

Reconceptualising professional development in ECEC

*Practitioners' impressions of identity,
professional development and
professionalism*

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Presentation Elements

- A Froebelian lens
- Fragmented systems
- Study Design and methodology
- Preliminary data

A Froebelian lens?

A Froebelian lens  looking at practitioners in a holistic way



PLD is interpreted as a system building on Froebelian principles of like mindedness, autonomy, and fostering companionship.

*“Regarding development and education as a static and isolated process is extremely disadvantageous”
(Froebel, 1906)*

Fragmented Systems

The UK

- Private
- Public
- Volunteer
- Nurseries
- Holiday play/After school
- Children centres

(DfE, 2010)

Italy

- Asilo nido (0-3 years old)
- Scuola dell'infanzia (3-6 years old)
- Compulsory schooling starts at 6 years old with the scuola primaria (6-11 years old)

(Balduzzi and Lazzari, 2015)

PLD context

The UK

- Providers' duty to support staff with their training and development by participating in 'appropriate' initiatives (DfE, 2017)
- No set number of minimum hours
- Courses are both during the week and at weekends or inset days.

Italy

- The educators by law have 20 hours minimum of compulsory professional development and learning courses that they have to complete each year.
- The courses are usually at weekends no inset days and the nurseries don't think it is appropriate to have bank staff to cover.

Principal Research Question

How can Professional Learning and Development in Early Childhood Education and Care be conceptualised through a Froebelian lens in light of contemporary PLD practices in Tuscany and London?

Methodology

Two 'freestanding-but-related case studies'

Documentary research



Semi-structured interviews



Focus Groups

*Semi-structured interviews Italy
London*



Focus Group

*Semi-structured interviews London
Group Italy*



Focus

The Participants

San Miniato, Italy

- 10 Early Childhood professionals in a variety of roles
- Working in the field between 5 and 38 years with the majority having around 10 years of experience
- All women
- Variety of qualifications

London, UK

- 10 Early Childhood professionals in a variety of roles
- Working in the field between 1 and 30 years with the majority having less than 10 years experience
- 9 women and 1 man
- Variety of qualifications

Working with children

‘Stare con I bambini e’ come un gomitolo di relazioni’

Being with children its like a ball of yarn of relationships

‘When I care for children I put myself in the position of a mother, there are children that need to be comforted and supported and their mum is not here, so I am here and I will support them in the same way that I support my own children’

‘Working in Early Years is like a vocation for me’

Why did you decide to work with children?

- Deep and personal motives, sprung from personal reflections

'I decided to work with children because I have children of my own and I have the right experience'

'Io non sono mai stata amante dei bambini finche' non ho avuto la mia prima figlia' (I never liked children until I had my first one)

- Like being around children

'E' stata una scelta naturale, e' una predisposizione' (It was a natural choice, I believe that I am predisposed to work with children)

- By chance

'Era un lavoro come un altro all'inizio' (It was just another job at the beginning)

Do you have any specific values that underpin how you interact with children?

- Respect for the child and for the families
- Seeing children as competent and active
- Seeing children as being autonomous
- Give the children equal opportunities to learn
- I want to be their advocate
- I start from where the children are and build from there
- Always being surprised

What is professionalism?

- The way you interact with other people
- Nothing has to be improvised
- Following the rules of the profession
- Being fair and available, not being 'too friendly' with the families and children, having some boundaries. Not being a baby sitter
- When I know the policies of the setting

'La professionalita' e' uno zaino pieno di attrezzi e di etica

Professionalism is like a backpack full of tools and ethics

The importance of PLD initiatives

- Fundamental, so we are never static in our knowledge
- Without professional development we risk of being anchored in the past and this is not good
- We can never say to know everything, we are always learning
- Its very tiring but it helps to adjust the focus of our work
- It's a reminder of what we know that makes us better in our role.

'Its not just about working with children, we also need to get further insights you need to know what underpins your work'

Thank you for listening

Any questions or
suggestions, please
don't be shy!

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