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Professional development of early years educators: achieving systematic, sustainable and transformative change – from what to what?

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Overview

Contexts, approaches, standards and performance: PLD for Early Years Educators

- England and Wales as exemplars
- What are the drivers for PLD?
- What should they be?
- How do we understand 'quality' in PLD in EY contexts?

Conclusion: systematic, sustainable and transformative PLD

Over to you...

A global project...

...to ensure economic productivity and competitiveness (Ball 2013)

Drives ECEC to:

1. Provide childcare for an increase in the (female) workforce (short term)
2. Future productive and competitive workforce (long term)
3. Reduce inequality by improving outcomes for children from disadvantaged circumstances



(UNESCO 2000, 2006, Barnett and Masse 2007, Field 2010, Allen 2011, Barnett and Nores 2012, Heckman and Kautz 2012, all cited in Waters and Payler 2015).

International drivers: OECD

Policy Lever 3

‘ECEC staff play the key role in ensuring healthy child development and learning. Areas for reform include qualifications, initial education, professional development and working conditions’ (OECD 2012: 11).

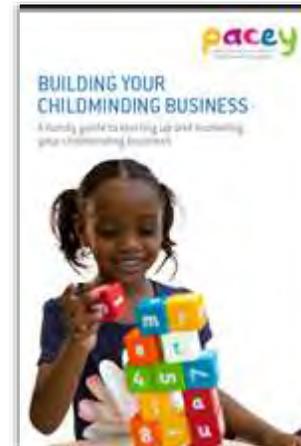
‘The critical element is the way in which staff involve children, stimulate interactions with and between children and use diverse scaffolding strategies. More specialised education and training of staff is found to be strongly associated with stable, sensitive and stimulating interactions in ECEC settings’

(OECD 2012:11).



English context

A word about PLD in the early years context...



Mainly private, voluntary and independent provision

English context – political project

Pre 2010

History - vocational on-the-job training, low level qualifications; poor pay & working conditions

2006 Early Years Professional Status introduced for 'graduate led workforce'

'Target of EYP (or 2) in every Children's Centre by 2010 and PVI full day care settings by 2015' (2006 Labour govt.)

Equated with raising standards and leading change

English context – political project

Drive for change 2006>

History - vocational on-the-job training, low level qualifications; poor pay & working conditions

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Since

Qualification levels risen by 12% since 2005

Now 75% NVQ level 3+

But levels of pay not risen accordingly. 41% paid less than £7 per hour

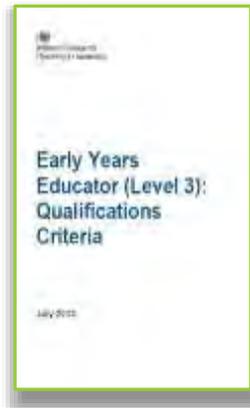
Removal of 'targets' in 2010; EYPS replaced with Early Years Teacher in 2013

(Simon et al. 2015)

English context

Criteria, statuses and qualifications - *vocational*

Early Years Educator – ‘criteria’ for level 3 qualifications



Apprenticeships – level 2 and level 3



GCSE English and mathematics - *entry or exit?*

English context

Criteria, statuses and qualifications – *graduate*

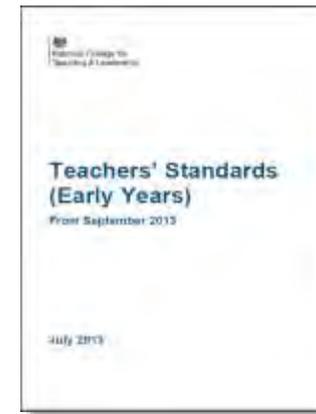
Early Years Teacher (3 to 7 years)

- ...with 'QTS', better career structures and T&Cs



EYITT Early Years Teacher (birth to 5)

- ...but not 'QTS' and not able to be employed in school as 'teacher'



Same entry qualifications and requirements

English context –

Implications of different sets of standards for different ‘teachers’ of same age children?

4. Plan and teach well structured lessons

- impart knowledge and develop understanding through effective lesson time
- promote a love of learning and children’s intellectual curiosity
- set homework and plan other out-of-class activities to consolidate and extend the knowledge and understanding pupils have acquired
- reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and adapt teaching
- contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum in relevant subject area(s).

4. Plan education and care taking account of the needs of all children.

- 4.1 Observe and assess children’s development and learning, using this to plan next steps.
- 4.2 Plan balanced and flexible activities and educational programmes that take into account the stage of development, circumstances and interests of children.
- 4.3 Promote a love of learning and stimulate children’s intellectual curiosity in partnership with parents and/or carers.
- 4.4 Use a variety of teaching approaches to lead group activities appropriate to the age range and ability of children.
- 4.5 Reflect on the effectiveness of teaching activities and educational programmes to support the continuous improvement of provision.

English context – PLD arrangements: *where do responsibilities lie?*

Pre 2010

Strong role for local authorities

- Providers of short courses, funding and commissioning of short and longer courses (accredited and non-accredited)

With quality improvement agenda

- Tailored to needs of local settings

Post 2010

Ofsted as 'sole arbiter of quality' (DfE: *More Great Childcare*)

Diminished and diminishing role for LAs

- LAs selling and commissioning training-for-sale to individual settings

But unequal success...

Professional Learning and Development in England



'Providers must support staff to undertake appropriate training and professional development opportunities to ensure they offer quality learning and development experiences for children that continually improves.'

(Department for Education 2014: 20)

But how do providers know where best to place their efforts and limited funding?

English context – Current direction of travel

- ‘Professional Development Standard for Teachers’ ...
 - The new standard will be non-statutory – schools will still be able to define their approach to professional development according to their own needs. The standard will aim to set out a clear description of effective practice in professional development for teachers
- Implications for PLD of
 - Provision for ‘disadvantaged two-year-olds’
 - 30 hour funded offer

Welsh context

Age range	Provision	Qualification
0-3 provision (pre-school)	Flying Start	All: L3 NVQ/QCF Managers L4 NVQ/QCF
	Non-Flying Start	Varied levels of qualification; Managers L3 NVQ/QCF
3-5 provision	Foundation Phase in school settings	QTS
	Foundation Phase in funded non-maintained settings	Non-QTS; lead: min L3 + 0.1 QTS contribution
5-7 provision	Foundation Phase in school	QTS

Welsh context - Provision (pre-school)

Flying Start:

Provision focussed on children 0-4 years in areas of multiple deprivation

Health visitor programme antenatal- 4years

Playful provision: 2-3/ 3-4 years

Parenting groups /programmes

Team aRound The Family



Welsh context - Provision (pre-school)

Variety of non-Flying Start provision:

- private daycare
- playgroups
- mudiad meithrin
- childminders

National forum for these groups **Cwlwm: *Childcare Wales Learning and Working Mutually***

Welsh context - Bilingual nation

Mudiad

Meithrin

The screenshot shows the homepage of Mudiad Meithrin. At the top, there is a navigation bar with buttons for 'Support Us', 'Cymraeg', 'Members', and 'Share', along with social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and a search icon. Below this is a horizontal bar with the organization's logo and tagline: 'mudiad meithrin arbenigwyr y blynyddoedd cynnar Welsh early years specialists'. To the right of the logo are six small images of children. Below the logo bar is a green navigation menu with links: 'About Us', 'For Parents', 'Clwb Dewin', 'News', 'Jobs', 'Training', 'Our Nurseries', 'Shop', and 'Contact us'. The main content area features a 'About Us' section with a blue heading and a large image of four children. To the left of the image is a sidebar menu under the heading 'About Us' with the following items: 'Background', 'Effect of our work', 'Support us', 'Dewiniaith - A Vision for Mudiad Meithrin 2015 - 2025', 'Annual Report', 'Cwlwm', 'Integrated Centres', and 'Useful Contacts'. Each item has a downward arrow icon.

Welsh context - Provision from 3 years

Foundation Phase curriculum (3-7 years)

Experiential, play-based with 'wellbeing' at its heart

- Seven Areas of Learning

3-4 year olds: half day provision in school, or setting, from 3rd birthday

- 'wraparound' care in school very common

4-5 year olds: full time provision, most usually in school settings.

Welsh context - Current performance; current standards

‘Variable and inconsistent’

- Flying start: Local Authority provision is highly variable
- Significant differences in the ‘quality of Foundation phase provision within and between schools and settings’

The Foundation Phase is associated with improved attainment for pupils eligible for free school meals but the evaluation has found **no evidence to suggest it has made any observable impact so far on reducing inequalities** in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Welsh context - Recognition that EY matters

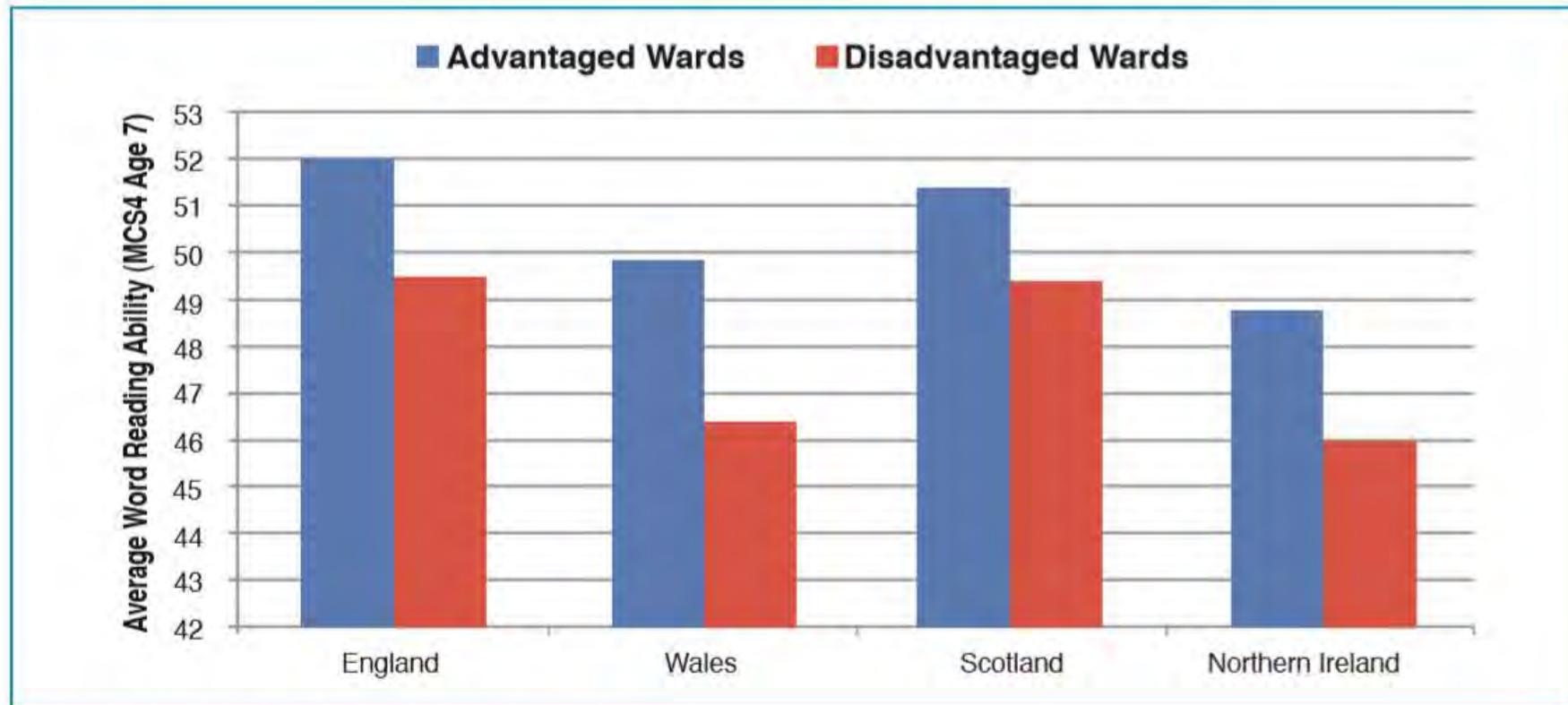


Figure 10: Word Reading Ability (age seven) by country
Source: Taylor, C., WISERD (2013)

Welsh context - Policy aspirations: big picture

‘Building a brighter future’ early years and childcare plan

- Early years childcare workforce development

Play policy

- LA play sufficiency audits

Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011

- Duty to have due regard to Convention on the Rights of the Child

National priorities

- Literacy
- Numeracy and
- Breaking the link between poverty and attainment

Flying start 0-4

Curriculum development

Welsh context - Successful futures

New curriculum in Wales

6 Areas of Learning **and Experience**

Continuum from 3-16 years

4 purposes:

➤➤➤ Recommendation

- 3. The purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that children and young people develop as:**
 - ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives**
 - enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work**
 - ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world**
 - healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.**

Welsh context - Poverty and wellbeing

Tackling poverty action plan (2012)

- 3 core areas of work
- Early years is embedded in 'preventing poverty'

Rewriting the future

- Focus on schools working to 'Raise ambition and attainment'
- EY Pupil Deprivation Grant

The proportion of people living in relative poverty in Wales - 23% - is the highest in the UK outside London.

Wales has the highest percentage of children living in poverty - one in three - of any nation in the UK.

Poverty is not declining in Wales as it is in the north east of England or Scotland



Child poverty is forecasted to increase by about a third by 2020

An All Wales Plan for the Early Years



The Early Years and Childcare Plan will support our ambition for every child to have a brighter future by putting the rights of the child at the centre of what we do, building on evidence of what works and effective early years pedagogy and strengthening our ways of working by being more joined-up at local, regional and national levels. It will support our relentless drive to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.

Key themes

Children's health and well-being – Environments which promote health and well-being, where children feel safe and secure. Health and other professionals working within multi-agency teams, sharing information and supporting transition to ensure early identification of needs/support and promotion of positive health messages.

Supporting families and parents – taking a whole-family approach making sure parents and children can access the information and support they need when they need it and building on their strengths to improve resilience. Communities work together to develop local solutions to ensure their children get a good start in life. Children feel safe.

Home learning environment – focusing on the importance of child development with health visitors, childcare and early education settings and schools supporting parents to play, read and sing with their children to help them develop good speaking, listening and language comprehension skills in English, Welsh or both languages and become school ready. Promoting parental engagement in their child's learning to help raise aspirations and achievement.

High-quality early education and childcare – improve quality including leadership, the workforce, the environment and the experience of the child. Supporting transition from home to school. Improving the flexibility and accessibility of early education and childcare and, where possible, the affordability of childcare by working with and developing the childcare market so more parents, who want to, can access childcare to help them work and train.

Effective Primary Education – support a whole-school approach to the Foundation Phase with improved transition to Key Stage 2 and balancing child/adult-initiated learning. Take forward a coordinated approach to school improvement.

Developing an effective system focused on raising standards and continuous improvement with robust regulation and inspection, a high quality, highly skilled workforce that works in a supportive, multi-agency way to enable better assessment and information sharing and robust data collection to help measure progress and support sustained improvement.

Figure 13: High level summary of *Building a Brighter Future*
Source: Welsh Government (2013)

Building a brighter future

Welsh context - Building a brighter future 2013

Brought together policies and programmes relating to children and families in Wales

0-7 years age focus

10 year plan

Ministerial Early Years Partnership Board

- Steers and monitors progress

- *for all our children to have a flying start in life;*
- *be well-educated;*
- *enjoy the best possible health;*
- *live in a decent home;*
- *have access to an enriched environment including play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;*
- *be listened to, treated with respect and feel safe.*

Welsh context - Building a brighter future: Workforce

Workforce development planning 2015 ...

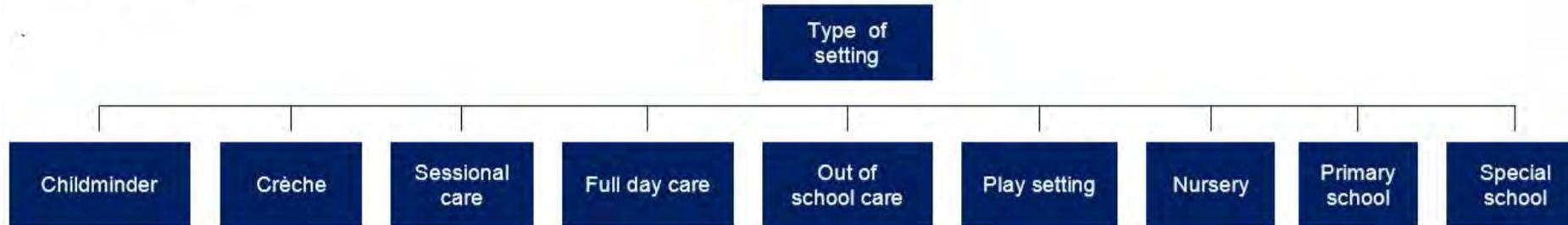
10 year plan for workforce development

Three key themes:

- Leadership
- The quality of new entrants to the early years sector
- The need to raise skills and standards across the existing workforce

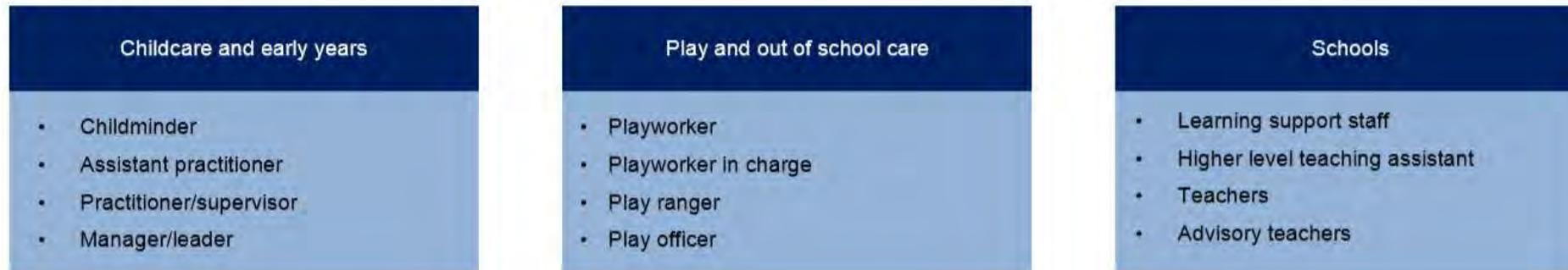
Task and finish groups reported to minister this month

By setting



Flying Start and the **Foundation Phase** may be delivered in a variety of settings.

By occupation



Welsh context - WG EY Task and Finish group (FP)

Cross-sector panel

- 'training' model
- Moving from a pedagogy of 'facilitation' to one of 'intention'
- Significant shift in workforce culture required.

An emphasis on:

- the role of the adult in supporting learning
- **exemplification and sharing of best practice** and
- the provision of appropriate playful learning environments to support children's early literacy and numeracy

'Standards' and 'performance'

What do we mean by *standards* for the 0-3, 3-5, 5-7 age groups?

What do we mean by *performance* for those working with young children?

Global policy discourse for EY

- 'High quality' EY is a route to national productivity and competitiveness
- Need to 'get it right' in EY

Australia: 'Standards' in Mathematics

Perry and MacDonald:

- engagement in a **sustained** programme of PLD
- **transformative** for the EY educators involved
- positive **impact** upon children's outcomes

PLD related to 'Let's count' programme

- online
- face-to-face

Revised understanding of children's competencies

Australia: 'Performance' regarding digital technologies

Nuttall, Edwards, Mantilla, Greishaber and Wood:

- academic engagement in evidence-informed **reflection** about a contentious issue
- new ways of **re-thinking** 'the problem'
- **transformation** in understanding the nature of EY educators' engagement with children's digital learning
- a call for PLD that is **consciousness-raising** and involves a **new conceptualisation** of a long standing and challenging problem

Contemporary practice in professional learning and development in Australia of PLD

Hadley et al 2015

Reflections on what works and why from two studies

Practitioner inquiry

Mentoring and networking

In-house training

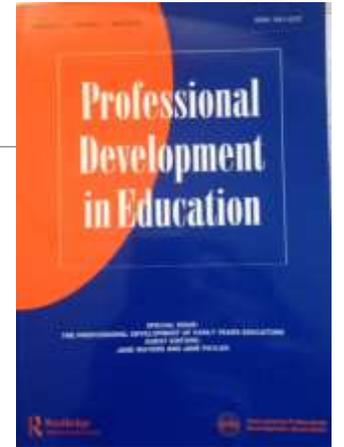
Reflective journals

Undertaking formal qualifications

Conferences

Professional readings

Research evidence on Professional Learning and Development



<http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

1. Systematic

2. Sustainable

3. Transformative

Research evidence on Professional Learning and Development

Themes for effective PLD

- **System-wide** framework for PD
- **Funding** diverse types of PD as an *entitlement* to ensure access
- **Facilitated** reflection and active engagement in PD

(Oberhuemer, 2013)

Evaluating and monitoring change in practice
'after educators return to the workplace'

(Hadley et al 2015: 190).

1. **Systematic**

2. **Sustainable**

3. **Transformative**

Research evidence on Professional Learning and Development

e.g. SEQUAL: Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning

Five domains:

- Teaching Supports;
- Learning Community;
- Job Crafting;
- Adult Well-being;
- Program Leadership.

(Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California at Berkeley)

1. **Systematic**

2. **Sustainable**

3. **Transformative**



Research evidence on Professional Learning and Development

Features that impact on practice

Setting based	✓
Expertise from outside	✓
Focus chosen by staff	✓
Collaborative work between colleagues	✓
Mentoring and coaching sustained over time	✓
Structured embedding and evaluation of practice-change over time	✓
Support from internal leadership	✓
Wider like-minded network	✓

1. **Systematic**

2. **Sustainable**

3. **Transformative**

Adapted from Walter and Briggs 2012, cited in Hadley et al 2015:190, and Lightfoot & Frost 2015: 415

Conclusion

Achieving systematic, sustainable and transformative change – from what to what?

We now have a reasonable body of international research evidence on PLD in early years. It tells us clearly what is required for PLD to be effective. But to really achieve that systematic, sustainable and transformative change, we need to address the drivers for and the contexts within which PLD takes place. 'From what to what' should be a question addressed as much through political advocacy as through the development of PLD programmes.

Over to you...

Q1. To what extent do professional 'standards' shape the quality of staff 'performance' and by what criteria?

Q2. To what extent and in what ways do professional standards impact on children's learning and development?

Q3. What are the methodological implications for research in relation to the two questions above?

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