



Documentation in ECEC settings: research perspectives

The National Quality Standard reminds educators and educational leaders that an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning must underpin the educational program, and that the cycle must be underpinned by critical thinking about what opportunities are offered and why.

When carried out with intention and reflective capacity, the documentation of children's learning becomes a powerful tool for educators to evaluate the learning journeys of children in the service, children's strengths, abilities and insights, and to enhance future planning.

This summary exists to share with nominated supervisors, educators, coordinators and other interested people, some recent research perspectives about the role of quality documentation and documentation practices in the delivery of high quality education and care services.

Recent perspectives

Recent perspectives about documentation in Early Childhood Education and Care include:

- ➔ The emerging trend toward documentation that moves from functional and administrative (such as policies, nappy changing, sleep schedules, and "raw" observations, to which no lens of reflection or interpretation is applied) to pedagogical (all documentation that has pedagogy as its focus). In pedagogical documentation, the documentation itself becomes the content, and the pedagogy the process.
- ➔ Represents progress over time
- ➔ Conceptual approach sees children viewed as powerful and active in the learning process, and documentation therefore involves more than the educator collecting work samples completed by a child (Broadman, 2007)
- ➔ When educators seek ways of documenting learners-in-action they are 'shifting their model of assessment from one in which assessment sits outside learning to one in which assessment is integral to the enhancement of learning' (Carr, 2005).
- ➔ Documentation = teacher research
- ➔ Documentation = making learning visible

So what do these perspectives mean for nominated supervisors, educators, and coordinators?

They mean that now, more than ever before, leadership of services isn't something that happens in isolation. Much of the recent work on leadership in early childhood has focused on the idea the leadership is dynamic and collaborative, with leaders being seen less as those who hold all the knowledge, and more as those who facilitate growth and exploration within a service. Increasingly, the role of the leader within the service is to support, challenge and guide educators as they grow in their understandings of philosophy, principle and pedagogy.

Leadership in the context of education and care services is dynamic and evolving, and educational leaders, directors, area managers etc are learning and growing alongside educators, children and families. Leaders are called upon to recognise the individual and group strengths of their teams, and to tailor their support and engagement to meet these needs. This support involves too a deep knowing of the self as a leader, as well as a willingness to embrace change and to explore, thinking critically about how one defines oneself as a leader, what leadership means for yourself and your service.

The link between leadership and high quality service delivery is linked closely with the underpinning concepts of critical reflection and reflective practice. The connection between reflection, professional learning and quality practice is found in many contemporary policy and curriculum documents. For example, the Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) identifies reflective practice and ongoing learning as an underpinning principle for quality practice and places emphasis on the power of collaborative reflective practice to enhance thinking and practice.

Leaders need to be confident, not only in their leadership, but also in their willingness to seek and explore further perspectives, as new information comes to hand. Leaders also need to collaborate with other leaders, as well as members of their team, in order to consult and embrace challenges as they arise in a leadership context. Communication is also a key element of successful leadership, with effective leaders paying close attention to communication styles, methods and responses, as well as building good communication channels with other leaders, inside and outside the sector, to grow and challenge their ideas and thinking. ■

Further Resources

To access more resources around leadership in the IPSP online library (www.ipsplibrary.net.au), search for terms such as "leadership", "change" or "leader". For other ideas and perspectives, you could search for "challenge" or "communication", and for information on working with families, try searching "families" or "parent"

Read more about leadership from:

ACECQA – the role of the educational leader:

<http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/Information%20sheets/Portal%20The%20role%20of%20the%20educational%20leader%20-%20information%20sheet%20PDF%20version.pdf>

Leadership in Early Childhood – e book by Jillian Rodd:

<http://ir.nmu.org.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/130657/41868f122d7385e1240745e73fd4bf62.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Dimensions of Pedagogical Leadership in ECEC:

http://ilrfec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/art_10Fonsen.pdf

If you would like further support, please email the project officer, at enquiries@gowriesa.org.au

References

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Educator Researcher poster series

Siraj-Blackford, I & Manni, L 2007, *Effective Leadership in the Early Years Sector: The ELEYS Study*, Institute of Education Press, London

Stamopoulos, E, 'Building Early Childhood Leadership Capacity through Professional Knowledge, an Interpretive Lens, Courage and Relational Trust', *Reflections*, Issue 44, pp. 11 - 13