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| Institution: Anglia Ruskin University |
| Unit of Assessment: UoA 25 Education |
| Title of case study: Influencing early childhood policy and developing playful pedagogy |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Identifying and promoting best practice in the education of young children, this case study focuses on local, national and international policy and practice in two linked areas: children's learning and staff professional development. It underpins national strategy for England, Northern Ireland and Wales and informs international curriculum developments. We have made a significant impact on children's lives through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shaping and dissemination of playful pedagogies and outdoor learning initiatives which have been adopted by early years practitioners in schools nationally and recognised internationally • evaluation of workplace practice leading to improvements in early years settings which have led to changes in employers' policy and practice • strategic alliances with Cambridgeshire, Essex and Northamptonshire Local Authorities, impacting on early years practice. |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Our early childhood research comprises two strands that are both discrete and intertwined. One strand develops effective pedagogies for young children, particularly through children's participation in classroom research, and through play and outdoor learning. The second examines and evaluates the professional learning and development of staff in the Early Years sector.</p> <p>Moyles et al. explored teachers' understanding and use of 'interactive teaching' (ESRC-funded Study of Primary Interactive Teaching project (1999-2001)). 'Interactive teaching' had already been identified as a characteristic of 'successful teaching' in the National Literacy Strategy (1999). This collaborative research led to a larger-scale, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) funded, 'Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning' (SPEEL, 2002) [1] that was co-ordinated by Moyles. The main outcome of the research was the development of the 'Framework for Effective Pedagogy' that provides a rounded set of core competencies identifying the effective practitioner/pedagogue role and its many components. The research also established that reflective and responsive adult-child interaction is the foundation to children's wellbeing. Before 1996 there was no national curriculum framework for the Early Years. The framework was developed in stages with successive revisions in 2000, 2008 and 2012, with the 2002 SPEEL Study being fundamental to establishing the core competencies of an effective Early Years practitioner role in delivering it.</p> <p>SPEEL was the first Governmental project in England to establish the characteristics required by the early years workforce, and thus directly contributed to a formalisation of the role of the practitioner in delivering the curriculum in the early years setting. At the same time Anglia Ruskin University's Early Childhood Research Group was formed around Moyles' influential work on effective pedagogy and play. This stimulated a key strand of research in relational (playful) pedagogy that resulted, in 2010, in a British Academy sponsored international conference. Focussing on Curriculum, Policy and Pedagogy, the keynote speaker was Professor Lillian Katz, a renowned world-wide expert, publishing, lecturing and teaching in early years. Selected papers were published in the book <i>Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Early Childhood</i> (2012) [2] that showcases the practice-focused research of staff (Cooper, Kanyal, Druce, Jennings, Knight, Luff, Moyles, Papatheodorou, Such, Wright) along with international colleagues.</p> <p>The role of play in the curriculum was a focus of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) introduced by the Government Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA 2000). In 2001, Moyles developed Statements of Entitlement to Play (StEPs), a self-assessment tool still used by practitioners and local authorities across the UK. Moyles contributed to a review, 'Inside the Foundation Stage: Recreating the reception year' (2004) [3] tasked to examine the impact in reception classes of the change to a more play-based pedagogy. This review, funded by the</p> |

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Association of Teachers and Lecturers, identified a 'rhetoric gap' between aspiration and practice. It also supported practitioners in reflecting on, and enhancing their understanding of, the principles underpinning the Early Years curriculum changes and in developing practice through continuing professional development based on the study.

Examining agency in childhood, Waller and Knight investigate and advise on how practitioners can develop the skills needed to facilitate children's participation. Knight's expertise, drawn from her practice and best-selling 'Forest School' book series, conceptualises Forest Schools for an international audience (2011), by stressing its singularity within the 'outdoor play' genre [4]. Founder of a Special Interest Group for this area, Waller collaborates with 92 key practitioners within the European Early Childhood Education Research Association. This collaboration has already produced two special editions on outdoor play and learning in international peer-reviewed journals.

Having commenced the research at the University of Wolverhampton, Waller remained a key contributor to the national Children's Workforce Development Council funded evaluation of the new graduate award of Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) at Anglia Ruskin University. Davis, with Essex local authority funding, carried out a three-year real-time (2010-13) assessment of the impact of Early Years Professionals' work on positive outcomes for children in local nurseries [5]. The study assessed whether Early Years Professionals (EYPs) in Essex are enabling outcomes in each of the five 'Every Child Matters' areas and demonstrated that, in their work with parents and staff, EYPs are making an impact in the area of economic wellbeing.

Key researchers

Dr Geraldine Davis, Principal Lecturer (2010-present)

Janet Moyles, Professor of Education (1999-2003), Emeritus Professor (2003-present)

Sara Knight, Principal Lecturer Early Years (2004-present)

Tim Waller, Professor of Child and Family Studies (2011-present)

3. References to the research

[1] **Moyles, J.**, Adams, S. and Musgrove, A. (2002) *SPEEL: Study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning*, RR 363. London: DfES. (available from HEI on request)

[2] **Papatheodorou, T.** and **Moyles, J.** (2012) *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Early Childhood*. London: Sage. [Includes selected outputs from conference funded by British Academy grant award number CSG: 55280]. (available from HEI on request)

[3] Adams, S., Alexander, E., Drummond, M.J. and **Moyles, J.** (2004) *Inside the Foundation Stage: Recreating the reception year*. Available at:
www.atl.org.uk/Images/Inside%20the%20foundation%20stage.pdf

[4] **Knight, S.** (2011) Forest School as a way of learning in the outdoors in the UK. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education*, Special Issue 1(1): 590-595. (available from HEI on request)

[5] **Davis, G.** (2012) A documentary analysis of the use of leadership and change theory in changing practice in early years settings. *Early Years, an International Journal of Research and Development*, 32(3): 266-276. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2011.638278>.

Quality of the research

The outputs listed are all published in peer reviewed academic journals/books and all authors consistently published in highly rated journals. Before funding proposals are submitted, Anglia Ruskin University requires a rigorous peer review process. Essex County Council research funding (Early Years Evaluation) was successfully obtained via a blind peer review process.

Funded research

Moyles, J., Adams, S. and Musgrove, A. (2002) see [1] above (c. £150,000).

Moyles, J., Hargreaves, L. and Merry, R. (2001) *The Development of Primary Teachers' Understanding and Use of Interactive Teaching. End of award report* (ROOO 238200). Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council.

Davis, G. and **Capes P.** (2013) *Early Years Professional Status Impact Study, Final Report*

Achieving outcomes in Essex. Report for Essex County Council. Anglia Ruskin University.
 Accessible at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10540/295428> £170,000

4. Details of the impact

Our research has a two-fold impact on early childhood education. At a strategic level it contributes to theoretical knowledge and informs national policy. At regional and local levels, our ideas are translated into practice through our support for local authority and school-based training and continuing professional development. Thematically, it centres on Professional Development itself, and Outdoor Learning particularly through the Forest School Movement.

Developing Professionals

The SPEEL competencies, contributing to Practice, Principles or Professionalism, are incorporated within the Key Elements of Effective Practice document. This official tool was developed to assist English local authorities in auditing and strengthening the impact of training of the early years workforce. Imported into the curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008; DfE, 2012), these competencies now inform continuing professional development, job descriptions, service level agreements, and evaluation processes. Additionally, the Children's Workforce Strategy for 2020 (DCSF, 2008) [A] acknowledges SPEEL's assessment of the difficulties surrounding parental involvement. The associated training package supported the transition of children between Foundation Stage and Key Stage One (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2011) [B] and cites SPEEL as key underpinning research.

The development of the 'Essex Effective Pedagogy Evaluation Scheme' at Essex County Council, informed by Moyles' research, enabled further collaboration with Essex and Cambridgeshire County Councils and Southend Borough Council. This resulted in 'The Effective Leadership and Management Scheme' (ELMS), the development of which was funded by the European Social Fund. Widely used for in-service training in Essex, these tools are available nationally as a continuing reference point for leaders and managers. A tool for all those in early years settings, it enables the evaluation of an individual's effectiveness as a leader/manager. Its purpose is to ensure that children and practitioners receive the best possible experiences and direction in their work and play, and that parents and carers can have confidence in the particular setting attended by their children. Additionally, the outcomes from the 2010 British Academy sponsored international Conference on Curriculum, Policy and Pedagogy, with the resulting book, informed practitioners of new techniques to facilitate children's participation in classroom research, observation and assessment strategies to promote educative experiences. On a national level, Moyles' research informed the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators (TACTYC) response (2011) to the EYFS Government consultation [C]. Beyond English educational settings, Moyles' research influenced policy developments: the Early Years Foundation phase in Wales; ELMS is listed as a 'key document' in a review of resources for leadership development on the official Scottish learning and teaching website (Dunlop, 2008) [D]; The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) (Greishaber, 2010), and, most recently, the National Professional Development model for the early years workforce in Northern Ireland (McMillan et al, 2012: 400) [E].

The Anglia Ruskin University Early Childhood team continue to collaborate with Cambridgeshire, Essex and Northamptonshire Local Authorities to support professional development and effective practice. For example, Davis' impact study with Essex County Council (2010-2013) shows that this is making a difference to outcomes for 'Every Child Matters' areas for children in Essex. The research found the EYPS graduate award has had a positive impact on children, parents and staff and there was a strong, positive correlation between the employment of EYPs and higher Ofsted ratings. Reports in the specialist press (Nursery World 3 May 2013, viewed by 120,000 individuals each month [F]; and Daynurseries.co.uk, 29 May 2013, 11,500 users – day nurseries [G]) demonstrate a national interest in its message that local authority support is 'essential' for developing professionalism. Waller (2012) gave a keynote presentation on the benefits of outdoor play and learning for children and adults to 300 participants at the Essex Early Years Professionals Annual Conference and is now collaborating with a number of schools to develop their outdoor spaces.

Outdoor Learning and Forest School initiatives

Knight set up Forest School training programmes throughout the REF period that prepared over 100 practitioners and teachers per year, to establish and maintain Forest Schools locally. Each teacher works with a nominal class of 25 so this, cumulatively, represents a considerable impact on children. Where children have had Forest School experience, teachers report improvements in children's concentration, motivation, social skills and communication that are observable over time [H]. One local teacher, trained by Knight and inspired by her publications, has been nominated for a national Learning Outside the Classroom award by his school [1], whilst another has started a Suffolk Forest School Network. Nationally, Knight is Deputy Chairman of the Forest School Association. In this role she has addressed Heads of Outdoor Centres at their annual conference (2012), led practitioner training in Keswick, Cambridgeshire and Worcestershire, and contributed to training DVDs for Somerset and Surrey County Councils. Following the impact of her research in the UK, Knight was invited to participate in the 2011 European Outdoor Learning and Adventure Education conference in Finland to explain to European practitioners what Forest School has achieved in the UK. This is summarised in a German text written for a European practitioner audience [I]. Following a Canadian lecture tour (2011), Knight was invited to join a national round table to develop Canadian Principles of Practice, a guiding document for national education policy and standards of practice in relation to Forest School.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] DCSF (2008) *2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy: Evidence & Knowledge Management: A Report for the 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy Expert Group by the CWDC, NCSL & TDA*. Available Online: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10601/>

[B] QCA (2011) *Continuing the Learning Journey: Training package*. Available Online: <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2011/11/continuing-the-learning-journey/>

[C] <http://www.tactyc.org.uk/pdfs/view-EYFS-Consultation-response-final.pdf>

[D] Dunlop, A-W. (2008) *A Literature Review on Leadership in the Early Years*. Learning and Teaching Scotland. Available Online: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/publications/a/leadershippreview.asp>

[E] McMillan, D.J., Walsh, G., Gray, C., Hanna, K., Carville, S. and McCracken, O. (2012) Changing Mindsets: The benefits of implementing a professional development model in early childhood settings in Ireland. *Professional Development in Education*, 38(3): 395-410, DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2011.637226.

[F] Gaunt, C. (2013) LA support vital for EYP development. *Nursery World*, 3 May 2013. Available Online: <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/news/1097764/la-support-vital-eyp-development>

[G] Learner, S. (2013) Nurseries with Early Years Professionals get higher Ofsted ratings. *Daynurseries.co.uk*, 29 May. Available Online: <http://www.daynurseries.co.uk/news/article.cfm/id/1560065/nurseries-with-early-years-professionals-get-higher-ofsted-ratings>

[H] <http://www.lotc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Inspiring-educator-shortlist-blogs-updated.pdf>.

[I] Knight, S. (2013) What is Forest School? A discussion of the development of Forest School in the UK. In Becker, P., Schirp, J., and Vollmar, M. (eds) *Abenteuer, Natur und Frühe Bildung*. Germany: Barbara-Budrich-Verlag. Available Online: http://www.eoe-network.eu/fileadmin/PDFs/Zbornik_2010_4.pdf

[1] Head Teacher, John Bunyan Infants School (details available from HEI on request).