Early Years Twilight Seminar August 14 Video

14 August 2019 video transcript

Video 9: Reflective practice

DARLENE LEACH: We're in a situation in Victoria at the moment where we have a strong dedication to reflective practice. I think we see that in our every day work and also the work that we're seeing at a larger context, as such. Quite deliberately, in the Victorian early years learning and development framework, we put reflective practice as the first practice principal that you read as you open the document quite deliberately, because it does influence everything that we do or should. It's not always easy to do that. I'd like to understand what happens in Sweden and whether or not that emphasis on authentic reflective practice is – is part of the way educational teams work together and – and with families.

SUSANNE GARVIS: So I think that's a really great question because critical reflection is a very much ingrained Principle that comes through this concept of diskutera as well that I talked about earlier of discussion, and the idea is that the critical reflection is happening in the preschool team as well. So – so time is given for the preschool team to reflect together about children, situations, experiences that have actually happened. And usually with this critical reflection engagement, different perspectives are taken. So can we think about this from the child's perspective? Can we think about this from the family's perspective?

So taking on different roles as part of this idea of reflecting on what is – what is happening but also asking questions that prompt further reflection, so it's an ongoing cycle. And the questions then become part of the routinal practice, and over time it's part of the development of the preschool teacher's role to be done either in the moment as well sometimes or in an actual planned reflection as well. And it's getting this – the skill development as well of being able to take on the different perspectives all the time. And it's really, really interesting as well when you think about what an important role critical reflection takes on as a professional, and part of this idea of professionalism is really engaged in the Swedish culture around continuous reflection around especially this idea of equivalent education for all.

DARLENE LEACH: So, for example, if we just tease that out a little bit more. A child is beginning inskolning, if I've got that correct.

SUSANNE GARVIS: Yes.

DARLENE LEACH: What kind of prospectives or what kind of reflective practice would a teaching team think about? You mentioned before about a family perspective or the – and the child perspective. Can you explain how that would look and feel on those first few weeks of inskolning.

SUSANNE GARVIS: So inskolning will look different for every single child depending on the child but also the information from the family and how it's actually going with the children. So, the first meeting is really important for the sharing of information and also the building of trust between the parents, the child and the preschool team itself. And in inskolning there is continuous communication that is happening. So even regular sharing of photos, information, and if the parent is out of the room this is happening in a digital format. So if the child is familiar and comfortable with some routines, for example, this is reported – and if the parent is out of the classroom, this is reported to the parents and then there is this discussion that happens as well at the end of each day after inskolning between the – the teaching team or one of the individual members of the teaching team and the parent.

So there is a continuous dialogue, and I think that's the key here as well, is that that dialogue is so important for information around working with what's best for the child. So, for example, one child – it may be their first ever experience with such a large group of children. So even this type of information is really important for the teacher. How can they ensure that the child is able to feel safe and secure when all of a sudden they have six or seven children around them? So in this particular instance the preschool teacher would reflect and take it in small steps, so perhaps introduce the child to one or two children initially and then as the child became more comfortable with this build more children into the play area as well.

DARLENE LEACH: So are you saying those deep-level conversations, those shared sustained thinking, is not just about working with a child but also working with the family as well.

SUSANNE GARVIS: Absolutely. Working with the family is critical 'cause that's where the important information is coming as well. And it can be even little things such as what the child has done for the weekend and this can then be brought up at meal times as a discussion prompter for the child to then explain what's been happening. So it's finding these – these points in time as well that can be very useful from parent information.

DARLENE LEACH: And the parent expectation that they would meet with an educator twice a year, I think you said, what kind of discussion points would they be looking at then?

SUSANNE GARVIS: So the discussion is based around the curriculum, and so it can be directed by either the family or the team depending on what they really wanna talk about, and again it's different depending on the family and depending on the teacher and the child. So, I'm also a parent. The photos that I shared earlier are actually of my daughter, and in the development talks that I have with the preschool team, it's very much focused on early oral language development. And so they will talk to me about what my daughter is saying and we're sharing ideas of what's happening in the home life, how can this be supported more in the preschool or vice versa. They'll also share trivial stories, ideas. They will also share important snippets that I may not know about. But the idea is that there is a team between – or a collaboration between the family and the preschool team and that there is continuous reflective questions that are happening as well.