

The impact on
childrens learning
and development
through the
perception of the pr...



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The aim of this assignment is to explore and discuss how Early Years Practitioners perceive the safeguarding of children and what influences the way it is perceived and implemented.

It is also the aim to discuss how the internal conceptualisation, and external pressures, of factors such as policy, the language used in relation to safeguarding and OFSTED, impact on professional practice and how that impacts on children's learning and development. It will consider, what appears to be an increasing belief that we, as a society, should remove all risk to children creating an insular world of safety. Drawing on reading and other people's research, it will also look at the opposing view of some Early Years professionals and the arguments they put forward in the consideration of risk taking. I work as an Early Years Advisory Teacher supporting a number of Early Years settings in the improvement of quality provision for children's learning and development. This is across a Phase one Children's Centre Reach Area consisting of some maintained Nurseries but is mostly focussed on Private and Voluntary Independent Nurseries. My role is in keeping with the statutory document, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, DCSF 2008).

The settings work towards the Practice Guidance and the statutory framework. The document became mandatory for all settings working with children under five years in September 2008, and came about from the Childcare Act (2006) and is written in line with the Every Child Matters Agenda (2003) which was a result of the inquiry into the Victoria Climbié case (2001). Within the Statutory Framework there is very specific language used. The term 'must' is used throughout and it is very clear about the duty

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of safeguarding, “ The provider ‘ must’ take necessary steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. ” (EYFS Statutory Framework, p.

2 DCSF 2008). The Principles into Practice supports the statement in the ‘ Unique Child’ section by stating that children are ‘ vulnerable’ and that their ‘ physical and psychological well being needs to be protected by adults, (Keeping Safe, EYFS Principles into Practice card 1. 3 DCSF 2008) I come from a maintained school background, where I was employed as a teacher, working for the most of the time in Early Years. Since being in my present post, I have experienced a range of practice in relation to safeguarding children, some of which is in keeping with my own past ‘ school’ experiences and some of which is in contrast.

I will refer to journal entries to give examples of incidents which have raised questions for me in the way safeguarding is interpreted by settings and is impacting on the learning and development of children. The following journal entry is of a Private Day Care Nursery which is in my Children’s Centre Reach Area. The ages of the children are between 2 years 5 years. The following conversation took place during a post OFSTED visit.

A day Care Nursery 2-5. After an OFSTED inspection there was a recommendation for the outdoor area to be developed so the children had the opportunity to “ climb up, over and through”. I raised the manager’s awareness of her entitlement to apply for a grant to improve the outdoor area and suggested to her that she applied for money to purchase equipment that would promote children’s gross motor skills in this way. I guided her toward the type of equipment she could purchase and asked her

what she thought. She said she was reluctant to provide anything that would encourage children to climb for “fear they might fall”.

Also she didn't want to create any areas which children could hide inside, such as tunnels, in case they hit each other when they were not in sight. I suggested she might acquire the clear, perspex type to enable her to see inside. The manager replied that even if she could observe the children, “they might be likely to kick each other in panic if they got stuck”. After a few weeks of strong consideration, the manager has agreed to purchase some equipment but is still very concerned about the consequences and has made the decision to remove two old trees which shed their leaves over the area in which the children play.

The reason given is that the area is made very slippery by the leaf fall and if children were going to climb she needed to reduce the risk. On further discussion, the manager commented on the parents, “What would the parents say if they turned up to find out that their child had fallen?” (Journal entry appendix 1.) Although sympathetic towards the manager's fears, shouldn't it also be recognised that children need to be given the opportunity to take risks within a safe environment? The EYFS states that children should be provided with a range of equipment at different levels such as “overhead ladders and tunnels” (EYFS, Pg. 98. DCSF 2008). Looking back to my own experience in school, the children in the Nursery were given access to much higher and more precarious equipment than anything the manager at this setting is considering.

The children did fall occasionally and learnt to set their own boundaries and recognise what was in their own capabilities, “ learn to avoid dangerous places and equipment” (Development matters, EYFS Pg. 97. 2008). It was encouraged that children were supported in their adventurous play, “ children should, Jump off an object and land appropriately” (Development matters, EYFS Pg. 7.

2008). The EYFS also states that effective practice is to provide opportunities for children to learn about risk so that they can learn to consider their own and others safety. That raised another question in my mind. What do we mean by taking risks in a safe environment? Is anything ever ‘ safe’ enough? Is it possible to take risks in a safe environment? If the environment is safe can risk be taken? Is it that I am basing my expectations on my past experience? Are children being overprotected to such an extent that they are unable to make their own risk assessments? Not only are we not providing children with the tools for them to learn with but we are preventing them from gaining the skills needed to make their own judgements which will actually keep them safe.

If so why do we do this? Could it be that views about safety have become a ‘ truth’ we all accept without question? Is the discourse about safety one that has been accepted and is it now the norm? (Foucault 1984). The setting manager has OFSTED supervising and then the Local Authority advising also. Foucault argues that society controls and that we come to perceive that control as the norm. Is it through a realisation of this being necessary or is it simply a requirement which has been adopted due to pressure from society?

Another question is posed. Why is there such a difference in what seems to <https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-on-childrens-learning-and-development-through-the-perception-of-the-practitioner/>

be acceptable in school and what is acceptable in Private and Voluntary Independent Sector? Could it be simply the fear of consequences? As an educational establishment, schooling is mandatory from the age of 5 years with the majority of children entering into the foundation stage between the ages of three and five years. Professionals in the field of childcare and education have an understanding of children's natural development and what is needed to facilitate their optimum learning.

It could be that, from the perspective of a teaching establishment, it is recognised and valued that children learn through risk taking and that it further facilitates their thinking in other areas of learning. Children need to become independent thinkers and they are more able to do this if they are given opportunities to grow in their confidence and learn that when something doesn't quite work out it can be tackled from a different perspective and that it doesn't mean failure. It is put forward that what is a challenge for one child might simply be a hazard for another due to the broad nature of children's abilities in their development (Stine 1997 in Stephenson 2003). Likewise, if this is the case, then the reverse is true also. What is considered to be a hazard for one child, another child needs in order to be challenged.

Stephenson studied four year old children at play and found that most children chose to take risks (Stephenson, 2003; Beate Hansen Sandseter, 2007). It is put forward that when a child faces a self chosen challenge the result is often a conquered inhibition or fear and is accompanied by self worth and a newly acquired confidence. Stephenson goes on to say that by removing hazards we remove the challenges too. In the context of a private <https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-on-childrens-learning-and-development-through-the-perception-of-the-practitioner/>

day care nursery the emphasis is much more given to the care of the child.

The manager in the journal entry commented on the parents, “ What would the parents say if they turned up to find out that their child had fallen? ”

Therefore, is the emphasis on the consequences? If so, the consequences for who? It is put forward that “ Current practice is more dependent on fears of accusation and litigation than any concerns for a child” (Piper et al.

2006). Social discourse, with regard to safeguarding, is wrapped around physical risk taking and vulnerable children. The pressure from parents can be great and with even greater pressure from establishments such as DCSF and OFSTED. Therefore, should we be considering how we are creating such an anxious profession in which it is becoming too difficult to ‘ risk’ any kind of accusation of neglect? Should it be accepted that everybody has a different perspective or do we consider the consequences of a risk free environment on the development of children? Stephenson puts forward “ Too often the concern to remove all hazards from a playground can inadvertently also lead to the removal of all opportunities for risk taking. For those whose priority is ‘ keeping safe’ this may be a small cost.

” It is further argued that, “ For those who are concerned with wider issues of children’s learning, it is likely to have far more significance. ” (Stephenson, 2003).