

Embedding Key Froebelian Principles into Observations of Trainee Teachers.

‘Young children are entitled to knowledgeable and well qualified professionals who are deeply informed about and attuned to the distinctive nature of young children’s development. Practitioners must constantly strive to develop their understanding through training, observation, research, reflection and discussion’ Tovey (2017).



Background



Method



Trainee and Mentor Feedback



Reflections and Challenges

Focus on a **School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT)** Programme based in an early childhood research organisation.

Ethos underpinned by a Froebelian sense of ‘**Unity**’ (Bruce, 2021), a ‘**community of practice**’ based on shared knowledge, understanding, values and beliefs (Wegner-Trayner, 2015).

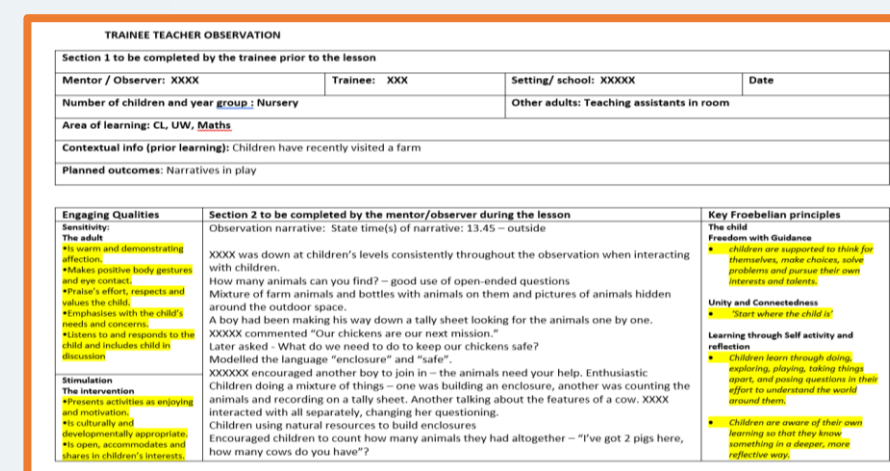
Considers the trainee teacher ‘lesson’ observation format for early years, currently based on the **Teacher’s Standards (2011)**, working with SCITT facilitators, teacher mentors and trainee teachers to consider whether the underlying Froebelian principles can be embedded into the observations of teachers in their training year.

‘It is time to reconnect Froebelian principles and practices, and in doing so, unearth buried treasure’ (Bruce, 2021).

The SCITT is familiar **Effective Early Learning Project (1996)**. This quality improvement project, based on reflective practice, uses an adult observation schedule based on the key characteristics of sensitivity, stimulation and autonomy. These link closely to elements of the Froebelian approach with a focus on the sensitivity of the adult and the complexities of the teacher’s role.

Froebel’s key principles were considered alongside the **Adult Engagement Scale**, demonstrating congruence between the two.

By making this explicit and integrated into the observation schedule, not only could the observation be more appropriate for trainees at the start of their course but would also enable mentors to reflect on their own practice within the setting through a Froebelian lens.



Reflective feedback was sought from both the mentors and trainees.

‘You can teach subject knowledge but not sensitivity or teachers sharing in the joy of learning. You may only ‘hit’ a few Teaching Standards, but your underpinning qualities are more indicative of the ability of an outstanding teacher in the long run’ (Mentor, 2021).

‘It was good to remember what I should be thinking about with children and what I should be doing rather than be hung up on the Teachers’ Standards and delivering a lesson. It was about my values’ (Trainee, 2021)

‘Refreshing as the ‘story telling’ narrative captured what was actually happening.’ (Mentor, 2021)

‘The focus on principles sat well with the pedagogy of ‘starting where the child is’ and what the children were doing’ (SCITT Tutor, 2021)

‘Didn’t realise I was being observed as the mentor popped in and out and saw me being my self.’ (Trainee, 2021).

Mentors and trainees have demonstrated their belief in a principled approach. The revised format will be used in the initial observations of trainees within their Early Years placements.

The Department for Education (DFE) revised the content and assessment method for trainee teachers, introducing a **Core Content Framework (DFE, 2019)** with a focus on subject knowledge and remembering more.

Challenge is to retain the early years and Froebelian pedagogy underpinning the ethos of the training whilst meeting statutory requirements.

There is a tension between the advocacy of a child centred approach to learning which Froebel describes as the freedom of the child to choose and lead their own learning, and the need to evidence trainees’ progress and achievement against a set of prescribed outcomes (**Initial Teacher Training Inspection Framework and Handbook, 2020**)

‘Froebel’s principles need to be considered in relation to the varied contexts and demands we face today. It requires critical reflection, discussion and a willingness to question ideas taken for granted’ (Tovey, 2020).

References

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