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Inquiry Based Learning in Teams: Sowing the seeds of research and enterprise with our students and their pupils

Introduction

Practice learning is a key tenet of programmes focussed on work with children and their families and the BA (Hons) Childhood Studies has developed a core reflective practice spine which begins in the foundation year and develops in subsequent years to enable students to undertake practice learning in teams with the focus on a change project.

Inquiry base learning involves the students developing questions to problems and is seen as an effective way of reinforcing and improving research informed teaching and practice.

The team placement provides an opportunity for us to work with partners including schools in a different way and to consider the development of projects that may have enterprise as a focus. These will not only enable us to seed enterprise with children and young people but also within the wider community. The students will also be exposed to the knowledge and skills essential to enterprise.

Foundations for Practice

This module is designed to raise awareness of the principles and values underpinning the role of the reflective professional in the children's and young people's workforce. Inquiry based learning will enable students to explore the system around the child and to draw on learning from across the programme. Focus includes working as an individual, working in teams including multidisciplinary teams, groups and in partnership with colleagues and families.

Practice learning settings are encouraged to identify a change issue that involves children and young people in enterprise

Employability and Practice Learning in Teams

The practice learning spine develops and enhances students as reflective practitioners but also builds towards their employability on graduation. This module mirrors and develops the strategy undertaken in the intermediate year and enables the development of the key knowledge and skills required by employers including team skills, problem solving, synthesis and professionalism.

Practice Learning in Teams

In year two students work in teams with a setting to identify a change issue and implement a change plan working alongside children or young people and practitioners. Preparation occurs in term one and is supported through inquiry based learning when tutors adopt the role of client for a project. Sample projects include development of admissions materials, focus days or artefacts for the programme.

Teaching and Learning Strategy

The learning and teaching strategy is underpinned by research, for example, on reflection (Moon, 1999) and Inquiry Based Learning (Justice et al, 2007).

Assessment Strategy

Teaching and learning is supported through assessment which requires reflection on learning and development, critical appreciation of the links between research, theory, policy and practice, and proposals for future enhancement or employability.

Enterprise

Students are involved in projects that are beneficial to themselves, the children they work with and to the setting. They are encouraged to be enterprising and, in partnership with the setting and the children, to bring to fruition ideas that they and the children can use into the future.

Learning, assessment and enterprise are supported by a member of staff from the practice learning setting who acts as a mentor. Crucially the opportunity to undertake a research degree within the university for this or another member of staff is offered. Thus they are researching the field and informing practice and teaching and feeding back into the teaching and learning and assessment strategies .