Quality and professionalism: the role of the teacher in an increasingly fragmented early years sector

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Initial questions

• What is early education and care for?
• Or who is it for?
• To benefit the child? To help parents with childcare? To compliment the home? To be different? To be a kind of a rescue from the home?
• Care ... or education?
Some history...

• In England: education of young infants began in the seventeenth century

• Main rationales –
  – educational, so that children could learn their alphabet before starting instruction in school (Cunningham, 1977),
  – pragmatic, enabling women to work (Burnette, 1998)
  – moral, either promoting more enlightened ways of bringing up children without force or coercion (Owen, 1824) or imposing hygiene practices (Lown, 1990).
• Early 20th Century: Christian Socialists like Rachel and Margaret McMillan who observed “children creeping on the filthy pavement, half naked, unwashed and covered with sores” (cited in Cusden, 1938, p.8).

• In 1914, the McMillan sisters founded an open-air nursery school in Deptford

• A radical vision of an early childhood for city infants situated in a beautiful and ordered environment including gardens, greenhouses, art and music, and a strong focus on the child’s autonomy.
• Susan Isaacs ran the Malting House School in the 1930s for children from the age of 2 – by contrast with the McMillans, mostly affluent families.

• Isaacs worked very closely with Melanie Klein to develop the first psychoanalytic theories about infants that were based on detailed observations (rather than recall in adulthood).
History...

- Isaacs developed a theoretical model for the child’s inner development through play and nursery experiences.
- She emphasised the benefits of children having space and autonomy in order to develop their thinking and their creativity.
History...

• Anna Freud left Vienna and opened the Hampstead wartime nursery in the 1940s.

• Like McMillan, Freud argued that nursery education for children from the age of two years old could provide “inestimable value as an addition to the opportunities for stimulation and growth which are only too often lacking in individual families”

• (Freud, 1974, pp. XX-XXI).
• However, whilst McMillan and Isaacs emphasised the child’s creativity, expressiveness and play in early education, Freud put her main emphasis on the caring relationship between adult and child.
John Bowlby

- Bowlby (1951, p.11): “the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.”
John Bowlby

• Bowlby argued in favour of nurseries which supplemented maternal care in families under stress so that the child could be kept out of full-time institutional care.

• But – in the period after WW2, Bowlby was cited in support of policy to discourage women from working and the closure of the wartime nurseries.
1960s: Plowden Report

- “some mothers who are not obliged to work may work full-time, regardless of their children’s welfare. It is no business of the educational service to encourage these mothers to do so” (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967, p.127).
Plowden Report

• Nursery education should be provided in a very specific form: for children aged between three and five years old, and for just a part of the day, making a distinction between childcare and education

• “the day nursery is the proper place for those children who have to be away from their homes before the age of three. An institution with a more directly educational aim is right for children of three and over.” (ibid, p.122)
1970s and 1980s

Research and discussion of nursery childcare in England for children up to the age of three is concerned with the provision of safe and healthy physical care – not early education or play – with a focus on structure and organisation.
1970s and 1980s: relationships

• Jack and Barbara Tizard (1971, p.159): “close relationships should not be allowed to develop” in nursery childcare as emotional detachment is inevitable.
The key person approach

- Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson (1994, p.10) – state that their “theoretical position has its origins in Bowlby’s seminal work on attachment and loss (Bowlby, 1969/82)”;
Breaking down the distinctions?

• The Rumbold Report (DFE, 1990, p.9): “care and education for the under fives are complementary and inseparable”.

• EYFS 2006: the “ending of the distinction between care and learning and between birth-to-three and three-to-five provision”
Early Excellence Programme

• Early Excellence (1997) was the government programme to integrate early education, care, health services and family support.

• Leads into other holistic policy/provision e.g. Children’s Centres, Every Child Matters.
Bringing together education and care

- Smith (1999): “a close and nurturing adult-child relationship ... is necessary for intersubjectivity, which allows the caregiver to judge how much the child already knows and understands, so that she can provide appropriate scaffolding to extend development.”
A strong legacy...a challenging legacy

• The Labour Years have left a strong legacy: integrating services, early intervention, bringing investment in early years services closer to European averages.

• But there are major challenges now: some from this legacy, some from coalition policy and cuts.
Quantity...or quality?

In the 1997-2010 period there was often more focus on *quantity* than *quality*.

Acceptance now by key figures like Margaret Hodge that more should have been done in the area of qualifications and professional development.
A second set of questions

• What do we know about quality in the early years ... how can we help children and their families to have the best possible experience of early education and care?

• How we are we doing at the moment?

• What is the role of teachers?

• What role could the NUT be playing?
Quality

• Despite major expenditure, and many major successes, in some respects the outcomes have been disappointing.
• Provision for children in the poorest areas has not improved enough.
• Evidence of effectiveness of some major investments e.g. graduate leadership, free places for two-year olds is mixed.
**Ofsted Early Years Inspection judgements:** "How well does the setting meet the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?"

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The national picture is also very challenging


• Scotland - (Woolfson and King, 2008, p.61): “while the intervention group was indeed progressing well between the two time periods ... its progress was not significantly different from that of the comparison group who did not attend the intervention programme.”
The national challenge

• Smith *et al* (2009, p. 95) compare their findings with the data from the evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative: “provision quality for disadvantaged young children has not improved significantly since the NNI data was collected in 2004/5.”
Qualifications

• More than half a billion pounds were spent between 2006 and 2011 to increase the numbers of graduates working in private and voluntary early years settings (Mathers et al, 2011, p.5).
• This appears not to have had any measurable effect on the quality of early years education and care for children up to the age of three by 2009.
• There has been a positive impact for 3 & 4 year olds
Qualified teachers

• The government removed the requirement for Children’s Centres to have a qualified teacher in order to “reduce bureaucracy” in 2010.


• The new “Early Years Teacher Status” is not equivalent to qualified teacher status; EYTs will not be able to teach in maintained schools and they are very likely to be paid a lot less than those with QTS.
Nutbrown Review

• The government commissioned an independent review of Early Years Qualifications, the Nutbrown Review
Recommenda*ons

Nutbrown Review

FOUNDATIONS FOR QUALITY

The independent review of early education and childcare qualifications

Final Report

• Reform and improve the Level 3 qualification
• Improve opportunities for continuing professional development
• Take action to ensure that black and ethnic minority practitioners are not being excluded from senior roles
• Create a new “early years teacher” qualification covering the full EYFS age range, from birth.

June 2012

Not implemented.
What’s effective...?

• The EPPE report found that nursery schools, and integrated centres based around nursery schools, were the most effective forms of early years provision.

• They found a substantial benefit to children when qualified teachers were employed to lead the provision and work directly with the children.
EPPE is consistent with international research

• It is now very well-evidenced that high-quality early education integrated with care has lifelong benefits for children, especially for the most disadvantaged.

• The EPPE Project has evidenced this for children to the age of 16.

• In the US, the Perry Preschool Project has evidenced this to the age of 40
Perry Preschool Findings (1)

Figure 1
Major Findings: High/Scope Perry Preschool Study at 40

- Arrested 5+ times by 40: Program group 36%, No-program group 55%
- Earned $20K+ at 40: Program group 40%, No-program group 60%
- Graduated high school: Program group 77%, No-program group 60%
- Basic achievement at 14: Program group 49%, No-program group 60%
- Homework at 15: Program group 61%, No-program group 38%
- IQ 90+ at 5: Program group 28%, No-program group 67%
Perry Preschool Findings (2)
But...

- It is only **high-quality** early education and care that makes a difference.
- In the UK, maintained nursery schools are an important part of that high-quality provision.
- Early Education has estimated that over 100 Nursery Schools have closed since 1999, leaving just over 400 still open (and many of these are very vulnerable).
Ofsted

• In its latest Early Years Report, Ofsted recognises both the importance of our high-quality maintained nursery schools, and the importance of having qualified teachers working in the early years
Ofsted findings

• Nursery schools are the only part of the school system which performs “as strongly in deprived areas as more affluent ones”.

• “Looking only at the overall judgements given, nursery schools perform considerably better than other types of early years provision.”
Sir Michael Wilshaw

“Unfortunately, even when the most disadvantaged do access early years provision they rarely find the support they need because too many practitioners are afraid to, or simply don’t know how to, teach.

Conversely, practitioners trained as teachers are much less likely to hold this fear.”
Sir Michael Wilshaw

“Year after year, Ofsted has tried to persuade the sector to focus on learning, but our success has only been partial. As long as many in early years provision continue to believe that teaching is separate from play, those children most in need of help will continue to fall behind.”

An unsure start, 2014
But ... more challenges...

• The DFE/Ofsted agenda is putting pressure on many schools and teachers to bring in more formal approaches to the EYFS

• The proposed “baseline assessment” at the beginning of reception will undervalue the earlier assessment work by nursery teachers and other practitioners; cause undue anxiety in children; lead to a large, new workload for reception teachers at a time that is already very challenging for them – when they are settling in children new to school. It will also be unreliable.

• [http://juliangrenier.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/baseline-assessment-in-reception-five.html#gpluscomments](http://juliangrenier.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/baseline-assessment-in-reception-five.html#gpluscomments)
Possible directions for the NUT?

• Focus on quality, including defending the role of qualified teachers and protecting maintained nursery schools.

• But unity is vital in the early years – great danger of “divide and rule”.

• Avoid an inter-sector war of attrition: focus together with other organisations on quality. Avoid setting nursery classes against nursery schools, or nursery schools/classes against the rest of the early years sector.
Possible directions for the NUT?

• Similar danger of an inter-professional war between qualified teachers (QTS) and early years teachers (EYTS). Standing together for quality and equality would involve:
  – Backing the Nutbrown Review and calling upon political parties to implement its recommendations;
  – Focusing on the Nutbrown recommendation that there should be equality in pay, conditions and prospects for all teachers in the Early Years. Those without QTS should be offered a funded conversion route to attain QTS. Many of those practitioners are excellent, an asset to the field, and are underpaid and undervalued.
Final thought (1)

• Much of the public discourse has been about “investment” and not about children or early education

• “Children are too often viewed as economic investments, ‘products’ for the future. The child must have the opportunity to be as well as become”.

• Philip Gammage (2003, p.349)
Early Education is *the* national organisation which focuses first and foremost on the quality of provision for the child.

We represent all parts of the early years sector, including schools, Children’s Centres, settings and childminders.

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