

You are an Early Years Teacher!

By Polly Bolshaw

This month marks the beginning of Early Years Teacher courses, introduced within *More Great Childcare* in January (2013). But what are the differences between Early Years Professional Status and the new Early Years Teacher Status? Eight sets of standards exist for becoming an Early Years Teacher, namely:

- Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge all children;
- Promote good progress and outcomes by children;
- Demonstrate good knowledge of early learning and EYFS;
- Plan education and care taking account of the needs of all children;
- Adapt education and care to respond to the strengths and needs of all children;
- Make accurate and productive use of assessment;
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and provide a safe learning environment;
- Fulfill wider professional responsibilities.

But how do Early Years Teachers in settings compare with teachers with QTS working in schools? Ollerenshaw (2013) notes the differences between the two, in part due to a stronger focus on aspects of care, such as understanding attachment theories (within Standard 2) and supporting children with transitions (within Standard 5). There are, as well, standards that closely relate to the 39 standards met by Early Years Professionals, for instance the Early Years Teachers Status standard 7.2: "establish and sustain a safe environment and employ practices that promote children's health and safety" in comparison to the Early Years Professional Status' S19: "establish a safe environment and employ practices that promote



children's health, safety and physical, mental and emotional well-being". Ollerenshaw also notes that, despite the EYFS's commitment to play – "play is essential for children's development" (EYFS, 2012:6) - play does not directly feature within the Early Years Teacher standards, although the Early Years Professional Status' S11 states, "Plan and provide safe and appropriate child-led and adult initiated experiences, activities and play opportunities...".

So, where does the transition from Early Years Professional Status to Early Years Teachers Status leave you? The good news is that the Department for Education states that existing Early Years Professionals will now be seen as the equivalent of Early Years Teachers (DfE, 2013), despite the change in standards. Clearly the future of the early years lies in the hands of graduate leaders who have been awarded Early Years Professional Status and those who will be awarded Early Years Teachers Status from April 2014.

References:

Department for Education (2012) *Graduate leaders in early years* [Online] Available: <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/h00201345/graduate-leaders/eyps>. [Accessed 20th August 2013]

Ollerenshaw, Z. (2013, August 23) *CSN Policy Briefing: Childcare Qualifications*. Local Government Information Unit/Children's Services Network.

The following study is based on an interview conducted on 2nd November 2011, with Alicya Maria Plucinska (née), a Polish woman, born into Haydon Park refugee camp, Dorset in 1947. Her account highlights some of the beliefs and values present at that time, which form the basis of this study. A wealth of themes transpired from the interview: a sense of solidarity among Polish refugees in the camp (Stolarczyk, no date: p 1), followed by difficulties integrating into British society, continued repression of their own nation, against austerity in rural Britain and a resistance towards foreigners. This study focuses on how Alicya's childhood was constructed, through her experience as a Pole in rural Somerset and her disciplinary upbringing. The study refers to socio-political, economic and cultural factors, as well as national and international events of the time, in order to contextualise the beliefs and values highlighted in Alicya's story.

Alicya describes how, when Haydon Park was disbanded in 1954, two Polish families were placed in social housing in each village, possibly aiming to achieve maximum integration (Robin et al, 1996: 228). Sadly, in Alicya's instance, integration was not achieved as she was quietly taunted and abused by adults. The fact that the abuse came from adults and not children suggests an undercurrent of societal disquiet. Numerous oral histories and first-hand accounts mirror Alicya's experiences, demonstrating widespread resentment of Poles (Marrus, 1985; Nocon, 1996; Robin et al, 1999; Bitner, no date). As Porter describes (2003: 292-296), rural Britain had also lived through the 1920's and 30's agricultural depression alongside the wider economic depression that hit Britain in 1931. Mass evacuation and an influx of Prisoners during World War Two placed pressure on rural areas and villages were not immune to bombing.

Already separated from relatives and at times uncertain of their fates, resettled refugees were separated from Polish camp comrades and dealt with wartime traumas in isolation. Out of the 'cocooned' camps, Alicya's mother's experience of forced labour and sense of rejection (from her father's decision to send her rather than her step mother) came to light. Thus the beliefs and values of the previous generation were transferred, unfortunately including the abuse. Alicya's mother's decision not to protect

her daughter from these traumas highlights the construct of the competent 'becoming' child (Uprichard, 2008; Cunningham, 2006: 15) and a disciplinary parenting style referred to by Hendrick (1997: 22) as prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Hendrick (1997: 33) remarks that a mother anxious through poverty 'becomes highly irritable, snaps at the child when she would prefer to caress him.'

Alicya makes several references to the child as seen and not heard, clearly defining adult and child roles and childhood obedience. For example, her experience of not being allowed to attend the camp ball, or play without adult intervention and of being upstairs at parties listening to adults drinking. Furthermore, Alicya's perspective of a Catholic childhood highlights a culture of fear, obedience, acceptance and blind faith. Alicya's experience highlights culture and religion as underpinning upbringing, mirroring the early twentieth century behaviourist theories (Cunningham, 2006: 198-200). However, her later experience should be examined in context (Hendrick, 1997: 28-32, Cunningham, 2006: 200-202), with the shift towards 'new psychology', first expounded after World War One, seeking to understand violent behaviour. Anti-Nazi and anti-Stalin feeling after World War Two, along with concern about evacuees separated from their parents and delinquent wartime children (Lofthouse, 1944: 80, Cox, 1996: 164), prompted a new liberal approach to childcare, with the central premise of 'reciprocity' in the parent-child relationship, influenced by Bowlby's attachment research, the 1948 Children Act (cited in Cox, 1996: 165) and the government's attempts to reconstruct family life. As Hendrick (1997: 34-35) notes, there was a shift from the 'strict religious views' that saw children as 'evil', to a more liberal or humane approach with respect to children's rights and freedoms.'

After interview, Alicya revealed that many of the subjects we discussed she had never shared with anyone, even her own children, whom she chose to protect from trauma, demonstrating the current construct of the 'being' child (Uprichard, 2008), as vulnerable and needing protection (Cunningham, 2006: 244). Paradoxically, she expressed concern of historical stories becoming lost and children not experiencing hardship: "The children...being born

now will be poorer because they haven't got to fight like we had to. They haven't known the deprivation...the hunger...the hurt or rejection. All the things that people after the war had to go through to make them survive." By placing her own experience against contemporary society, Alicya contextualises our current reality. Heywood (2003: 6) notes the difficulties in gaining accurate source material on

historical childhoods, since children's own accounts are scarce. First-hand accounts such as Alicya's are invaluable, not only as historical records, but in understanding our present constructions of the child and societal beliefs and values. Such accounts might also facilitate understanding of our current immigrant population and their untold stories, particularly in times of austerity.

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Cunningham, H. (2006) *The Invention of Childhood*. London: BBC books.

Porter, V. (2003) *Yesterday's Countryside: Country life as it really was*. Devon: David and Charles.

What to Read... *By Eleanor Jones*

Tax-Free Childcare

A government consultation on plans for tax-free childcare is open until 14th October. The plans include tax-free childcare for working families and universal credit, which will provide additional childcare assistance for parents. The consultation provides an opportunity to comment on the details of how these proposals will be designed and operated, asking questions regarding the knowledge and insight that stakeholders are likely to have. Areas explored include the eligibility criteria, the approach to managing voucher accounts for each child, the role of the market, and the key information and validation processes.

The consultation document can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tax-free-childcare>

New Flexibilities for Opening Nurseries

The Department for Communities and Local Government is running a consultation regarding proposals that will extend the planning relaxations recently agreed for schools to nurseries. If the proposals go ahead, premises that are currently used as offices, hotels, residential institutes, non-residential institutions, some agricultural buildings, leisure buildings and assembly buildings will be able to be converted into nurseries without a full planning application being submitted first. The idea is to speed up and simplify the process for opening new nurseries. The consultation is available here and is open until 15th October:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/greater-flexibilities-for-change-of-use>

In Practice... Partnering with Parents to Support Two Year Olds

By Eleanor Jones

September is upon us and many settings will be taking in more two-year-olds, in line with the new government offer. For those settings who have previously had mainly older children, it is important to think about the particular needs of two-year-olds and how to support them. Partnership with parents is key here. Here are some ideas of how to do this effectively:

- Strong links between home and the setting are crucial for the emotional security of young children. In addition to early relationship building, sharing edited highlights of the day with parents and enabling parents to bring in tangible links from home can really support this.
- Sharing and discussing children's early phrases with parents can help illuminate the child's growing observation, imitation and expressive skills.
- Two-year-olds often use their own, ungrammatical 'pivot words' as a tool to communicate, for example 'shoe me', 'apple me', 'nogoin juice', 'nogoin nightnight'. Discussing these with parents are a great way of communicating about traits personal to the child, as well as reassuring parents who think their child is talking nonsense to realise that they are a valuable tool for communication.
- Modeling positive ways of interaction can be a powerful form of non-verbal partnership with parents. For example, you could model your use of mathematical skills when interacting with children or model how you support children's language skills.
- In line with this, it is important that parents see developmentally appropriate practice in your setting and that you share this with them when they ask you how their child is learning.

References:

Lindon, J. (2012), *What does it mean to be two? What every practitioner needs to understand about the development of two-year-olds*, London: Practical Pre-School Books



Let's Celebrate!

What could we be celebrating this month?

- 16th: Owain Glyndwr Day (Wales)
- 19th: Talk Like a Pirate Day
- 29th: Michaelmas



Why Get Messy?

By Polly Bolshaw

As the EYFS states, some of the characteristics of effective learning, within *Playing and Learning* are “using senses to explore the world around them” and “engaging in open-ended play”. Messy play provides the ideal opportunity to do this, as well as giving the chance to develop in a wide range of ways. Barking and Dagenham Portage describe three stages of messy play, namely:

1. Messy play using hard and dry materials

Exploring textures that are hard and dry are the first step in messy play, as these textures will be the most familiar to children and so children are most likely to respond positively to them. Some things you could use: tea leaves, uncooked rice, uncooked pasta, rice crispies, cornflakes, porridge oats, shredded paper, bark, sand, hay.



2. Messy play using soft textures

The next step to messy play is introducing soft textures that are still dry. You could also put wet materials (see below) in zip-lock bags so that children can experience the texture in a “clean” way. Some things you could use: cooked rice, cooked pasta, cooked noodles, play dough, balloons, soft material (like velvet or satin), flour.

3. Messy play using wet and sticky textures

The next step to messy play is introducing soft textures that are still dry. You could also put wet materials (see below) in zip-lock bags so that children can experience the texture in a “clean” way. Some things you could use: water, jelly, Angel Delight, custard, shaving foam, wet cereal, cooked porridge, mud, gloop (cornflour and water).



But how can messy play aid children’s learning and development? Add different sizes of containers so that children can explore measurements and concepts of more and less. Add materials such as pasta and rice to role play scenarios to develop imaginative and creative skills. Use dry materials such as flour or tea leaves with brushes, spoons or vehicles to encourage mark-making. As open-ended resources, the opportunities created in messy play are numerous – follow the stages set out above to ensure children become as ease with the materials, and let them investigate and explore.

References

Barking and Dagenham Portage (no date) *Messy Play*. London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Available: <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/ChildrenAndYoungPeople/Portage/Documents/portage-messy-play.pdf>. [Accessed 30th August 2013]

Hogbin, T. (2008) *Active Learning Through Messy Play*. Childhood 101. Available: <http://childhood101.com/2012/02/active-learning-through-messy-play/>. [Accessed 30th August 2013]

