interactions are being taken to develop children to their full potential.

Similarly, by using Questionnaires practitioners are able to gain an insight of a child's individual home life and the additional support a child may need through communicating with parents. Engaging parents in children's learning progress is vital and by using questionnaires it allows parents to feel heard (Education Scotland, 2024). According to Nursery Resources (2019) by using questionnaires practitioners are able to use the information to build relationships and create a safe environment that allow parents to speak openly. When these relationships being formed the quality expectations of a setting can be exceeded, as this allows for a positive parent partnership. Seventy percent of children's lives are spent at home or with the community therefore parents having a voice should be seen as opportunity for practitioners to learn and enhance a provision and how the curriculum is delivered, based on feedback received from questionnaires (Nursery Resources 2019 and Gov.UK, ND).

In correspondence, the SSTEWS scale highlights the importance of working with parents, the SSTEWS method is supportive of quality communication and interactions at home as well as in setting. This links home learning and education, moreover, increasing the quality of education and care a child receives in setting and at home (Howard, 2018, Howard, 2020 and Siraj, 2023).

Together SSTEWS and Questionnaires can increase the curriculum quality of a setting. By working in partnerships with parents and monitoring staff interactions this can give an insight of where practitioners can adapt the curriculum and provision to increase and support development and early language skills, thus improving quality of a setting (Gov.UK, ND, Siraj, 2023 and Teager, 2018).

The SSTEWS scale and questionnaires both link to the curriculum expectations, for example, the five areas of SSTEWS focus in particular on areas such as well-being, social development, and Child-led experiences. Whereas the implementation of Questionnaires impact and improve effective communication, parent partnership and well-being. These finding suggests that both methods support the curriculum and prove to ensure quality relates to the expected academic outcomes (Welsh Government 2016). Furthermore, these two methods also support the rights of a child, for example, Article 12 and 13 of the convention on the rights of a child, respecting children's views and allowing children to share thoughts freely, and also

Article 29 the rights to an education that allows children to develop to their full potential (UNICEF, ND).

Another essential method of improving quality in a setting is staff awareness and collaborating with other professionals and multi-agencies. According to Siraj (2023) the SSTEW scale provides adults and professionals with the tools to increase the quality they deliver in education, contributing and enhancing developments. To develop staff knowledge and keep in line with the new curriculum professionals work together applying methods such as SSTEW, monitoring how staff interaction enhances children's development (Hoare, ND). In contrast to this, evidence shows that practitioners can sometimes be set in their ways and view what contributes to development and quality differently, this can be seen as a barrier. However, when practitioners are given the opportunity to reflect on everyday realities, professional growth will occur, leading practitioners to be more critical, confident, and articulate about interactions with children, thus, leading to a higher standard of quality in setting (Fisher and Wood, 2012).

Similarly, According to Department for education (2011) questionnaires can also provide practitioners with confidence to improve interactions with children as practitioners can learn to value and recognise how engaged parents are in a child's learning, which is an essential part of children's learning and development. Questionnaires give practitioners the confidence to form relationships and work with parents. This partnership increases learning behaviours, attendance, and achievements, therefore increasing the quality of education and care that is offered in a provision (Welsh government, 2016).

According to Ofsted (2024) working with parents and providing questionnaires can link in with the expectations from Ofsted, as they assess settings and how well they work in partnerships with parents. Ofsted offer an online questionnaire for parents and gather information about what parents think of a setting around the time of inspection. According to Leader (2019) by providing families with questionnaires regularly from a setting, practitioners can reflect and self-assess on parent feedback and work on quality improvements and goals at any time, allowing practitioners the opportunity to exceed the expectations of an inspection (Ofsted, 2024 and Leaders, 2019).

Brodie (ND) states that SSTEW can also be used as a self-assessment tool for practitioners to see where improvements are needed, but more importantly, it is seen as an essential tool for childhood educators and professionals, enabling staff to measure and enhance the quality of interactions and pedagogy in early years settings. In contrast to this, the scale cannot increase the quality of a setting unless it is used by a professional with the desired knowledge and understanding of children's development, meaning the scale is only valid for self-assessment when carried out correctly. Ensuring the SSTEW scale is fulfilled accurately will guarantee the targets are true to the setting, allowing practitioners to make changes and adapt the setting to exceed quality expectations. (Siraj, 2023. P84, Brodie, ND and Hoare, ND).

Pacey (2024) highlights that the level of quality a provision has can be reflected through resources, opportunities of play and the equipment a setting has. Neither the SSTEW scale or questionnaires focus on environmental factors of quality and research suggests that this area can often be overlooked due to lack of funding (Butler, ND). In contrast to this, an enabling environment applies to parent partnership too, which could suggest that questionnaires set the foundations for building trust and parent partnerships, contributing to families feeling that a setting is a safe space, this approach builds on a Froebelian principle, where it is believed that working in partnerships contributes to a children's development and high-quality environments. (Butler, ND and Kambouri et al.,2022).

The attitude that practitioners have towards creating a high-quality provision reflect the environment that is created for children and families. Therefore, measuring quality using methods such as SSTEW and questionnaires allow professionals to reflect on skills, attitude, knowledge, and behaviours. All of which could become barriers to implementing a high-quality practice if not recognised (Landsverk, 2023).

It is important for children to have access for a high-quality provision to allow them the best outcomes in life (Welsh Government, 2015). According to Hopkin (2010) the main objective of measuring quality in the early years is to collect information that could improve a child's outcomes. Both SSTEW and questionnaires provide practitioners with the information to progress and enhance quality of care and children's development within a provision. When using multiple methods of measuring quality practitioners are able to consider how the quality methods

compare and how they can be developed. Bringing multiple methods together can enhance the quality in early education and the outcomes for children (Hopkin, 2010). Bland (2024) believes that when practitioners have the skills to be critical and provide constructive feedback in a session it allows for a provision to be developed to a high standard of quality that exceeds the national minimum standards (Welsh government, 2016).

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