

Understanding Our Sense of 'Being': Reflection, Narrative and The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

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It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are.

***They do their work in silence, invisibly.
They work with all the internal materials
of the mind and self.***

***They become part of you while
changing you***

Ben Okri, 1996 as cited in Perrow, 2008.



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Tracing the Beginning Threads of Personal Connection



This research began when I questioned my beliefs about being an early childhood educator?

The beginning thread:
Who am I?
What does it mean to 'be' an
Early childhood educator?



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Positioning the Researcher – Who am I in this Research?

Who am I as an Early Childhood Educator?

- A Mother
- A Storyteller
- A Steiner Educator
- A Researcher



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Where This Reflection Took Me

A specific pathway was marked through reflecting on my 'being' as
An educator.

This pathway focused on how an educator's beliefs and
philosophy influences practice.



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I Needed a Map

Philosophy is a huge area to investigate – a frame was needed to work within.

A case study was chosen as this frame for the research.



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At The Heart of the Research Were Two Questions

- What is the nature of the relationships which Steiner early childhood educators' have with the children in their preschool setting?



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The Second Question asked:

- What are Steiner early childhood educators' perceptions of (a) Steiner philosophy and (b) the *EYLF*; and what connections can be made between these perceptions and their relationships with children in preschool settings?



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From the Central Questions Pathways Formed

A review of the literature that surrounded the focus questions revealed three distinct areas

Theories of Attachment

Belonging

Personal Philosophy and The EYLF



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Belonging

- As a concept spoke to how we explore identity through critical reflection.
- Looking outside the ‘boundaries’ of our individual practice to see how other educators work.
- A study by McMullen (2010) suggested that this can help educators:

“to question or revisit ...long-held beliefs to shake up old, dusty assumptions about how things are supposed to be”



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Personal Philosophy and The EYLF

“Valuing difference means difference is recognised and talked about. Excitement is shared with others about difference, and difference is enjoyed. There is no longer a need to be embarrassed with difference. Difference can be talked about openly and questions asked. There no longer needs to be a pretence that we are experts. It is appropriate to ask questions; to not know but be willing to find out.”

(Sims, 1999, p.3)



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*The EYLF asks us to reflect and ask questions
about our practice.*

So I asked:

*How do we define our personal philosophy within
the context we work in?*

What is outside the boundary of practice?



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Where the Pathways Led Me

- I held conversational interviews with four different educators about their ways of being with children.
- I analysed the interview data through crafting a story about each educator.



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Understanding Our Sense of 'Being' through Story-telling

I reflected about each participant to gain insight into their character and being in relation to the research questions.

The following reflective questions aided my process of writing the narratives:

- *Who is this person?*
 - *What beliefs do they hold about relating to children?*
- *What perceptions are held about Rudolf Steiner's philosophy of education?*
- *How do they perceive the EYLF?*



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Story as a Tool for Personal Reflection



Alongside the voices of the participants was the thread of my personal narrative. Giving space to listen to this thread has been a personal outcome of this research.



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Tracing our Self-Narrative

Maps are complex – they hold different signposts and landmarks.

If working with children is like a journey:

What signposts would you see on your map of this journey?

These sign posts maybe memories, thoughts, feelings...

Or perhaps people you have met, children you have worked with, places you have visited or books you have read.

What do these signposts tell us about our sense of 'being' and identity?



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Finding the Beginning of our Self-Narrative Creating a Story Map

Tracing our journey and self-story as an educator can help with an awareness of being, knowing and acting in our work with children.

We will do this now with a simple activity of reflecting and remembering.

- *Think back to the time when you first decided to work with children.*
- *Was it a moment you had with a child?*
- *A need or an interest?*
- *Does a particular memory come into your mind?*



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Draw The Beginning of Your Map

With these memories in your mind...

Using your paper to draw marks or shapes to represent these signposts.

Write words that come to you and describe the signposts

These are the beginnings of your map



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Giving Space to Listen to The Voice of the Stories we Tell

Tuning into the voice of my intuition
was crucial to the reflective journey that this narrative
research has taken.



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Listening to the voice in the story of who I am as early childhood educator has been a way to know what it means to 'be' and 'belong' in my work with children.

Listening to the voices of other educators has helped me to see outside my personal frame of 'being' to learn through a dialogue with other educators.



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The Need for Reflection through Self-Story

*I have seen first hand how the process of writing a story
has helped me to identify how my beliefs
influence who I am in the early childhood setting.*

Notes from Research Journal

...and when I understand *who* I am – I am able to see *why* I relate to the children
In a particular way.



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Using Story as a Tool for Practice

For me, story has been a powerful way to process and understand my practice.

Shields, Novak, Marshall, & Guiney Yallop (2011, p. 63) suggest that in our personal story we can find:

*the roots of our present-day perspectives
and actions that we can incorporate into our everyday
meaning-making, using our emergent understanding to choose present and future
possibilities in our relationships.*



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