

Reflection on an Aspect of Practice/The Role of the Student Practitioner (500 words)

Reflection is vital in the Early Years sector, for students and Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) alike, in order for practice to consistently evolve (Rose & Rogers, 2012). However, it is particularly important for the student practitioner to reflect on their experiences for their own professional development as “we do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience” (Dewey, 1933, p78). I have found behaviour management to be an aspect of practice where the role of the student practitioner can be unclear. Therefore, this short essay seeks to identify this role, aided by a reflection on my experiences of behaviour management in a special educational needs (SEN) setting.

From the outset, my principal role for this placement was clear; to gain practical experience of behaviour management. However, the challenging behaviour presented, serving to put my academic knowledge into practice, quickly became unmanageable by myself as a student. Therefore it is clear to me upon reflection, that experiencing challenging behaviour alone, is not sufficient to improve a student’s practice. Much as the child needs a more knowledgeable other to extend their learning, the student also needs another member of staff to act as a model and guide when support is necessary (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Doolittle, 1997, p85). Therefore, the role of the student is not simply to gain practical experience of challenging behaviour, but to enhance this with additional expertise through designated support systems, such as a work-based mentor (Hallet, 2013). With the support of practitioners in the field, students can feel empowered to deal with challenging behaviour, “raising individual and collective consciousness” of the issue through this discussion (Hallet, 2013, p95).

This leads to another crucial role of the student: to work as part of an effective team. By choosing a non-participatory role, through lack of confidence or ability, the student cannot make a meaningful contribution to the setting as they are not involved in the “participatory educational team” (Figueiredo & Formosinho, 2014, p409). Personally, enabling myself to actively participate in behaviour management by reading the setting’s behaviour policies and discussing individual behaviour plans with staff, not only increased my confidence to deal with challenging behaviour, but raised my level of involvement in the team. This in turn showed the children a united front of “positive role models”, showing appropriate social interactions (Ota & Price, 2014, p1). This also increased the consistency of the behaviour

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management approach, vital for team building and showing the child a clear message, thus improving overall practice in the area of behaviour management (Lindon, 2009).

In conclusion, the key role of the student in the area of behaviour management is to work effectively with the EYPs. By doing this, the children are supported to manage their behaviour through an approach which is upheld by all professionals and cemented in policy. This also enables the student to learn from other practitioners through reflection and discussion, supported themselves by the team. Although this is only a brief discussion on the role of the student in relation to behaviour management, it serves to outline some key factors for further analysis.

References

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