Key features of Froebel’s approach

A Froebelian approach to early childhood encompasses:

- self-directed play
- respect for children and their ideas
- the centrality of nature and the community
- self-expression and creativity

For more information about the research findings, please contact:

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Research aim and objectives

The key aim of the project was to explore the following question:

What are the opportunities for protecting and extending Froebelian principles in practice through policy interventions?

From the aim we developed the following research objectives:

1. How does localism impact on enactment of Froebelian principles?
2. How has practitioner’s early years education and training informed their understanding and enactment of learning through play?
3. What form of policy intervention in early years practitioners’ education and/or training could protect and extend Froebelian principles in practice?

Turn over for a summary of the key findings

Enacting Froebelian principles in practice

Key findings for early years practitioners and managers
**Influence of localism & professionalism**

- Localism influenced access to higher education in rural, urban and suburban locations
- The local area shaped the sorts of opportunities available for higher education with far more choice for participants in urban locations
- Prohibitive travel time and expense to access higher education for those in rural areas
- Uneven access to high quality higher education in different areas

**Views on professionalism:**

- Practitioners think about professionalism in terms of relationships with children
- Theoretical understanding is separate from practice
- Qualification-based divisions in early years teams
- Paper qualifications tend to over-ride practical experience
- Capable but unqualified practitioners are undermined

**The importance of play**

- Play was described by practitioners as an essential part of children’s cognitive, social and emotional development
- Froebelian ideas were implicit in the practitioner’s pedagogical practice. Explicit knowledge of Froebel was limited

**Practitioner challenges of providing opportunities for play:**

- Lack of time and space for play
- Policy context that marginalises play
- Schoolification (emphasis on testing and targets) of Early Years
- Differences in parental understanding of the value of play for preschool children and babies

**Friedrich Froebel, 1782-1852**

**Recommendations & policy interventions**

- Explicit reference should be made to the work of Froebel in BA and Level 2 & 3 qualifications, particularly ideas around learning through play
- Tensions between graduates and non graduates could be eased by a policy to provide ‘developmental professionalism’ – education aimed at developing professionals from where they are in their practice
- To strengthen the link between theory and practice by providing rigorous accessible training for all practitioners regardless of their local context