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ENHANCING PLAY: AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHAMPIONING PLAY PROVISION IN PLACEMENT SETTINGS

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BACKGROUND

This research examines the challenges for student teachers in:

- understanding what constitutes enhanced play provision to support child-initiated play
- making links between theory

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What knowledge and attitudes inform students' understanding of enhanced play provision?
2. How do student teachers conceptualise, identify, interpret and respond to children's 'interests'?
3. What are the barriers to enhanced provision and the challenges in negotiating practice?

METHODS

This is a qualitative study involving PGCE students reflecting on their placements in the English Early Years Foundation Stage. Data is drawn from evaluative assignments and focus group discussions to elicit student perspectives on their experiences of enhancing play provision and the strategies they deployed for navigating change.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

RQ1: A limited understanding of enhanced provision as a location; as set of physical resources; as a site of control/potential conflict “having planned and implemented previous enhancements, resistance to change had become somewhat of a familiarity”

RQ2: Through a curriculum lens: “ the children started playing in their own way and I thought how can I bring it together to show learning?”

“it’s a treasure box and I’m a pirate”...”It was what they were into, but you wouldn’t have known if you didn’t have things like that [open-ended enhancements]”

RQ3: teacher control v children’s agency – “messy disruption”; “illusionary freedom”

“enhancing provision is intrinsically linked to the pedagogy... of the setting itself”



“teachers’ engagement in and with research is a minority activity in most national contexts” (Leat et al, 2014, p. 6)

“fixed and partial meanings and interpretations of children’s free play activities” (Wood, 2014, p. 16)

“the discursive power of guidance” (Millei, 2012, p. 89)