



Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators

Response to the Nutbrown Review of Early Education and Childcare Qualifications: Interim Report April 2012

TACTYC aims to promote the highest quality professional development for all UK early years educators in order to enhance the educational well-being of youngest children.

Our activities include:

- **advocacy and lobbying** - providing a voice for all those engaged with the professional development of practitioners through responding to early years policy initiatives and contributing to the debate on the education and training of the UK early years workforce;
- **informing** - developing the knowledge-base of all those concerned with early years education and care by disseminating research findings through our international Early Years journal, annual conference, website and occasional publications;
- **supporting** - encouraging informed and constructive discussion and debate and supporting practitioner reflection, the use of evidence-based practice and practitioner-research through, for example, our website (www.tactyc.org.uk) and newsletter.

- We welcome the recognition that progress has been made in improving skills and understanding and that there are examples of excellent practice across the sector. (p. 5)
- We welcome the recognition that study at levels 2 & 3 is too broad (birth to 19) and lacks depth, and that foundation degrees and other HE qualifications are more robust (p.7)
- We welcome the point emphasising that poor quality settings are not suitable places for the training experiences of students.
However, we would like to add the caveat that for those on Early Years Professional Status **practitioner pathways** (i.e. candidates who are *already* experienced practitioners with at least a foundation degree), such settings can provide useful placement experiences with opportunities to demonstrate aspects of leadership, practice-improvement and small-scale change management. This can be beneficial to both the EYPS candidate and the setting, but of course requires careful management, supervision and the matching of candidate to setting (p. 8).
- We welcome concern over the 'hair or care' stereotype and would encourage engagement with schools in order to raise awareness of the high expectations of the early years sector in terms of academic qualifications, as well as attributes such as creativity, analytic and problem-solving abilities, interpersonal sensitivity and communication skills, and attitudes to playful teaching and learning. Such action would, we feel, facilitate appropriate academic choices for young people and raise the standard of students applying to enrol in early year's courses in further education (p.9).

- We welcome the recognition of the contribution that teachers with early years training can make to early years settings and children's outcomes and the call to optimise use of this. We encourage careful attention to the evidence base (notably EPPE) which links, but does not establish a causal relation between, the presence of teachers and children's progress. The significant relationships between higher quality provision (as measured by ECERS), qualification level of staff and better intellectual and social/behavioural child outcomes could have been caused by, or at least associated with, another variable such as level of funding over time for particular settings (Georgeson, 2009: 121-123). Identifying areas of practice linked with teacher input, such as higher quality adult-child interactions, would be helpful in considering the contribution of teachers to children's progress. Clarity on the research findings with regard to the **ages of the children** with which teachers might make a difference would also be welcomed. It cannot be assumed that what might have been found to be effective with 3-5 years olds will translate to birth to threes (p.9, 10).

(Georgeson, J. (2009) The Professionalisation of the Early Years Workforce. In Susan Edwards and Joce Nuttall (Eds.) *Professional Learning and Early Childhood Settings*. Rotterdam: Sense)

- In relation to this, we feel that the reporting of the **contribution that EYPS can make** is underplayed in the report. Given that this is a new professional status (compared to teaching), it is unsurprising that many have obtained employment outside settings; as the drive gained pace towards increasing the number achieving EYPS in line with the (now defunct) target for all full day care to have a graduate leader by 2015, those with the status have been in demand by training providers for assessment and training of new candidates. In addition, without government backing for clarity and improvement on the terms and conditions of service for those with EYPS, such well-qualified and experienced people are likely to seek better recompense elsewhere, such as in training and further or higher education. **These seem to be reasons to provide further support and clarity to this Status, just as it gains hard-won momentum, rather than remove it** (p. 9).
- Many practitioners have taken themselves through the lengthy route from level 3, gaining English and maths GCSE grade C or above along the way (which *is* a requirement for EYPS), studying part-time for foundation degrees, completing their BA degrees and gaining EYPS through further training and assessment, at considerable personal effort whilst working in the sector and managing family commitments. To consider now replacing EYPS with a teaching qualification seems wholly unfair to these committed people and those part-way along the route.
- We agree that consideration of how salaries and terms and conditions of service for proposed early years teachers would be funded, given that this is a problem graduates with EYPS continue to face, is of importance for both teachers and EYPS.
- Research into EYPS from University of Wolverhampton (<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/PDF/sed-res-cwdcfinal.pdf>) shows that, interestingly, 32% of the sample EYPs (988) already had QTS, suggesting a more complex relationship between QTS and EYPS. This requires further investigation of what practitioners' feel that each status contributes to their professionalism (p.42).
- The comparison between NNEB diploma and L3 Diploma is helpful and we suggest that a clearer comparison between EYPS and QTS along similar lines would help further the debate about how the two can complement each other (p. 27).

- Research from Mathers, Ranns, Karemaker, Moody, Sylva, Graham, and Siraj-Blatchford (2011) evaluating the Graduate Leader Fund (supporting funding of those with EYPS) and its impact on quality in the sector shows promising results for EYPS:
(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RB144.pdf>)

Settings which gained a graduate leader with EYPS made significant improvements in quality for pre-school children (30 months to five years), as compared with settings which did not. The evidence also suggests that EYPS provided 'added value' over and above gaining a graduate. There was little evidence of an EYP impact on the quality of provision for younger children (birth to 30 months). (Mathers et al., 2011:.2)

Unfortunately, the low numbers of EYPs working in birth to three rooms made it impossible for their impact with the birth to 30 months age group to be assessed. This reflects a history of under-valuing and under- prioritising the care and education of babies and toddlers. **We would like to see this directly addressed in the Review of qualifications, particularly in view of the impending progress checks for two-year-olds.**

- We would like to add to the key areas for further consideration (p.11):
How can those with EYPS best be retained, supported and effectively deployed in the sector to maximise the impact on quality and children's outcomes?
- We welcome the recognition that there has been a rise in the proportion of the workforce that is qualified, but agree that the current requirements are inadequate. **We have argued and reiterate that the requirement to have a level 3 qualification to lead a setting and for half of staff to have level 2 is inadequate.**
- It will be important to make funding available to encourage current practitioners with lower or no qualifications to move towards level 3 if we are to avoid losing a sector of the experienced workforce. In addition, we would like to see further support for the training of childminders. We would like to see all childminders to be **qualified and trained** and to be on their Local Authority Early Years directory to accept the three and four year old funding. At present this is only possible if a childminder belongs to an accredited childminder network. Yet in preschools and nurseries only one member of staff has to be qualified to level 3 for the setting to be included onto the Directory. Hopefully, with the recommendations of all staff being trained to level 3 as a minimum, this would create a level playing field and help towards ensuring that quality provision is available for all children.
- We support the call for students to gain experience beyond one setting during their training (p. 27)
- We welcome the recognition that tutors need time to visit, supervise and support students in placement. Observing a student in practice in a setting context is a powerful pedagogic tool, which has an important part to play in effective training and education. It is however costly in terms of resources and needs to be properly funded (p.33).
- Statement 3.15 is inaccurate; whilst **we welcome the focus on the need for literacy and numeracy skills**, this is misleading as it stands. Since 2006, students had to have GCSE maths and English at grade C or above to enter the final assessment part of EYPS. Since January 2012, this has changed so that students cannot begin EYPS until they have GCSE maths and English at grade C or above (p. 35).

- It would be helpful to have an explanation of what is meant by the phrases 'would need to be even more rigorous than the current EYPS' (statement 4.27) and 'would need to match the amount of time spent in settings in other routes to QTS' as it implies something lacking in EYPS. Direct accurate comparison would be helpful for those who are not immersed in EYPS and QTS.

As an example of the type of comparative detail that would be helpful in these discussions:

The current placement requirements with a leading provider for one year full time courses for new entrants to education or early years are as follows:

PGCE Primary with QTS

2 week self arranged pre-placement

Placement 1: 6 weeks

Placement 2: 9 weeks

Graduate Entry Pathway to EYPS

2 week self arranged pre-placement

Placement 1: 6 weeks

Placement 2: 6 weeks

Placement 3: 6 weeks

Further comparison of taught elements, professional/placement experience and assessment methods across other routes to QTS and EYPS (e.g. BA (Hons) Primary; Undergraduate Practitioner Pathway to BA and EYPS) would be helpful.

We welcome a full review and discussion of how best students of EYPS and QTS in the early years can be educated, trained, assessed, rewarded for employment and supported during their initial post-qualifying year.