
Personal Beliefs, Values And Experiences

When it comes to choosing work placement many factors have to be considered. For example Equality, Diversity and relationships. While on work experience it is important to take into consideration not only your beliefs and values but the ones of the other practitioners and the parents and children who attend the practice. The study of student beliefs can have important implications for teacher education programmes. Evidence suggests that students' beliefs upon entrance into their teacher preparation programme may influence the ways in which students experience their teacher training (Calderhead & Robinson, 1991, Hollingsworth 1989). In order to help students shape their belief systems into those appropriate for working with young children, teacher educators must be aware of students' beliefs and in turn provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and how those beliefs influence their action. (Green 1971, Renzaglia, Hutchins & Lee 1997).

Children in an early childhood setting are both vulnerable and naïve. It is important to note their ways and their beliefs while carrying out various activities with them. Respecting the child while making them feel comfortable and creating a safe, cosy, nurturing and loving environment for them whenever possible. Placing emphasis on the social/emotional health of the child is of primary importance in helping the children to develop a strong positive self image and become capable independent human beings. Children need to feel cared for and loved all the time (all human beings do) but it is essential that children in an early childhood setting are provided this basic need as this is where they spend most of their time. Respect for the children's family beliefs and values is a key factor as essentially, we are the children's first teachers.

It is in fact a necessity to be aware of your own skills and abilities when choosing/entering an early childhood setting. Many of us are not aware of the many skills that we have. There are many skills needed while on the grounds of an early childcare setting, these include Communication skills, Decision making skills, Instructional skills, Patience, Physical stamina, Enthusiasm, Creativity and flexibility. According to the National Association of the Education of young Children, the most important characteristic for teachers of early Childhood development is enthusiasm for children. I believe this is essential as it means that you are wanting to make a difference to each, and every child and you are interested in moulding and shaping the children to the best person they can be. When teachers having a caring outlook on the children they are able to unlock every child's door to learning and overcoming any obstacle that a child may have. Young children are known to have short attention spans and little self-control, which always proves difficult for practitioners to keep them interested and involved. This is a skill in itself. Every child is different, too, making the job even more challenging. This requires patience and good communication skills and working with the children at their level.

While it is important to have good communication skills with the children it is equally as important to be able to communicate effectively with the child's parents. The parents need to be updated regularly about his/her needs, skills, problems and achievements so both parties can help the child without undue emotion. We need to be aware of the families own culture and ethnic background. This is a major factor when teaching children effectively and also when they are engaging in activities that they are aware that not everybody has the same background and beliefs as them. We respect these differences and work with each child's style, rather than

trying to force the children to adapt to other styles. Planning lessons that will engage young children and educate them at the same time takes creativity. Adapting lessons to individual learning styles requires flexibility. This comes into practice when dealing with multicultural classrooms and also with many ethnicities , cultures and traditions.

I myself believe that I have the required skills and abilities for working in an early childcare setting. I am caring, creative, helpful, understanding and also willing to learn more and more about early childcare while doing my work placement. I have past experience of working with children on numerous occasions. I did 3 weeks work experience in a primary school where I spent one week in the main stream classrooms, one week in the autistic unit and one week in the pre school department of the school. This work experience was a huge eye opener for me personally. To see the diversity between the different departments of the school was incredible. This school had many different cultures and races, but this didn't affect how the children saw each other. In their eyes everybody was the same, there was no discrimination or rudeness towards other children, their friends were their friends and that's all that mattered to them. This was all down to the teachers creating equality throughout the school. The set up in the pre school department was truly outstanding, the various stations that they had set up for the children and the amount of activities that were provided was unbelievable. One of the most important things for the teachers in the pre school was taking the children out every day no matter what the weather was like. Each child had a little cupboard with a hook where they hung up their outdoor gear and their wellies were placed underneath that. I noticed every single time the children were taken outside, they felt independent and just loved the freedom of running around and being allowed to get messy. Messy play is extremely important for a child's development. It provides children with an exciting tactile and sensory experience that inspires their curiosity, allows them to explore the world around them and enhances their learning, language and creativity. Children need this time to themselves to recharge and set themselves up for the rest of the day. One thing in particular that you will notice with young children is that they are all unique, no two are the same. They will work away themselves most of the time and even during play time they are happy to let their imagination take over and just go with it. This work experience most certainly changed my outlook on early childhood settings and helped me to change my view on the whole set up.

Another side of experience with children for me was when my parents fostered a little boy called Mihai. This was a major change for my whole family as I have two older brothers and I was the youngest until Mihai came along. We fostered him from the day he was born 5 years ago and it was the best thing that ever happened to my family. Fostering Mihai has really made me change my view on life and not take so much for granted such as having my biological parents and siblings still with me and having that feeling of being loved and cared for. Mihai has been with us since he was born so he has been brought up with our family ways and beliefs. Mihai's biological mother is Romanian so therefore Mihai has quite sallow skin. This was a concern for us as race is a big issue of today, but the playschool accepted this and made sure it was never an issue in the school with other children. He goes to mass with my parents, he understands discipline and rewards and he respects my parents' ways and has respect for others around him. Particularly with Mihai, the difference in him since attending playschool is unbelievable. The knowledge he has about the world around him and the skills and abilities he has learned it incredible. He has really thrived. Early childhood development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health. The experiences children have in early childhood shape the brain and the child's capacity to learn, to get along with others and to respond to daily stresses and challenges. The personal skills and abilities that we portray are vital to us when we are

choosing our work placement and also when we are on our work placement.

As well as our direct personal experiences, the way that we were raised and the community and society that we grew up in shapes us. This is because we gain our values and beliefs from our parents, school and wider society. While the impact of personal experiences can be easy to pinpoint, it can be harder to recognise the impact of our values and beliefs. This is because many of us continue to live and work in the community and society in which we were raised. Our beliefs and values may seem 'normal' and so we may not even question the impact of them on our practice. Choosing work placement may seem like an easy task but realistically you have to take many factors into consideration and be conscious and wary of the world around you and the example you are setting for those around you.

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