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Good practice and professional identity in early years practitioners

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The reflective practitioner

- “review, analyse and evaluate their own and others’ practice” (CWDC, 2008)
- Educated to graduate level
- Lead role in planning and delivering EYFS
- Model good practice to others
Reflection

- Process of noticing (Jaworski, 1993)
- Retrospective and critical (Proctor (1993) in Moon, 1999)
- Purposeful and focussed (Moon, 1999)
- An analysis of the effectiveness of practice and its values (Johns, 2004)
Voice (Belenky et al, 1986)

- Silence
- Received knowing
- Procedural knowing
- Subjective knowing
- Constructed knowing
Professional identity

- Professional knowledge
- Naive/informed belief
- Sophisticated understanding underpinned with theory
- Personal vs. professional
Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews
- Thematic analysis
- Voice Centred Relational Method (Mauthner and Doucet 1998):
  - Reading for the plot
  - Reading for the voice of I
Results – thematic analysis

- Good practice is:
  - Child-centred/child-led (4)
  - Requires personal commitment and caring disposition (4)
  - Measured in terms of child’s outcomes (5)
  - Shaped and measured by external frameworks (4)
  - Measured by others (3)
  - May be dynamic and shaped by context (2)
Results – thematic analysis

- Own performance is judged by using:
  - Reflection and reflective models
  - The judgement of others in the workplace
  - The use of external frameworks
  - Outcomes for children
Results – reading for the plot

- Confirmation of thematic analysis
- No reference to underpinning theory to support concepts
- Some articulation of personal values
- Concepts expressed in naive/unsophisticated terms
Results – reading for the voice of I

- “I” used to express personal experience and opinion
- “they” or “you” used to discuss good practice

- Informant 1 – uses “I” to discuss own practice, “you” to discuss external frameworks, e.g. learning outcomes, practice guidance
- Informant 4 – very reluctant to use “I” at all, even when discussing own practice
Conclusions - the voice of the practitioner

- Informants in this study show evidence of:
  - Received knowing
  - Subjective knowing
  - Procedural knowing

- Voice of the practitioner is still victimic but becoming more agentic

- Informants express naive/unsophisticated concepts of good practice and the use of reflection
Conclusions – supporting these learners

- If the early years practitioner is to acquire a credible professional identity then subjective, intuitive concepts of good practice need to be expressed with greater reference to underpinning theory

- This in turn will support them to lead on and model informed practice and understanding, raising the professional knowledge and skill-base of the sector

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References