

Relationships at work: Working relationships?

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Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

SEASONS OF CHANGE EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2014

Research

- Phenomenological study
- Lived experiences of a small group of teacher aides working in Preparatory classes in Queensland Catholic schools
- Metaphor: ropes as lived experiences



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Role of teacher aide (4.5-5.5 yr old chn)

Pedagogical:

- individual, small and large groups
- support children with toileting, organising possessions...

Organisational/clerical:

- prepare/clean/pack away resources
- maintain equipment records
- assist with compilation of children's records



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Imaginal experiences and metaphor

- Rope cards: images
- Rope work
- Photos and drawings



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Selection of ropes



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Imaginal experiences and metaphors

Benefits

- allowing a space for and open conversations
- revealing

Hitches

- may not sit comfortably
- control



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Finding knots & frays



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An ambiguous role

- “Where is the list of duties? Where is the job outline? What are you supposed to be doing?”



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- “I felt I was thrown in the shark pit, that’s how I felt! ... at the beginning I felt like my stomach was in knots and I went home every day and cried”
- “I felt like I didn’t know what I was doing...am I doing this right? Am I supposed to be here or am I supposed to be there?”



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A maternal role

- “I feel like I’m drawing more on my experience as a mother working in the Prep classrooms than what I am as an aide”



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A mis-understood role

- “The Principal would discourage a Prep aide from doing the Certificate III because he is saying a Prep job is a Level Two aide... and I’ve been told... “well, I don’t know what you are going to be doing because you are being overpaid”
- “Last year there was a change of Principal and this year when school first started, no aide hours had been allocated to Prep. Of course we’d turned up at the school but I wondered what would happen if we didn't when the Prep children arrived!”



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An un-secure job

- “There’s a line as an aide between what you can and can’t say ‘cause you don’t want to lose your job or hours ‘cause you never know when you’ve got a job from year to year”



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Only an aide

- “Other teachers...a lot of them look as you as the aide. Only the aide and that really annoys me”
- “You don’t need to know about it because you are a teacher aide”



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Perceived as not capable - not trusted

“Sometimes you feel like even though you are more capable of doing a lot more responsibilities and stuff, you’re sort of tied up”

“I’m actually quite capable of speaking to parents about the children’s development and all that but I can’t, so that’s tricky”



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Limited access to knowledge

“I’ll say “you know I don’t mean to pry but how come it was done that way?”

Jacqui felt:

- she was overstepping her place by asking questions
- teacher possessed and protected information
- teacher controlled both her status as knowledgeable, and Jacqui’s status as uninformed or minor.



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Let's try...

Select an image/images to represent..

- yourself at this point of time
- your experience as educational leader
- your journey through assessment process
- your relationship with particular child/parent/family

Talk about..

- reason for choice
- knots, hitches, breaking strains
- unraveling



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Synthesis

benefits to all: gain and give

- may help move from assumptions about others' opinions
- help support respect and reciprocity for all stakeholders
- tapping into the collective wisdom of all can lead to wiser decision making



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