

1. Investigating how early years teachers can be supported to engage in integrated working

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Children's mental health (MH) has become a more prominent issue during the past decade. Ofsted (2018) assert that children's MH needs are not being sufficiently supported. The DfE's and DH's (2017: 3) Green Paper, 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' proposed that schools have an important role in identifying children's MH needs 'at an early stage, referring young people to specialist support and working jointly with others to support young people experiencing problems'. This proposal has implications for the efficacy of Early Years (EY) teachers' collaborative working with other professionals, which facilitates a child's access to a range of professional knowledge and skills to support their learning and development (Wong and Press 2012). However, challenges exist to the process of collaborative working and EY teachers' capacity to realise its potential is variable (Nutbrown, 2018). Developing proficiency to collaborate effectively with others requires additional layers of expertise, as well as specialist knowledge and skills associated with particular professional roles (Edwards, 2010).

Employing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework, this research project examines collaborative working in EY provision to inform policy initiatives relating to the professional development (PD) of EY teachers. A qualitative interview study was undertaken that sought the views of EY practitioners and teacher educators about collaborative working and an interpretive paradigm was used to explore the participants' responses (Yin 2016). Research findings indicate the importance of a working environment that promotes open and respectful communication and trusting relationships; encourages innovation in pedagogical approaches and offers PD opportunities

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that have relevance to specific contexts of practice. The findings were supplemented by the current evidence base from the literature to suggest recommendations for what a curriculum for EY teachers' PD might reasonably include.

References

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Preparing the Mental Health practitioners of the future through practice-based research

Background

Children's mental health has become a more prominent issue during the past decade. The DfE's and DH's (2017: 3) Green Paper, 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision' proposed that schools have an important role in identifying children's mental health needs 'at an early stage, referring young people to specialist support and working jointly with others to support young people experiencing problems'. This proposal rests on the efficacy of early years teachers' collaborative working with other professionals, which facilitates a child's access to a range of professional knowledge and skills to support their learning and development (Wong and Press 2012). However, challenges exist to the process of integrated working and early years teachers' capacity to realise its potential is variable (Nutbrown, 2018). Developing proficiency to collaborate effectively with others requires additional layers of expertise, as well as specialist knowledge and skills associated with particular professional roles (Edwards, 2010).

Conclusion

The project identifies three nested layers of support for early teachers' engagement in integrated working:

- Professional development
- School culture and mentoring
- Education policy

Findings

Research findings indicate the importance of a working environment that promotes open and respectful communication and trusting relationships; encourages innovation in pedagogical approaches and offers professional development opportunities that have relevance to specific contexts of practice.

Data Analysis

Key themes emerged from thematic analysis of the participants' responses in the interviews following 'deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection' (Braun and Clarke 2019: 591)

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Purpose of Study

Employing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, this research project focuses on early years teachers' collaborative practice in integrated working.

Aims and Objectives

The project aims to investigate how early years teachers can be supported to participate in integrated working and manage challenges they may encounter when engaged in this activity.

Method

A qualitative interview study was undertaken that sought the views of practitioners and teacher educators about integrated working. An interpretive paradigm was used to explore the participants' responses (Yin 2016).

References

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