International Perspectives on Early Years Workforce Development

Verity Campbell-Barr & Jan Georgeson
About Verity Campbell-Barr

- **Verity Campbell-Barr** is a Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies at the Plymouth Institute of Education, Plymouth University.

- Her research interests include:
  - the mixed economy of childcare and early years education provision
  - experiences of working in early childhood occupations
  - the role of childcare in supporting employment and the welfare to work agenda
  - understandings of quality childcare and early years education from multiple perspectives.
About Jan Georgeson

• **Janet Georgeson** is a Research Fellow in Early Education Development at the Plymouth Institute of Education, Plymouth University.

• Her role involves developing and conducting independent research projects and collaborating with colleagues in the development of research within the School of Education.

• She is currently researching the professionalisation of the early years workforce, and early cognitive development, including the role of parents, practitioners and other care-givers.
The Many Pedagogical Influences on Early Childhood Education and Care in the UK

This Presentation:

• The UK, Britain, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and our Islands
• Brief policy context
• Early childhood education and care pioneers
• Exploring the contrasting histories
The UK, Britain, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and our Islands

• UK or Britain?
  • Often used interchangeably
  • BUT
  • The UK = Four Nations (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
    • Devolved responsibilities for education policy, including early childhood education and care
  • Britain also includes our islands, such as Guernsey and Jersey
    • These are dependencies of the British crown
    • They do not have EU membership, but have recognition through their relationship to the British crown
    • Have their own parliament and Governor
    • May follow UK policy, but have their own departments and scrutiny panels
      • Acts of Parliament do not routinely apply
      • Can legislate independently

• Subtle variations in each island
What does this mean?

• Fragmentation
  • The Government tries to limit fragmentation by seeking to influence decisions across Britain
    • e.g. the allocation of resources from the Treasury
  • However, each part of Britain makes its own decisions on early childhood education and care, so there are differences between them
  • Very hard to speak of a British approach when looking at policy
An Early Childhood Education and Care History

• Historically there has been very little political support for early childhood education and care
• Services developed through philanthropic endeavor
• Gave rise to early childhood education and care pioneers
Philanthropic endeavour

• Margaret McMillan (1860-1931)
  • A campaigner and advocate for children’s health
    • Free school meals
    • Poverty campaigner
  • Founded the Open-Air Nursery and Training Centre in London (Deptford) in 1914 with her sister
  • Interested in how children could learn in an outdoor environment
    • Declared that 'the best classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky'
  • Focused on working with the most vulnerable children
  • 1923 became the first president of the Nursery School Association (NSA)
    • Now Early Education
Developing pedagogical ideas

• Susan Isaacs (1885-1948)
  • Principal of the Malting House in Cambridge from 1924-1927
  • Believed in child-centred learning
  • Nursery school provides social experiences and enables children to form friendships, with these being central for children’s development
  • Built on the work of McMillan in focusing on the importance of the outdoors
  • Also drew on the ideas of Frőebel and Vygotsky (both of whom have had a lasting influence on understandings of early childhood pedagogy in Britain)
  • Believed in the role of observation to create an understanding of the whole child to inform pedagogical practices
  • However, it was not just about observing the child as a teacher should also participate in children’s play to encourage their imagination and (in turn) their physical and cognitive development
• Susan Isaacs (cont.)
  • Children need to develop skills that enable them to exercise independent judgment
    • Supports the development of the individual
  • Children learn best through play
    • Experimentation
    • Play as children’s work
    • Social interaction through play
Pioneers and influences

John Locke  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
Friedrich Fröbel  
Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky  
Jerome Seymour Bruner  
Susan Isaacs

Jean Piaget  
The theoretical background to the development of early childhood education and care from the 17th century to the present day  
Margaret McMillan
Historical summary so far

• Little Sate support
• Influence of British pioneers who campaigned for early childhood services to support children’s holistic development
• Influence of international ideas
The influence of World War Two

• Nursery provision is expanded during the war to support women entering the work place

• After the war women are encouraged back into the home to care for their husbands who are returning from the war
  • Also ensure that there are jobs available for the men

• Influence of Bowlby’s Attachment Theory

• 1967 - The Plowden Report signals some interest in the provision of early education to support child development, particularly for disadvantaged children
  • But no action is taken
  • Children remain the private responsibility of families, except where there is an identified need
A period of rapid development

• 1990s – Tentative steps from policy makers to provide support for early education and out of school care
  • Nursery Education Grant
    • Criticised for poor quality and lack or places
• 1998 – Introduction of the National Childcare Strategy
  • Focus on quality, affordability and accessibility
  • Period of rapid policy development
• 2010 – Change of government, but continued support for early childhood education and care
  • But with a shift in focus...
1998-2010 (New Labour)
- Focus on quality, affordability and accessibility
  - Upskilling the workforce
  - Improving the curriculum
- Educare model
- Early Years Professionals
- Emerging school readiness agenda
  - Foundation stage profile

2010-Present (Coalition followed by Conservative)
- Focus on quality, affordability and accessibility
  - Upskilling the workforce
  - Improving the curriculum
- A division in care and education
- Early Years Teachers
- Increased school readiness agenda
  - Baseline assessment
  - Exceptional levels of development
  - Increased accountability
Pedagogical tensions

• Britain has a long legacy of early childhood education and care pioneers who have focused on:
  • Child centred approaches
  • Observations to inform pedagogical practice
  • Play based pedagogy

• Many of these features are still present in the early years curriculums that are present across Britain

• BUT – Increasingly pedagogical principles are compromised by political accountability
For more...