

## Free for Twos

By Polly Bolshaw

From September 2013, the 20% least advantaged two-year-olds in the country will be entitled to 15 hours free early education during term-time, which can be accessed both in nurseries and childminders. The Government estimates that overall 149,900 two year olds will be entitled to a free early education place, including 28,800 in London, 3,600 in Kent and 900 within Medway. In September 2014, this will increase to 296,300 two year olds nationwide – the least advantaged 40%.

The roll-out of this scheme follows a pilot since 2006, which has examined the impact of receiving free early education from two years old. The programme continues with the same aims of the original pilot, of developing disadvantaged children's "social and cognitive outcomes", as well as to ensure that these children are "as ready as their more advantaged peers to start and fully benefit from school" (Gibb et al, 2011). With this in mind, in order for children to fully benefit settings must be judged as Good or Outstanding to take funded twos.

To be eligible for a free early education place, children must meet certain criteria, the same that decides who is entitled to free school meals. If parents and guardians are in receipt of one or more of certain benefits, such as Income Support and Income based Job Seekers Allowance, then their children will be eligible, as will children who are looked after by the Local Authority. Local authorities have now begun to contact eligible families who will have a child aged two by September 2013, to inform them of the offer available to them.

### Bibliography

Gibb, J., Jelacic, H., La Valle, I., Gowland, S., Kinsella, R., Jessiman, P. and Ormston, R. (2011) *Rolling out free early education for disadvantaged two year olds: an implementation study for local authorities and providers*. National Children's Bureau with National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)

### Eligibility Criteria for Two Year Olds

#### Criterion A - Children whose parents/guardians are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support Allowance under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are **not** also entitled to Working Tax Credit, and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

#### Criterion B – Children looked after by the Local Authority: Child in Care (Request MUST be completed by the child's Social Worker).

From <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childcare/parents/cis/eye/2-year-old-offer-2.htm>

# Student Research: Child Poverty

By Eleanor Jones

## What is poverty?

Alcock (1997) makes it clear that there is no one single definition of poverty because it is such a political concept. The political rhetoric over the past few decades has revolved around the problem of poverty in our society today and the urgent need to reduce child poverty in particular. However there are a range of differing attitudes to this. In 1989, Moore (Secretary of State in the Thatcher government) placed more emphasis on the absolute definition of poverty, with its focus on income and material goods and services. He stated that it was not possible that a third of children were living in poverty, as the pressure groups then claimed, as living standards were so much higher than when Booth and Rowntree had set poverty levels in the nineteenth century (Moore, 1989: 5). Oppenheim and Harker, on the other hand, demonstrated a move towards a more relative view of poverty. They defined poverty as going short materially, socially and economically, spending less on food, on heating, and on clothing than someone on an average income. They highlighted that poverty takes away life chances as it takes away the opportunity to have a life unmarked by sickness, a decent education, a secure home and a long retirement. (Oppenheim and Harker, 1996: 4-5, in Alcock, 1997: 3). The concept of absolute and relative poverty is key here. The debate around how poverty can continue to exist and grow today, even in our more affluent British society, centres around the concept of relative poverty.

Many people quote Townsend to explain poverty in our society, stating that individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged and approved in the societies in which they belong." (Townsend 1979, quoted by CPAG on [www.cpag.org.uk/povertyfacts/index.htm](http://www.cpag.org.uk/povertyfacts/index.htm)). Although poverty is most commonly measured in terms of income, CPAG go on to show that poverty is not simply about being on a low income and going without – it is also about being denied power, respect, good health, education and housing, basic self-esteem and the ability to participate in social activities. This distinction between absolute and relative poverty is critical, as Montgomery et al (2003) make clear, stating that different definitions of poverty have profound effects on the numbers of children who are considered poor. It is the relative definition of poverty that helps us to better understand the issues of social inequality, and also helps us see that poverty is not simply about lacking material goods and services. Rather, poverty is also about an individual's relationship to others in society.

## Attitudes to poverty now

Both the solution to child poverty and also what constitutes child welfare are understood differently at different times according to the context in which they are situated. Since 1997, when Tony Blair became Prime Minister and promised to end child poverty, we have seen shifts in attitudes to poverty among both the public and among policy makers. This has led to an increase in public acknowledgement of poverty and the responsibility to do something about it. The challenge facing Rowntree and his peers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was to demonstrate that poverty was about insufficient income rather than indolence and vice. The challenge now, however, is to demonstrate what income poverty means in terms of experiences, or what constitutes an adequate or decent standard of existence. This all hinges around the idea of relative poverty. Current income levels do not necessarily reflect a family's spending – deprivation measures that show people's experiences can therefore give a very different account of poverty.

## So what is the situation in the UK today?

CPAG states that a widely-used measure of poverty is where household income is below 60 per cent of the median UK income after housing costs have been paid. Using this measure, the HBAI survey in 2009/10 showed that 13.5 million people in the UK (22%) were income poor. The main cause of poverty is inadequate income, arising from worklessness, low wages and the low level of benefits. Paid work is not, on its own, a guarantee of being free of poverty, as low wages can leave even those in full-time work living below the poverty line. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation states that the proportion of children living in poverty has risen considerably in the last 30 years, and the UK currently has proportionally more children in poverty than most rich countries. All of these statistics have been put forward by organisations campaigning to raise public awareness of poverty in our society today. However, they are useful in giving us an overview of the situation.

## **Bibliography**

Alcock, P. (1997), *Understanding Poverty*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London: Macmillan  
<http://www.cpag.org.uk/povertyfacts/index.htm> (2011) (Accessed: 18th November 2011)  
Moore, J. (1989), *The end of the line for poverty*. No. 802. Conservative Political Centre

# Why Play?

By Polly Bolshaw

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013, Professor Tina Bruce presented *Observing children at play and the development of the whole child* at CCCU and the Froebel Trust's conference *Child Observation and Assessment: Froebel's Holistic Approach* in Canterbury. Her speech introduced the idea of play, explained some of reasons why play is just so important, as well as giving practitioners some tips and hints of how to support play and use it to foster learning and development.

## What is play?

Prof Bruce explained that play "empowers, equips and inspires" children's way of thinking, by providing a means by which children can reflect upon real life by reenacting and drawing upon their own first hand experiences. In the Froebellian ethos, children are active members of their community in which they will eventually become adults, so play is a way in which children can make sense of this and be better able to tackle it, and thus, "rehearse for the future". Bruce gave an example of children playing soldiers in an army barracks camp, with experiences of conflict. If practitioners do not have an awareness of how play is used to help children better understand their environment and surroundings, rough play or "fighting" may be curtailed or restricted. However, in this case, children were making sense of the world of which they are a part, in order to be better able to understand and share in it. In this sense, Bruce describes play as "the highest form of learning".

## Why is play so important?

Through reflecting on first hand experiences through play, learning is embedded. For example, within my

setting last week, an egg incubator had been installed for three days, with the nursery and reception children taking daily visits. On the third day, they visited several times, seeing a cracked egg, and later a brand-new chick poking its head out of its shell. Upon returning to the classroom, three four-year old boys ran straight to a table, hiding behind the trailing tablecloth. Upon approaching, I heard a whispered, "I'm going to hatch soon" and "I'm inside" – clearly embedding their learning of eggs hatching through playing at being chicks. To enhance play, provide a wide range of rich first hand experiences for children. For instance, if you carry out a cooking activity with children, imagine how this may be replicated, and embedded, in child-initiated time, perhaps in using a mud-kitchen or with playdough. Consider how your setting offers opportunities for children to reenact their own experiences, and how these can be further developed through "play props", which children often create to enhance their play. Bruce advocates children making their own play props, which will help their symbolic representation.

## How can practitioners use play to develop learning?

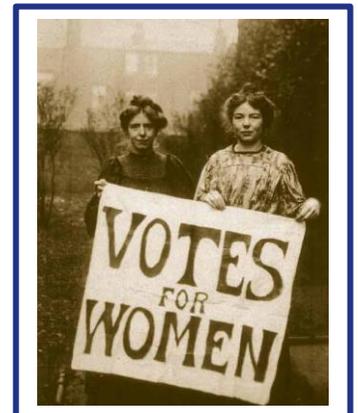
Essentially, in order to support children's learning, practitioners need to keep learning too. If the children in your setting are interested in, say, butterflies, keep one step ahead of them by learning too. How much do you know about butterflies? Can you name them? Know their individual habitats? To keep the children's interest, foster enthusiasm and also develop their knowledge, you need to show your interest, enthusiasm and knowledge too.

---

## Let's Celebrate!

*What could we be celebrating this month?*

- 12<sup>th</sup>: Battle of Boyne / Orangemen's Day
- 14<sup>th</sup>: Emmeline Pankhurst Day
- 15<sup>th</sup>: St. Swithin's Day



# In Practice... The Importance of Joyful Learning

By Eleanor Jones

The Joyful Learning Network defines joyful learning as "Engaging, empowering, and playful learning of meaningful content in a loving and supportive community. Through the joyful learning process a student is always improving knowledge of self and the world". Several sources can be used to illustrate the power of this approach. According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), numerous studies show that happy individuals are successful across multiple life domains, including marriage, friendship, income, work performance, and health. They suggest that the happiness–success link exists not only because success makes people happy, but also because positive affect engenders success. In addition, Gibbons and Silva (2011) state that child wellbeing at school and enjoyment of the learning environment are important economic outcomes, in particular because a growing body of research shows they are strongly linked to later educational attainments and labour market success.

Joyful learning encompasses play and enjoyment, but these elements alone are not enough. Having said this, the evidence is growing that higher achievement is not attained through an early start to formal learning, and that a significant amount of playfulness enables children to think critically and creatively. This is important as the 21st century job market requires skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and an ability to analyse, categorise and evaluate as well as the traditional skills of literacy and numeracy. Ferre Laevers' wellbeing characteristics are useful indicators of joy due to their emphasis on children feeling at ease, acting spontaneously, having an openness to experience and an enjoyment of life. In addition he characterises wellbeing as involving inner relaxation, vitality, self-confidence, and being in touch with your own feelings and emotions.

With this in mind, the following points are a good starting point to incorporate joyful learning into your practice:

## **Barriers to joyful learning:**

- noise and bustle
- children's needs
- disembodied education

## **Creating an environment for joyful learning:**

- build strong, positive relationships
- develop a growth mindset in children
- get outside
- get active
- help children find pleasure in learning
- help children become experts
- make more use of creative and expressive arts
- don't forget stories

## **Joyful teaching:**

- love the job you do
- model joy
- look carefully at children
- make your setting inviting



## References and for more information:

Gibbons, S. and Silva, O. (2011), *Economics of Education Review*, Apr2011, Vol. 30 Issue 2, p312-331  
Laevers, F. (2002), *A Process-Oriented Child Monitoring System for Young Children*, Centre for Experiential Education  
Lyubomirsky, S. et al. (2005), *Psychological Bulletin*, 2005, Vol. 131, No. 6, 803– 855  
Pound, L. (2013), *EYFS Best Practice: All about ... Joyful learning*, *Nursery World*, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
[www.joyfullearningnetwork.com](http://www.joyfullearningnetwork.com)

# Ready to Start School? The Importance of Sharing Expectations

By Polly Bolshaw

As the summer holidays approach, there may be children in your setting who will shortly be moving up to school in September. As practitioners, there are lots of things we can be doing to prepare for children for their reception class, by working with the children directly, but also with their families, and the schools they will be entering into. UNICEF (2012) characterises school-readiness as being this three-faceted approach between ready children, ready schools and ready families, who must work together to ease the transition for children. With this model in mind, it is important to remember that the duty of being ready for school does not solely lie with the child, but instead with other partners within the child's microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). So what can we be doing to ensure a smooth transition for children starting school in September?

At what age do children from other European countries start school?

Age	Country
Four	Northern Ireland
Five	Cyprus, England, Malta, Scotland, Wales
Six	Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey
Seven	Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Sweden

National Foundation for Educational Research (2013) *Compulsory age of starting school in European countries*. [Online] (URL <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/index.cfm?9B1C0068-C29E-AD4D-0AEC-8B4F43F54A28>). (Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013).

In my dissertation research, I explored what practitioners, parents and children understood by the idea of being ready for school. My research found that there were disparate views in what skills, qualities and attributes the different stakeholders thought would be necessary to start school. Typically, the children focused on academic elements, such as "good writing", whilst parents and practitioners favoured social, emotional and personal development, for example attributes such as being confident and happy. From these findings, it is clear that all parties must share expectations of what they think are necessary skills to have to begin school, so that children have a greater awareness of what will be expected of them, so that families know what skills to focus on at home leading up to the new school term, and so that teachers know how best to ease the transition for children with their expectations in mind.

Practitioners can often act as key links between families and schools – as well as having an in-depth knowledge of the child to share with the family, they often also have built up links with schools (which in itself aids a smooth transition). Practitioners can use these links to share information about expectations – find out from the school what they are expecting from new pupils, and, as well as making sure there are opportunities to develop these skills within your setting, share this information with families and children so they feel more secure about the environment they will be entering into once they leave yours.

## Bibliography

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.  
UNICEF (2012) *School Readiness: A Conceptual Framework*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

# Keeping On Track with your Dissertation – Discussing and Drawing Conclusions

Polly Bolshaw

After you've written up your dissertation findings, the next step is to evaluate your findings and answer your research questions within the discussion, and then move onto a conclusion. Your conclusion should summarise your research process and draw conclusions from your findings and research questions as a whole, as well as perhaps discuss additional limitations you found within your research.

## Discussion: Summarising Your Research Questions

Your research questions should be outlined within the methodology section of your dissertation, which provides the basis of explaining how you are going to answer your research questions. Then, within the discussion you can bring together your research findings, which may have been identified within themes, to answer your research questions. (Personally within mine, I had identified ten themes, which I drew together to answer three research questions, which I answered individually in distinct sections). At this point you may also want to bring in additional literature and theory to support your discussion. If your findings are not what you expected, this is fine, you may want to bring in literature that supports what you found.

## Drawing Conclusions

Your conclusion provides a means for you to summarise your research as a whole – the literature review, methodology, findings and discussion – within a relatively short section (mine was around 750 words). Bear in mind this is small-scale research, so sweeping statements or national recommendations will appear far-fetched - instead identify the limitations of your research and make small recommendations that are relevant to your setting/location.

## Adapting to the New Job Market

By Eleanor Jones

A feature of the new job market in which we are operating in our current economic climate is that employers can no longer guarantee a job for life. So how can you navigate this situation in a way that makes you as secure as possible? How you respond to the new market will determine how successful you are at managing your career and how relevant you are to employers. Here are some tips to keep you in a strong position as you move forward in your career:

- Be responsible for your own career – think ahead about how to build your skills and don't wait for others to present new opportunities to you, always be looking out for them yourself
- Keep learning
- Develop diverse income streams – sidelines can develop your skills as well as helping financially
- Be prepared to adapt and relocate
- Keep your network oiled – if you keep in touch with and pass information on to contacts when you don't need anything, it will be easier to ask for help when you do.

**Bibliography:** Whitmell, C. (2012) Surviving the new normal: adapting to the 2012 job market. *The Guardian* [Online] (URL <http://careers.guardian.co.uk/careers-blog/responding-to-changing-job-market>) (Accessed 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013).