

2015

Skills for employability

An exploration of skills for employability within the early years sector from the multiple perspectives of learners, employers and FE college practitioners, with consideration as to how to embed these into the level 3 Early Years Educator programme.

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The
Education
& Training
Foundation

This project has been developed and supported by the
Foundation's Practitioner-Led Research Programme (2014-2015)
and the East Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training
(emCETT)



Abstract

The fundamental purpose of education for the 21st Century, it is argued, is not so much the transmission of particular bodies of knowledge, skill and understanding as facilitating the development of the capacity and the confidence to engage in lifelong learning. Central to this enterprise is the development of positive learning dispositions, such as resilience, playfulness and reciprocity.

(Claxton and Carr 2002 cited New Zealand Ministry of Education 2012)

This research explores the concept of employability within the early years sector. Employability is defined as 'a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes' (Yorke 2006 cited Saunders and Zuzel 2010) that are underpinned by positive dispositions to new experiences and learning. Further and Higher Education providers have a large element of responsibility in providing learners with learning environments that offer possibilities for the future and remove barriers that constrain dispositions for lifelong learning.

Through a qualitative, interpretivist methodology the perspectives of learners, early years settings and lecturers were gained. Methods utilised included learner and course documentation, questionnaire and dialogic discussion. Transparency, honesty and informed consent were seen to be essential in ensuring that this research was beneficial and not of derogatory impact upon its participants.

The significance of initiative within employability was one outcome of the research that had positive results within learner practice in placement. Relationships, and the strong rationale for contextualised active learning were further highlighted as essential within the embedment of employability within the level 3 early years educator programme. A conceptual framework developed through the research is a catalyst for further suggested developments in teaching and learning practice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Education and Training Foundation and emCETT for their funding and support for this professional development opportunity.

I further thank my employers for allowing this research to open possibilities.

I acknowledge the following people. Without you this would not have been possible:

Johanna Witts and Julia Gillard for continual positivity and 'nugget holding'

emCett and especially Annemarie for your support and motivation.

My peers for the opportunities for co-construction that have led to deeper learning.

My friend and partner in thinking and co-construction for her additional role as critical research friend.

My family for supporting me in what has been an emotionally and physically challenging year in which to undertake this research.

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Section One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As an early years (EY) practitioner for over twenty years I had many experiences of supporting Level 3 learners in practice. A recurring theme within recruitment both within my own settings and those of peers was the lack of skills for employability within those we interviewed; qualification did not equate to being employable.

1.2 Context

The British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) (2014 cited BBC 2014) stated that young people were not equipped for employment on finishing their education. Alongside the BCC the need for skills for employability is something that has been highlighted by consecutive governments, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) stated that too few learners had the skills required for employment even though businesses had been highlighting these for twenty years. As a course manager, planning a new level three EY course the employer requirements discussed in the media were connectable with dispositions for learning encouraged within EY practice. As such this led to questioning as to whether these dispositions had been discouraged through formal schooling and whether the encouragement of autonomous learning would support learners in becoming equipped for employment. This research sits within the EY course but has clear drivers if considered with the ecological model from micro, macro and the wider chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1994).

1.3 Research Aims

This research aims:

- to gain greater understanding of skills for employability from the perspective of
 - The learner
 - The early years setting
 - Childcare lecturers/college practitioners
- to support the college strategic aim to
 - Inspire
 - Be ambitious
 - Respect
 - Support all learners
- To build and further strengthen relationships with the wider community

In addition consideration will be given to how dispositions for learning can be utilised to develop the learning environment including

- Sustainability
- Maths and English Skills
- Reflective practice

1.4 Research Question

In looking to meet the above aims and research objectives (appendix 1) the following question will be explored: What are skills for employability and how can I support learners in developing these?

Section Two: Literature Review

In looking to answer the research question of the development of skills for employability in the EY sector, it is first important to consider the research and findings of others to gain a wider perspective of that than the personal. The following aspects will be considered further:

- The definition of dispositions and employability
- Understanding of skills for employability
- Methodology of andragogy

2.1 Learning Lens

Learning can be defined in many ways (Jarvis 2005), it is essential to be transparent with the lens through which learning is viewed (appendix 1). Dispositions for learning are recognised within this research project as a framework for consideration (appendix 2). Kearns (2001 cited Amalathas 2010 p14) developed a framework of 'mental capabilities' (appendix 3) for vocational education that create necessary skills and knowledge as he believed that it was not enough to just teach the skills and knowledge, links can be clearly made with Carr's (2006) dispositions diagram (appendix 4). Further, Amalathas (2010) suggests that the habits of learning (appendix 5) that had been cultivated in schooling did not meet the Country's needs. To summarise the lens for exploration for this research, it is recognised that it is important to build a 'love of learning' (Holt 1964 cited Amalathas 2010 p18) through the cultivation of habitus or dispositions for learning within a socially constructed learning environment.

2.2 Employability

Belt, Drake and Chapman (2010) define employability as the ability to be in employment, seeing the use and development of skills as a continual process. Yorke (2006 cited Saunders and Zuzel 2010) suggests that employability skills are 'a set of achievements-skills, understandings, and personal attributes'. Further STEMNET (2010) add employability skills can be considered to be transferable skills needed to become employable.

Employability skills (appendix 6) are recognised by employers and learners alike as important, with Saunders and Zuzel (2010) finding a strong convergence in perceptions. Longworth (BBC 2014) and STEMNET (2010) agree that resilience, being a good communicator and teamwork are amongst the essential employability skills. Whereas the CBI (2007 cited Lowden *et al* 2011) suggest that employability skills must be underpinned by a positive attitude, can do approach and readiness to participate and engage.

The Leitch Review suggested that everyone entering the workforce needed a 'wider set of skills, such as IT, communication and team working', further it was suggested that these should be embedded into education provision or taught discretely if appropriate (HM Treasury 2006 cited Belt, Drake and Chapman 2010 p20). Cranmer (2006 cited Saunders and Zuzel 2010) believe that employability skills are already embedded into the curriculum, highlighting that it is the need to make them explicit that many universities are now recognising. Pukelis *et al* (2007 cited Belt, Drake and Chapman 2010) add that there is no argument that educational institutions hold a large responsibility within the smooth integration of learners into professional life.

2.4 Teaching Methodology

In recognising employability skills as an essential element of development, it is important to consider the approach to these within further education. Freire (1974 p132, 1996) describes a process of dialogue that leads to 'education as the practice of freedom'. He further

suggests that teachers have the right to views but no right to dictate or manipulate learners with these views, instead dialogue should enable a 'demythifying of reality' through co-constructive meaning making (Freire 1974 p132, 1996).

Ravenscroft and Luhanga (2014 p143) suggest that in considering the teaching of employability skills an essential element is ensuring that it is active, they state that passive learning is not effective due to the lack of opportunity for 'conceptual understanding'. Further to this they suggest that passive learning does not offer the opportunity for developing deeper thinking skills (Ravenscroft and Luhanga 2014), which can be seen to link to dispositions for life-long learning (Carr 2001). Active learning is a key theme in methods for sharing employability skills (appendix 7), alongside the learning being active and practice based there is a theme of learners taking an element of control within their learning. Belt, Drake and Chapman (2010) suggest the involvement of learners in setting the boundaries for both their own learning and the learning structures of the group as such building autonomy. Ravenscroft and Luhanga (2014) agree that learners should have control within their learning, they further suggest that learning should be flipped allowing for the transmission of information to occur outside of the classroom.

2.5 Summary

Employability skills can be seen to be essential for the development of possibilities for the futures thinking of all learners. The necessity of providing active learning opportunities in a learning environment that is built upon reciprocal relationships with learners, practitioners and employers has been shown. In a wish to continually develop practice further exploration of the embedment of skills for employability within the level 3 early years educator provision is highlighted.

Section Three: Methodology Evaluation

3.1 Methodology

In recognising the complex multi-layered nature of reality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000 p22) an adaptive and reflexive methodology was adopted; aiming for transparency, value and respect for all involved.

3.2 Nature of Inquiry

This research was intrinsically motivated, underpinned by values, beliefs and principles stemming from a challenge in practice. The methodological considerations are situated within ontological and epistemological beliefs as such a transparency was key (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). Though action research in design the research paradigm was individualised by fitting within interpretivism, looking to gain a deeper co-constructed understanding of the research question whilst valuing and respecting the feelings and beliefs of participants.

3.3 Methods

Punch (2009) suggests that methods are based upon a series of assumptions that set lenses for the nature of the study, what is being studied and the appropriate method of gaining knowledge. The methods for this research were directly linked with the ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations behind the research (Punch 2009). To gain understanding from multiple perspectives different methods have been used, this research remains qualitative, though methods may be considered to be quantitative (Punch 2009, Robert-Holmes 2005).

3.3.1 Documentation

Sharp (2009) suggests that documentary evidence sits between the positivist and interpretivist paradigm. Learner's visualisations of employability were collected within two planned sessions that included elements of dialogue, analysed through an interpretivist lens alongside documentation collected for course management. Thus allowing for the combination of visual and verbal (Clark and Moss 2001).

3.3.2 Questionnaires/ interview

Short questionnaires (appendix 8) were distributed to settings where learners were in or had been in placement in the past or had connections with the college. The questionnaire was semi-structured allowing for an ease of analysis (Walliman and Buckler 2008), whilst giving respondents the opportunity for deeper responses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000, Roberts-Holmes 2005). A similar questionnaire (appendix 9) was distributed to lecturers within one curriculum area. Respondents had the choice of completing the questionnaire as a dialogic discussion and a small proportion of respondents opted for this. Dialogue was undertaken with learners and dialogic interviews with five settings providing stimulus for reflection.

3.4 Participants

The learner participants for this study were two Level 3 EY groups, there were 42 learners initially. This was narrowed to just the year 1 group for the second part of the research making a sample group of 19. The second sample group was EY settings these included, pre-schools, nurseries and schools. 24 settings out of 26 in the sample group participated in the research. The final sample group was lecturers in one curriculum area, 10 out of 14 in the sample group responded.

3.5 Ethics

As a reflexive researcher it has been impossible to separate feelings and beliefs from ethics as such as Mookherjee *et al* (2012) suggest ethical considerations included respectfulness and the process of truth. Miles and Hubermans (1994 cited Punch 2009) list (appendix 10) was used as a stimulus for reflection on ethical considerations. Gatekeeper consent was sought and agreed prior to commencing (Appendix 11). Many organisations produce ethical guidelines, respect was held for the University of Gloucestershire (2008) and The British Educational Research Association (2011) ethical guidelines. Informed consent and do no harm were considered to be of particular consideration as undertaking research involving learners. The essence of the research was explained to the participants in the sessions learners were asked at the end of the sessions to leave their anonymous visualisations if they were happy to participate in the research. An information sheet (appendix 12) and ethical agreement (appendix 13) was given to other participants.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple methods and sample groups, supporting both the validity and reliability (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). Hughes (2001 cited Roberts-Holmes 2005) agrees suggesting that triangulation brings validity to interpretivist research. If considering reliability as a measure of whether research can be repeated with similar results (Punch 2009), it is clear that the construct of this research means that it is repeatable however human nature means that the results may vary. Validity can be considered to be whether something 'accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers' (Hammersley 1990 cited Silverman 2014 p90). Validity has been supported through elements of respondent validation (Silverman 2014) and piloting all elements of the research with a critical friend, further supporting reliability as well.

3.7 Intervention

As planned in the gantt chart (appendix 14) the intervention was carried out in February, there were three stages to the intervention.

- Stage One: Explicit learning objectives linking to employability
- Stage Two: Sessions on dispositions, mind-sets, resilience and initiative
- Stage Three: Initiative and reliability problem/prompt cards

Section Four: Data Analysis

This study asked dual questions of what the skills for employability within early years setting are and how they should be embedded within the level 3 EYE programme. The initial data from the two sets of questionnaires, learner visualisations, and dialogic discussions was collated (Appendix Fifteen) and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative analysis. In addition course documentation was studied for its representation of reality (Silverman, 2014 p285), with my research journal a further source of qualitative interpretation.

Figure 1 (p16) shows the top skills for employability highlighted by learners, settings and lecturers. All skills shown were highlighted by at least two participants by at least one sample group. Figure 2 (p15) shows seven employability skills highlighted made up of the top four in each of the sample groups. It can be seen that in the lecturers column there is a fifth skill of initiative highlighted, this skill was within the top four skills for settings but was fifth highest occurring skill for lecturers.

Skill/attribute	Learners	Setting	Lecturers	Total
Communication	26	18	12	56
Teamwork	9	10	7	26
Reliability	3	12	8	23
Practical skills	5 – possible links	11	5	21
Initiative		11	6	17
Organised	6	1	2	9
Time-keeping	7	1		8

Figure Two

Employability Skills

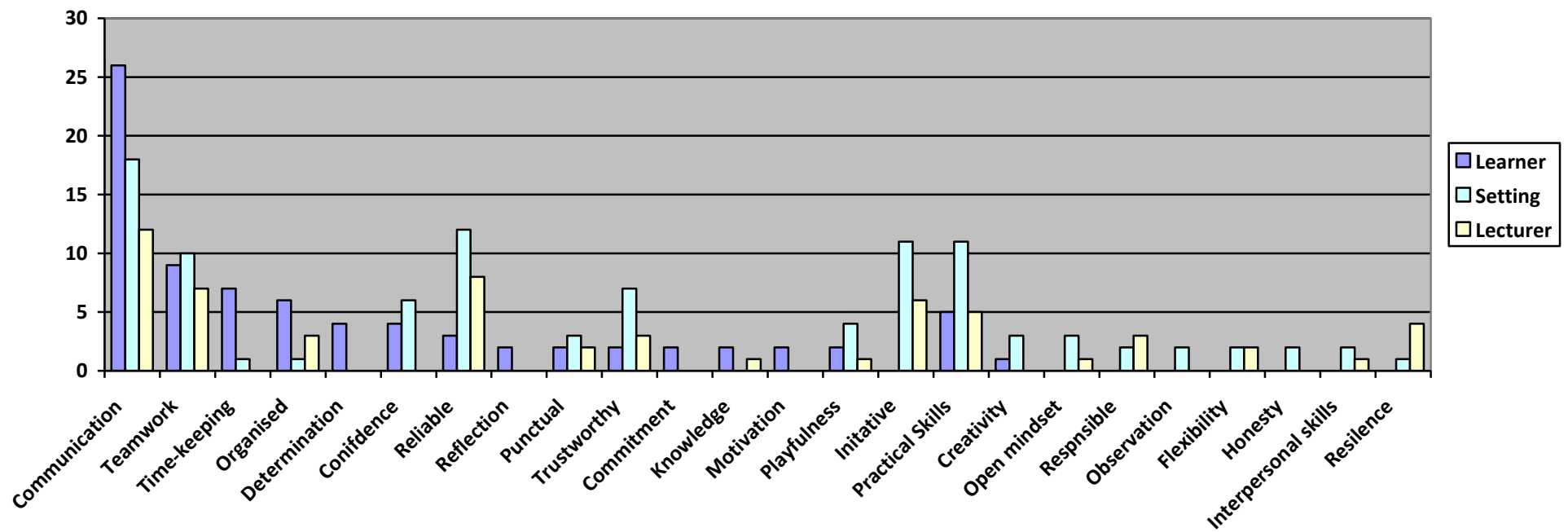


Figure One

After the intervention was carried out, data was collected from learners and settings. Learners were asked to again write the three most important skills or attributes for employment in the early years sector, this was through a 'post it note' snapshot view. Final data collection was through the placement feedback process, where additional feedback was requested specifically on learners use of initiative, communication, reliability and teamwork. From the qualitative analysis of data from the questionnaires, interviews and learner documentation, alongside the wider reading and personal reflection the following themes were highlighted.

- Experiential learning
 - Initial quality review showed that 37% of learners highlighted practical activities as the most useful aspect of the course. A further two learners stated that having fun was the most useful factor to their learning. The midyear review showed that 54% of learners found the practical element of learning most useful, also highlighting this as the most enjoyable aspect.
- Relationships
 - Both quality reviews have highlighted the importance of the relationships built within the course with 47% stating it was the people they had met, peers, teachers and tutor that was the most enjoyable aspect of the course.
- Being explicit and contextualised
- Challenge

Further, Figure two is a conceptual framework that was developed after the intervention, initial setting skills for employability have been mapped in red alongside the snapshot learner

data. It can be seen that 40% of learner attributes match with skills highlighted by settings. The four themes and the conceptual framework will be discussed further in the next section.

Conceptual Framework

Communication	Relationships	Well-Being	Work readiness and habits	Thinking and learning
Communication Communication	Teamwork Teamwork	Confidence Confidence	Confidentiality	Determination
Observation	Ability to make relationships	Compassion	Reliability Reliability	Play Playfulness
Writing skills	Equality	Fun	Good judgement	Enabling environment
Approachable to parents and practitioners	Trustworthy	Patience	Initiative	Open mindfulness Open mindsets
Being able to smile	Interpersonal skills	Flexibility	Practical skills relating to the role	Creativity
Interact with children and adults	Sociable	Honesty	Punctuality	Problem solving
	Empathy	Resilience	Time Keeping	
		Happy	Responsible	
			Organisation	

Figure Three

Section Five: Results Discussion

5.1 Action

On reflection I am contented that this research maintained its aims and transparency throughout, remaining both valid and reliable. It is recognised that it is action research on a very small scale; however on reflection I am pleased with the engagement of settings with a 62% response rate. Though small scale the methods have provided me with a wealth of information that will be invaluable within the course development. I would if revisiting this research again aim to carry out more narrative interviews, however it is recognised that time constraints are unlikely to decrease.

5.2 Context of Findings

This research was carried out during a time of change, the role and course were new and the organisational culture of the college was undergoing a change process that at times was turbulent. However, the openness for exploring possibilities for learner future thinking has remained paramount on all levels.

The new course led to challenges for lecturers and learners alike, it was essential that open mindsets (Dweck 1991 cited Jarvis 2005) and possibility thinking (Craft 2002) were modelled to learners. Further, requirements of the EYE course mean that autonomous learning and reflection were soon found to be essential not just to future practice but to learner success on the course. As suggested previously this research stemmed from a professional and personal intrinsic desire for both knowledge and possibilities for learners, it is from this lens that it has been viewed.

5.3 Themes

5.3.1 Experiential Learning

Learners have consistently through the course of the year highlighted the benefits of practical learning, both in college and in work placement. This can be seen in quality reviews for the year 1 sample group but also within the year 2 EYE course. It can be seen that learners have become more aware of the benefits of this during the year with an increase of 17% of learners highlighting between initial and midyear reviews.

Practical skills were highlighted within the four highest employability skills by both lecturers and settings. Though this has not been an explicit skill for embedment within this project, this has served as rationale for the continuation of the practical learning methodology that had been favoured for the course. This can be seen to be as Ravenscroft and Luhanga (2014 p143) suggest active contextualised learning that aims to support learners deeper thinking alongside employability.

5.3.2 Relationships

This theme encompasses many separate elements: keyperson approach, teamwork, interpersonal skills and multi-agency working. Figure three (p20) shows that learners' highlighted three skills directly connected with this theme however others can be said to link with this such as honesty and compassion. Longworth (cited BBC 2014) and STEMNET (2010) stated that teamwork is essential and this research supports this, however further recognising the underpinning elements of teamwork. These elements can be seen to link with skills that learners require for employability both recognised by settings and the learners themselves. However one fundamental result of this research has been the building of reciprocal relationships between the college and the settings. This has offered further insight

into the needs of the settings and improvements such as a newsletter have been highlighted from dialogic discussion. Further looking to build as McLoughlin (2013 p10) suggests essential, a 'genuine collaboration' between the college and employers.

5.3.3 Being explicit and contextualised

As Cranmer (2006 cited Saunders and Zuzel 2010) suggested being explicit about employability has on reflection supported learners understanding of the value of different learning activities. As part of the intervention objectives set at the start of the lesson and reviewed throughout have had explicit links to skills for employability. My journal states '....were excited when they linked the objective with possibilities to the future'; the contextualisation of learning in both explicit objectives but also in maths and practice challenges around initiative and reliability have increased learner motivation visibly.

5.3.4 Challenge

Learner feedback on the sessions on resilience, dispositions and mindsets stated that they had enabled learners to make links between themselves as learners and provision within EY practice. Learners meaning making from these sessions has been repeatedly seen in both formative and summative assessments since, alongside being recognised as skills for employability: determination and open mindfulness (Figure three p19). As such learners have been able to link their developing skills for employability as highlighted by BBC (2014) and STEMNET (2010) and their professional role as educators, this can be seen to be supportive of developing reflective practice which is recognised as vital within the EY sector.

The ability to manage change and challenge is recognised as dispositional (appendix 2 and 4), I believe this relates closely with autonomous learning. As when learners are facing challenge there can be seen to be benefits to as Belt, Drake and Chapman (2010) suggest learners setting the boundaries and provision for their own meaning making. Further, when

learners are encouraged to take the challenge, within an emotionally contained learning space this disposition is encouraged.

5.4 Conceptual Framework

It is important that this research forms a catalyst for change in practice, though recognising the original challenge will evolve and change itself. The conceptual framework (Figure three p19) was developed from reflection on the employability skills. The five domains are intricate in nature and lend themselves to interpretation of and through reality at the point of use. It is recognised that though skills have been placed into categories many are multi-layered in reality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000) and as such there is a flow of reciprocation. Further the framework is not limited to the skills currently shown; it is acknowledged that as Belt, Drake and Chapman (2010) suggest the development of skills will be continual and just as reality will shape the lens to view the framework, it will further add to the skills that are seen to be needed for practice.

5.4.1 Initiative

Initiative has been mapped under work readiness; initiative was in many ways an unexpected skill to consider. The ability to take initiative in a situation is recognised as highly beneficial; however on reflection it is something that can often be considered to be more instinctive. Thus, the ability to use or take initiative could be considered to be dispositional (Carr 2006) or a habit of mind (NZME 2012), it is clear that this is underpinned by other skills or aspects such as self-confidence, resilience and problem solving again highlighting the complexity of employability.

This has however been a successful aspect of the research project with the impact of the intervention showing in placement feedback. For example:

‘.....used his initiative to engage the children...’

(placement feedback)

‘.. the most proactive student we have ever had’

(placement feedback)

Learners commentary on the activities has been that the answers are natural and obvious, however they have been engaged with them and the evidence has been seen within their practice. It may be the case that this is due to the thinking space that is available in college, without the other pressures that are constant in EY practice.

5.5 Summary

To summarise skills for employability have been highlighted, the creation of a framework offers possibilities for future embedment. The themes of experiential, active learning, making the learning explicit and contextualised, relationships and challenge were recognised as essential for the embedment of employability skills in practice. The importance of contextualised learning is shown to be reciprocal with initiative and reliability activities proving successful.

Section Six: Conclusion

This action research stemmed from an intrinsic desire to understand a challenge that had been experienced from the duality of professional experiences. There is a large amount of reflexivity within the study and changes that have already commenced in practice will continue to evolve. Within this it is recognised that the cycle of action research will be ongoing. It is with anticipation that this is stated rather than fear; action research has provided me with deeper understanding of my role as a lecturer and course manager. Further insights into teaching and the construct of professionalism are motivational in concept.

I conclude that skills for employability are essential in practice and though these may have taken different names and methodologies in the past, they will be embedded within the Level 3 EYE through experiential and active learning that is contextualised and explicit within the programme. The rationale for using active learning providing opportunities for learners to play (Figure three p19) within their own learning whilst learning to provide possibilities for others has been strengthened.

6.1 Recommendations for Practice

- Use of the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework lends itself to many possibilities. I propose to introduce this to the new cohort of level 3 EYE learners in the new academic year as a framework for practice reflection.

- To align with the learner reflection I will develop the current feedback sheet used with placement settings to use the framework for feedback. It is aimed that skills for employability will be both able to be highlighted and comments

made to support learner explicit understanding of taking learning into placement.

- Relationships with Settings

As a part of this action research the relationship with settings and practice has been deepened, this offers possibilities for the future of continuing this to create a shared understanding of employability needs. This understanding would provide both the knowledge for ensuring the best provision for learners but also offer personal continued professional development from my heritage profession.

- Exploring the obvious

Initiative may seem obvious, however dialogue and meaning making of scenarios has enabled learners to take this into practice. As such this will be continued to be explored alongside reflective practice and practice problem solving activities.

- Further research

This research has been a catalyst for a cascade of further research possibilities. I highlight just one, the further research of active learning within the concept of play. I would argue that EYP need to understand play from a personal perspective to provide for young children, as such the barriers of formal education need to be broken and the dispositions that are often constrained allowed to grow again.

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Appendix One

Learning Lens

Traditionally learning was defined as a process of adaption to an environment (Jarvis 2005). Freire (1974) refers to teaching as a process of transferring knowledge without dialogue; education as a passive concept. However, Jarvis (2005) suggests a social construct of learning that takes into account the social, political and cultural influences. Wenger (1988) and Rogers (1967) both add to this the value of participation and as such co-construction.

I realise that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my own behaviour

(Rogers 1967 p 267)

It is the learning described by Rogers (1967) recognising the importance of experiential co-constructive participation through active dialogue (Freire 1974, 1996) that gives definition to learning for this research.

Andragogy has often been seen to be discrete from pedagogy, in considering Knowles assumptions for adult learning (appendix 2) (Jarvis 2005) it is recognised that there are multiple elements that can be applied to pedagogy (Smith 2010). As such the approach taken to teaching for this research will be a humanagogical one; defined as 'a holistic approach to teaching human beings' (Peterson and Ray 2013 p84).

Appendix Two

Dispositions

Katz (1988 cited Carr 2006 p21) states that 'dispositions are a very different type of learning from skills and knowledge'. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (NZME 2012) agree suggesting they can be considered to be competencies, shaped by relationships and experiences over time. Further, dispositions can be considered to be patterns of learning or habits of mind (NZME 2012, Carr 2006) as such shaping reactions to situations (Katz 1988 cited Carr 2006). Perkins (2001 cited Carr *et al* 2010 p16) suggested that they can be summarised through the three elements of attitude, alertness and ability.

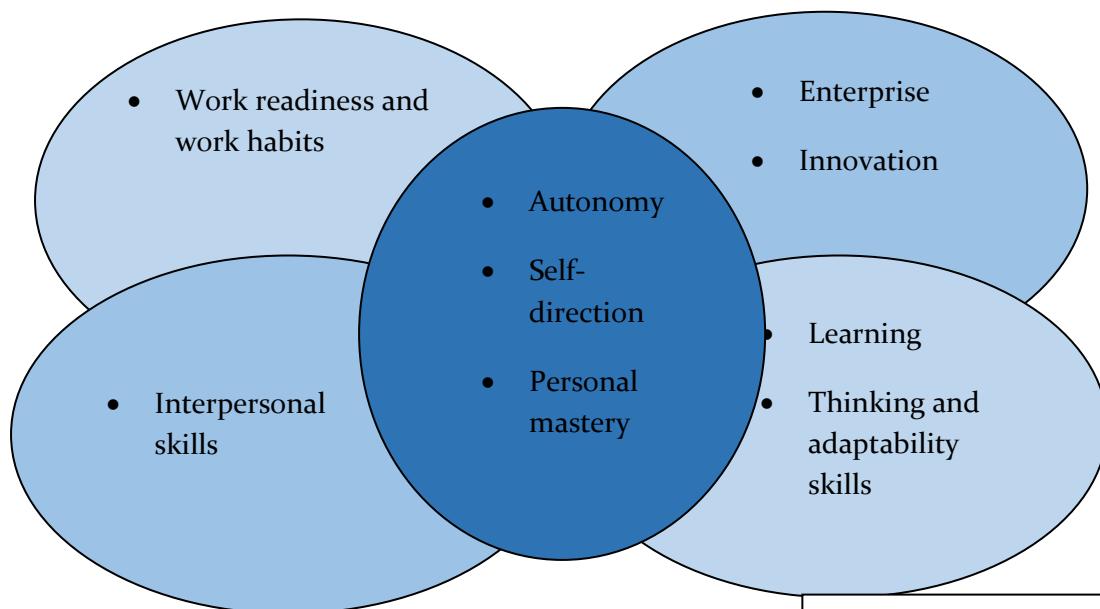
Dispositions can be considered to be learning to be a good thinker through 'learning to recognise and search for opportunities to apply one's capacities' (Carr 2001 p9). Further Carr (2001) and NZME (2012) state they are a social construct and can be supported in learning environments that value thinking, autonomy and independent judgement. Dispositions such as resilience, persistence and curiosity are seen to be supportive of lifelong learning as they are not constrained by curriculum, subject or age; as such they are seen to be a motivator in learning (NZME 2012). As such learning environment provision should recognise the need for relationships both with others and the environment, inviting learners with fragile dispositions in with a 'sensitivity to occasion' , offering opportunities for co-constructive meaning making (Claxton and Carr 2004 cited Carr *et al* 2010 p18).

Appendix Three

Kearns Cluster of Key Generic Skills

- Basic skills
- Using technology
- Practicality
- Business of orientation
- Planning and organising
- activities

- Enterprise
- Entrepreneurship
- Innovation
- creativity



- Communication
- Team skills
- Customer services
- Cultural understanding

- Learning
- Thinking
- Analytical capability and problem solving
- Systems thinking
- adaptability

Adapted from Kearns 2001 cited Amalathas, E., 2010, *Learning to Learn in Further Education*: London, CfBT Education Trust p14

Appendix Four

Possible Alignment of Resources Across Learning Dispositions and Key Competencies

Te Whariki strand	Learning disposition as an action	Key competencies	Mediating resources
Belonging	Taking an interest	Participating and contributing	Communities that connect with the learners funds of knowledge and suggest possible selves and interests
Well-being	Being involved	Managing self	Local resources and routines that can be orchestrated by teachers and learners
Exploration	Persisting with uncertainty and challenge	Thinking	Ways of thinking and exploring
Communication	Expressing ideas and feelings	Using language, symbols, and texts	Diverse languages, symbols and texts
Contribution	Taking responsibility	Relating to others	Other people, in a range of roles

Adapted from Carr, M., 2006, *Learning Dispositions and Key Competencies: a new curriculum continuity across the sectors?* Available from: <http://www.educate.ece.govt.nz/learning/exploringPractice/EducationalLeadership/LeadingProgrammes/Environment/LearningDispositions.aspx> [Accessed 2nd January 2015]

Appendix Five

Habits of Mind Cultivated in Schooling

1. Deference
2. Unquestioning acceptance of authority
3. Neatness
4. Punctuality
5. Accurate recapitulation
6. Sequestered problem solving

Adapted from Claxton and Lucas 2008 cited Amalathas, E., 2010, *Learning to Learn in Further Education*. London: CfBT Education Trust p18

Appendix Six

Skills for Employability

- Aesthetic skills
- Adapt to change
- Willingness to learn
- Flexibility & adaptability
- Team working
- Problem solving
- Attitude & motivation
- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Enthusiasm
- Questioning and listening

Adapted from: Belt, V., Drake, P., and Chapman, K., 2010. *Employability Skills: A Research and Policy Briefing*. Wath Upon Dearne: UKCES Crown Copyright

Appendix Seven

Methods of Embedding Employability

- Working in an informal way using practical activities
- Giving learners responsibility
- Involving learners in setting ground rules and session structure
- Using workplace strategies – problem solving learning
- Having the right teacher for the job – high levels of experience
- Developing assessment for employability skills
- Work relating codes of conduct
- Peer checking and assessment
- Work experience
- Engaging employers
- Employer involvement in the course design and delivery
- Be explicit about how delivery supports employability
- Encourage reflective learning
- Use personal development plans to integrate all opportunities for developing employability skills
- Create a specific brand for employability skills separate from the careers service to demonstrate the importance of transferable skills
- Ensure that leaders champion the importance of delivery of employability skills

Adapted from: Belt, V., Drake, P., and Chapman, K., 2010. *Employability Skills: A Research and Policy Briefing*. Wath Upon Dearne: UKCES Crown Copyright

Appendix Eight

Setting Questionnaire

Dear Setting

I am completing a small piece of research about skills for employability. I would like to provide our childcare and education learners with the best possible grounding for a career when they leave college. I appreciate how busy you all are and that time is very limited, I would be very grateful if you could spend five minutes highlighting what you believe are the five most important skills for early years practitioners. I have attached an information sheet about the research and an ethical agreement. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information or you have any queries.

Please highlight the five most important skills or add your own

Communication	Punctuality	Writing skills	Observation	Perseverance	Initiative
Practical skills relating to the role	Reliability	Honesty	Integrity	Trustworthy	
Open Mindset	Resilience	Playfulness	Creativity	Curiosity	Confidence
Responsible	Teamwork	Flexibility	Organisation	Interpersonal skills	
Problem solving	Politics				

Other:

Appendix Nine

Curriculum Area Questionnaire

I am completing a small piece of research about skills for employability. I would like to provide our childcare and education learners with the best possible grounding for a career when they leave college. I appreciate how busy you all are and that time is very limited, but I would be very grateful if you could spend five minutes highlighting what you believe are the five most important skills for employment. I have attached an information sheet about the research and an ethical agreement. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information or you have any queries.

Prospective area of learner future employment:

Please highlight the five most important skills or add your own

Communication Punctuality Writing skills Observation Perseverance Initiative

Practical skills relating to the role Reliability Honesty Integrity Trustworthy

Open Mindset Resilience Playfulness Creativity Curiosity Confidence

Responsible Teamwork Flexibility Organisation

Interpersonal skills Problem solving Politics

Other:

Appendix Ten

List of Ethical Issues

Issues arising early in the project:

1. Worthiness of the project
2. Competence boundaries
3. Informed Consent
4. Benefits, costs, reciprocity

Issues arising as the project develops:

5. Harm and risk
6. Honesty and trust
7. Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity
8. Intervention and advocacy

Interests arising later in, or after, the project:

9. Research integrity and quality
10. Ownership of data and conclusions
11. Use and misuse of results

Adapted from Miles and Huberman 1994 in Punch 2009 p50,51

Appendix Eleven

Gatekeeper consent – signed copy available on request

Health, Care and Early Years Staffroom G107

Ashdown Building

Yeovil College

BA21 4DR

15th December 2015

Dear

I am writing this to formally ask your permission to carry out a piece of research, as discussed within the research proposal that I gave you previously. My area of research is the embedment of skills for employability; I intend to gain data from colleagues, learners and partners in early years settings in the community for this research.

This research will be submitted to the University of Gloucester, as part of my PGCE alongside being presented as practitioner research to emCETT (May/June 2015).

I will be using an ethical agreement and information sheet to ensure that all participants are fully informed prior to consenting to take part in the research. I will share copies of these documents and my findings as the research progresses.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Pavey

Fiona Pavey

Appendix Twelve

Information Sheet

Information Sheet

I am currently completing a small piece of practitioner led action research.

This research will be shared with and presented to emCETT (East Midland Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training) and The Education and Training Foundation alongside Yeovil College.

My working title is: - How do I embed skills for employability into the Level 3 Early Years Educator program?

A consideration of what are skills for employability from the multiple perspectives of early years settings, further education practitioners and learners currently undertaking the Level 3 in Childcare and Education.

It is the aim of this research that it will

- Be beneficial
- Be transparent
- Be respectful of the views and opinions of those taking part

I would like to ask you to take part in this research. This is completely voluntary and should you wish to withdraw from the process at anytime up until the end of the data collection period, this can be done without reason or any recrimination.

Data gathered from the questionnaires will be considered alongside data from interviews, learner sessions and personal reflections.

This information is intended solely for the use of this research. However should information arise that causes concern for the safety of anyone I will have to share this.

Appendix Thirteen

Ethical Agreement

Title - How do I embed skills for employability into the Level 3 Early Years Educator Programme?

Have you received and read the information sheet?

Have you had the opportunity to ask any questions and discuss this research?

Have you received satisfactory information about this research?

If you have not received enough information, would you like to discuss this further?

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the research?

- at any time up until the end of the data collection period
- without having to give a reason
- without any recrimination
- that this research will be transparent
- that this research should not add to your workload

Do you agree that your views, when expressed anonymously can be used for the purpose of this assignment?

Do you agree to take part in this research?

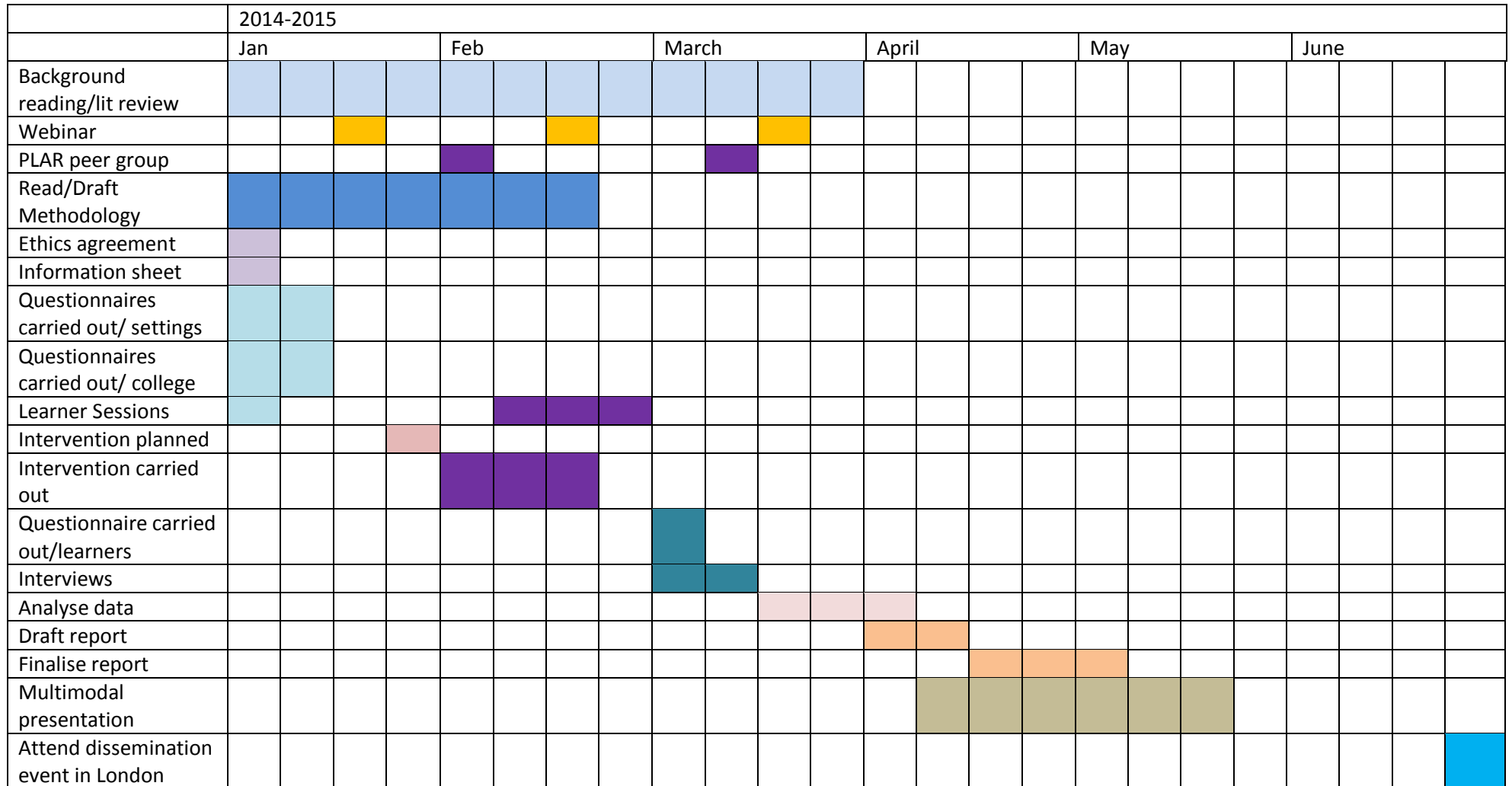
If participating in telephone or email questionnaire then responses are taken to include agreement to the above questions.

Signed

Date

Name (Printed)

Appendix Fourteen Gantt Chart



Appendix Fifteen

Research Raw Data

Analysis of learner posters

31 posters

Communication	26
Teamwork	9
Time Keeping	7
Organised	6
Determination	4
Confidence	4
Reliable	3
Reflection	2
Punctual	2
Trustworthy	2
Commitment	2
Knowledge and Understanding	2
Drive/Motivation	2
Fun and enjoyment	2
Hard working	1
Leadership	1
Creativity	1
Independence	1
Attendance	1

Role model	1
Listening	1
Respect	1
Body Language	1
Patient	1
Understanding current legislation	1
Decision Making	1
Willing to do	1
Logic	1

Of 31 posters prepared

28 different skills were highlighted

One learner only highlighted two skills

14 skills were highlighted only once

7 were highlighted twice

1 was highlighted three times

2 were highlighted four times

1 was highlighted six times

1 was highlighted seven times

1 was highlighted nine times

1 was highlighted 26 times

20 Questionnaires from settings

Communication 18 – relaying information

Reliability 12

Initiative 11

Practical skills relating to the role 11 –basic practice – story reading – being aware pf the EYFS

Teamwork 10

Confidence 6

Trustworthy 7

Playfulness 4

Creativity 3

Punctuality 3

Open mindsets 3 – open to challenge

Responsible 2

Observation 2

Flexibility 2

Honesty 2

Interpersonal skills 2

Problem solving

Organisation

Resilience

Writing skills

Approachable to parents and practitioners

Happy

Sociable

Time Keeping

Being able to smile

Interact with children and adults

Empathy

14 Questionnaires from staff

Communication 12

Reliability 8

Teamwork 7

Practical skills relating to the role 5

Initiative 6

Resilience 4

Responsible 3

Open mind set/ willingness to learn 3

Trustworthy 3

Punctuality 2

Flexibility 2

Organisation 2

Playfulness

Dedicated

Interpersonal skills

Body language

Integrity

Problem solving

Competence

Professionalism

Passion

Knowledge and understanding

Courage

Personality

Dress/appearance

Motivation

Creativity

Confidence

Combined Skills Highlighted

Skill/attribute	learners	setting	lecturers	Total
Communication	26	18	12	56
Teamwork	9	10	7	26
Reliability	3	12	8	23
Practical skills	5 – possible links	11	5	21
Initiative		11	6	17
Organised	6	1	2	9
Time-keeping	7	1		8

Seven skills highlighted taken from the questionnaires to settings and lecturers and learner posters. Learners had not highlighted initiative at all but this had been highlighted by setting as their third most important attribute. As learners had not highlighted at all, this can be seen to be an important element to embed into the course and learner experience within their training to support their future professional practice.

Communication embedded in all sessions.

Analysis of post it note - April 2015

Patience 6

Confidentiality 6

Communication 4

Teamwork 3

Reliability 2

Determination 2

Fun 2

Good judgement

Ability to make relationships

Equality

Confidence

Play

Compassion

Enabling environment

Open mindfulness

Skill/attribute	Learners	Learners April	Setting	Lecturers	Total
Communication	26/31 – 84%	4/10 40%	18	12	56
Teamwork	9/31 – 29%	3/10 – 30%	10	7	26
Reliability	3/31 – 10%	2/10 – 20%	12	8	23
Practical skills	5 – possible links/31 – 16%	1/10 – 10%	11	5	21
Initiative			11	6	17
Organised	6		1	2	9
Time-keeping	7		1		8

Links can be made with many of the skills highlighted and practical skills for early years such as fun, play and enabling environment

Some aspects highlighted directly link with teaching in the last year and continual themes such as making relationships which is essential to practice in early years.

Conceptual Framework

Communication	Relationships	Well-Being	Work readiness and habits	Thinking and learning
Communication	Teamwork	Confidence	Confidentiality	Determination
	Ability to make relationships	Compassion	Reliability	Play
	Equality	Fun	Good judgement	Enabling environment
		Patience		Open mindfulness



This project has been developed and supported by the Foundation's Practitioner-Led Research Programme (2014-2015) and the East Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (emCETT)



For further information please contact Fiona Pavey on fiona.pavey@yeovil.ac.uk