Pearson
BTEC Level 3 National
in
Children's Play, Learning and Development

Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice

Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs)

For use with Extended Diploma in Children's Play, Learning and Development

First teaching from September 2016   **Issue 3**

Edexcel, BTEC and LCCI qualifications

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Contents

Changes to rubrics

We have made changes in response to DfE feedback.

The rubrics in this Sample Assessment Material have been updated to provide clarity on the conditions under which the task should be taken. Centres should read the Instructions to teachers/tutors and Instructions to learners sections carefully to understand the full detail of the changes. These changes have been summarised below for ease of reference.

Summary of Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Children's Play, Learning and Development Sample Assessment Materials for
Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice **Issue 2 to 3 changes**

Part A – Summary of changes made between previous issues and this current issue	Page number
An introduction section has been added to clarify the: • purpose of the assessment • availability and timings of the assessment • requirements for monitored preparation and formal supervision.	Page 1
The release of Part A to learners has changed from 6 to 4 weeks before undertaking Part B of the assessment.	Page 3
Instructions to teachers/tutors section has been changed to reflect the changes in the Introduction and Part A Task front sheet, this includes: • recommendation for learners to spend on independent research reading secondary sources has changed from 18 to 8-10 hours • monitored preparation in 6 scheduled hours • stipulations on format of notes and notes that can be taken into the supervised assessment have changed from 6 to 4 sides of A4.	Pages 4-5
The Instructions for learners section has changed to reflect the changes in the instructions for teachers and tutors.	Page 6
Set Task Brief section has changed to reflect the changes in the Instructions for teachers/tutors and learners sections.	Page 7

Part B – Summary of changes made between previous issues and this current issue	Page number
Set Task section wording has been revised to reflect the changes in the Instructions to teachers/tutors and/or invigilators and learners sections, this includes: • wording for Activities 1, 2, 3 and 4 has changed for clarity • Activity 3 marks have changed from 15 to 20 • Activity 4 marks have changed from 20 to 15.	Pages 27-42

Sample marking grid – Summary of changes made between previous issues and this current issue	Page number
Marking grids have been revised in accordance with Activities 3 and 4 changes, marks have been revised accordingly.	Pages 46-48

If you need further information on these changes or what they mean, contact us via our website at: qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/contact-us.html.

Introduction

Teachers/tutors are asked to read this section to understand the structure of the assessment for this unit as illustrated in this sample assessment. This information will not appear in the text of the live assessments.

The key purpose of this assessment is to allow learners to show how they can use research in the completion of extended written activities.

This assessment will be offered twice a year.
Part A is issued four weeks before Part B to allow learners to prepare.

Independent preparation is required for Part A of this assessment so that learners are able to research a specific issue using the information provided. Centres need to make provision for this preparation using scheduled lessons totalling 8-10 hours and should ensure that learners have access to information and equipment that may be required. Learners should be working independently rather than being taught or directed.

Monitored preparation is provided for when learners produce materials that are used in any formally supervised session. This includes notes, artefacts, assets, plans etc. as specified in the sample assessment. Monitored sessions are where learners are being directly observed. They may have, where specified, access to their own outcomes from preparation, access to the internet and use of appropriate resources. Learners are working independently and teachers/tutors will be able to authenticate that the outcomes for formal assessment meet the requirements and are authentic. At the end of the monitored preparation centres will retain the notes which will be provided to learners during the formal supervised assessment. After the assessment the notes will be retained by the centre and may be requested by Pearson during the marking process.

Part B of the assessment includes unseen material. It will take place under full formal supervision to ensure that learner work is authentic and that all learners have had the same assessment opportunity. The formal supervision takes place in a single timetabled session of three hours.

The assessment evidence submitted to Pearson for Part B is a written task and answer book.

Formal supervision is the equivalent of examination conditions. Learners must work independently, cannot work with other learners, cannot talk about their work to other learners and will only be able to access the materials specified in the assessment.

Write your name here

Surname		Forename		Level
				3

Children's Play, Learning and Development

Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice

Extended Diploma
**Sample assessment material for first teaching
September 2016**

Part
A

Monitored hours
6

Instructions

○ **Part A** contains material for the completion of the preparatory work for the set task.

○ **Part A** is given to learners **4 weeks** before **Part B** is taken under formal supervision as scheduled by Pearson.

○ **Part A** must be given to learners on the specified date so that learners can prepare as directed and monitored.

○ **Part A** is specific to each series and this material must only be issued to learners who have been entered to undertake the task in that series.

○ **Part B** contains unseen material and is issued to learners at the start of the specified formal supervised assessment session on the timetabled date specified by Pearson.

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Instructions to Teachers/Tutors

This set task has a preparatory period. **Part A** sets out how learners should prepare for the completion of the unseen task in **Part B** under supervised conditions.

Part A should be issued to learners **4 weeks** prior to undertaking **Part B** of the assessment.

Learners should be provided with the opportunity to conduct independent research in order to select and read secondary source materials such as articles and journals. Centres may need to make facilities available to learners to support independent preparation. Learners are advised to spend approximately **8-10 hours** on selecting and reading their secondary sources and that spending any longer on this is unlikely to advantage them. Learners may bring their selected secondary sources into the monitored sessions, and these will be subject to monitoring by the teacher/tutor.

Learners should be monitored in **6 hours** provided by the centre to compile notes on their secondary research. During this time they may only have access to:

○ the internet to carry out searches and to access secondary sources in relation to their research

○ outcomes of independent research such as sources that they have selected.

Learners must work independently and must not be given guidance or feedback on the completion of the preparatory work. Learners must not prepare potential responses.

Learners may take up to four A4 sides of notes into the supervised assessment. Learners' notes are the outcome of independent preparation and support learners in responding to the additional information and activities presented only in **Part B**. The notes may be handwritten, or typed in a 12 point size font.

Learners' notes can only include:

○ facts, figures and data relating to secondary sources covering the article's area of research

○ the research methods used in the learner's own secondary research.

Other content is not permitted.

In addition to the four pages of notes, learners should use the monitored preparation sessions to prepare a list of sources that they have used, to take into the supervised assessment.

Teachers/tutors should note that:

- learners notes produced under monitored conditions must be checked to ensure that they comply with the limitations

- learner notes should be retained by the centre between the monitored sessions and the formal supervised assessment

- learner notes should be retained by the centre after the completion of assessment and may be requested by Pearson.

Centres should refer to the Instructions for Conducting External Assessments (ICEA) document for full information on the correct conduct of monitored assessment.

Instructions for Learners

Read the set task information carefully.

In **Part B** you will be asked to carry out specific written activities using the information in this **Part A** booklet and your own research on this topic.

In your preparation for **Part B** using this **Part A** booklet you may prepare short notes to refer to when completing the set task. Your notes may be up to four A4 sides and may be handwritten or typed in a 12 point size font. Your notes can only include:

○ facts, figures and data relating to secondary sources covering the article's area of research

○ the research methods used in the learner's own secondary research.

Other content is not permitted.

You will complete **Part B** under supervised conditions.

You must work independently and should not share your work with other learners.

Your teacher will provide a schedule for the **6 hours** of monitored preparation.

Your teacher can not give you feedback during the preparation period.

Set Task Brief

You are required to use your understanding of research methodologies and associated issues related to a piece of current research on the early years education issue, and to use your own skills in carrying out secondary research around the issue.

It is recommended that you spend approximately **8-10 hours** on carrying out your secondary research.

To prepare for the set task in **Part B** you must carry out the following:

1. Analyse the article.

2. Carry out your own independent secondary research based on the content of the article. You must use at least three secondary sources in your research.

3. You must prepare the following for your final supervised assessment:

    ○   a list of your secondary sources

    ○   notes on your secondary research – you can take in no more than four A4 pages of notes.

During the supervised time for **Part B** you will have access to this material. You will be required to address questions, based on the given article and you own secondary research.

You will have **3 hours** under supervised conditions in which to complete your final assessment.

Extract from Article: Sustained shared thinking in an early childhood setting: an exploration of practitioner's perspectives (2014)

(Anne Purdona - Norland College - Published online: 16 Apr 2014)

Introduction and aims
Definition

Sustained shared thinking (SST) has been identified in the Teachers Standards (Early Years) (2013) as contributing to good progress and outcomes by children. Writing frames, questionnaires and focus group interviews were used with 19 practitioners. SST was considered a child-initiated interaction with links to co-construction. The interaction occasioned deep-level learning in children, who were often totally absorbed and showed learning which was 'sustained' over time. Implications are highlighted, especially the need for additional training in using SST.

It has been claimed that the capacity to engage in sustained shared thinking (SST) with children is central to effective early years pedagogy (Allen and Whalley 2010, 98). SST has been defined as an episode in which two or more individuals 'work together' in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend the understanding. (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002a, 8)

The aim of the current study was, therefore, to explore the views of a number of nursery practitioners about the term SST and its associated practices.

Themes that are incorporated in SST

The concept of SST incorporates a number of themes which need to be explored, such as the nature of thinking skills, the pedagogy of thinking skills including links with language development, co-construction and the role of the adult, including links with the Zone of Proximal Development. Other issues to discuss include listening to children as a prerequisite of SST and the role of the environment.

Explanation of the different themes that are incorporated in SST

First it is necessary to establish what thinking skills are and how children might develop them.

Contrasting theories about teaching and learning thinking

- Piaget (1951) stressed self-initiated discovery.

- Vygotsky (Ford 2009, 70) stressed the role of the adult in contributing to a child's learning and development.

- Fisher (2005, x), building on Vygotsky's ideas, suggests that thinking is the primary process of human life for there is no doing without thinking. This approach highlights the need to support children at an early stage to help them think and make sense of the world.

- Robson (2012, 31) suggests that 'the creation of an atmosphere in which talking about thinking happens and in which children are encouraged to reflect on their thinking, may be most important'.

- Robson's idea is supported by Salmon and Lucas (2011, 373) who suggest that practitioners' attitudes to thinking are significant.

- Rogoff (1990) supports this by emphasising 'guided participation' in cultural activities and the effect of interpersonal and community processes in thinking: 'cognitive development consists of individuals changing their ways of understanding…in shared endeavours with other people building on the cultural practices and traditions of communities' (Rogoff 2003, 236).

Links between the pedagogy of thinking skills and language acquisition

Piaget (1951) believed that children already think before the onset of language. He saw the role of language initially as expressing thought (rather than creating it) but as children got older, language was seen as the key way in which initial ego-centric thought became more social and abstract.

- Vygotsky (1986) considered that for a child under two years of age, thought was non-verbal, but by the age of two, language and thought become connected. From that point on, intellectual development would be determined by language. For Vygotsky (1986), language skills and new concepts develop as a child speaks, listens and plays.

- Johnston and Nahmad-Williams (2009, 145) agree, explaining that children make sense of the world through language.

- Palmer and Doyle (2004) explain that the structures of a child's thought processes emanate from the speech structures which they have acquired.

- This demonstrate that children's linguistic skills affect the development of their thought processes. The acquisition of language relates closely to SST as sharing the thinking with someone else through language helps to promote thinking skills.

Effective Provision for Preschool Education (EPPE)

The Effective Provision for Preschool Education (EPPE) project has tested the hypothesis that 'children whose thinking skills have been nurtured in the company of supportive adults will do better than children whose thinking has developed alone or in the company of their peers' (Sylva et al. 2004). The EPPE project showed links between positive learning outcomes and effective support offered by adults through language (Sylva et al. 2004).

REPEY Study

In the related REPEY study (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002a), effective settings were found to be those balancing learning opportunities from teacher-directed interactions with opportunities for freely chosen play activities. In settings considered effective, practitioners guided children into thinking in deeper ways by challenging their thinking. This was usually initiated by the child but then sustained through skilful interactions facilitated by practitioners.

Links between co-construction and SST

○ Rogoff, emphasise the importance of sharing the thinking, engaging with the understanding of the other and studying meaning with children.

○ Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002b, 85) state that 'child development progresses as children experience more challenging sustained shared thinking in their play initially with adults, then in reciprocal peer play and later in sophisticated collaborative play'.

○ Whereas in scaffolding the teacher is in control and often has an outcome in mind, in co-construction the interests and dispositions of the learner are all important and the skill of the practitioner lies in establishing intersubjectivity, allowing the child to accept responsibility for their learning (Jordan 2009, 50; Olusoga 2009,47).

○ Ford (2009) suggests that both the physical and the social environment are highly significant in supporting children's learning, in terms of the most effective intellectual environment for SST.

○ Siraj-Blatchford (2005) has identified a number of strategies to support children's SST one of which is 'tuning in' or listening effectively to what is said.

○ Dowling's (2006) teaching materials to support SST in the early years are based on these strategies. (A list of these strategies can be seen in question 4 of the questionnaire in Appendix 3.)

○ Nutbrown (2011, 149) maintains that 'educators must be tuned into young children's thinking, open to their ideas and responsive to ever active minds'.

- Clark and Moss (2001), Dahlberg and Moss (2005) and Rinaldi (2006) have highlighted the importance of listening to children.

- Fumoto and Greenfield (2012, 48) suggest that when we communicate by really listening, all the parties involved are empowered.

- In Siraj- Blatchford and Smith's study (2010), one of the success factors for effective SST was the ability of adults to show an interest in a conversation led by the child, extend it and develop it without resorting to their personal agendas, which often involved trying too hard to lead children to the 'right' answer.

Role of the adult including links with the zone of proximal development

- Through Olusoga's (2009, 42) summary of the key features of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978, 87), clear links can be seen with SST.

- Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004, 725) have suggested that adults need to have understanding of the child's 'cognitive, cultural and social perspective' to enable bridges to be built between the child's current knowledge and knowledge the child is capable of gaining. Therefore, the adult has a key role to play in knowing the child, being aware of their level of development and through SST having the skill to support them to move their thinking skills onto the next level.

- Sarsani (2005) maintains that building self-confidence in a child is the most important factor in encouraging creative thinking skills. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979).

- Fumoto and Greenfield (2012) have recognised the influence of the environment on the development of a child's thinking skills. Therefore, the promotion of children's creative thinking and social relationships is vital in enhancing the quality of early childhood practice as a whole.

The use of SST could be seen as a criterion for an effective setting

- The REPEY report (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002a) stated that interactions such as SST played an important part in raising levels of achievement and were mostly found in settings of the best quality.

- Walsh, Murphy, Dunbar, and in collaboration with the EYEcep Team (2007,5) stated that 'staff in excellent settings were: more likely to encourage children to engage in new experiences; more enthusiastic about the child's efforts; and more proactive in seeking out opportunities to scaffold children's thinking'.

- The findings of the EPPE project (Sylva et al. 2004) also suggested that the quality of interactions between practitioners and children were crucial. Where warmth was displayed and adults responded to children's needs, more progress was made.

- Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004, 720) concluded that 'positive cognitive outcomes are closely associated with adult–child interactions of the kind that involve some element of "sustained shared thinking"', which they consider supported learning effectively across the whole curriculum. The benefits of a structured approach including the use of SST were considered to be better cognitive and linguistic outcomes.

Relation to government policy

- The Early Years Professional Status Standard 16 states 'engage in sustained shared thinking with children', which 'refers to the development of children's thinking skills…essential tools that enable children to learn' (CWDC 2010, 41).

- The EYFS (DfE 2012), states that one of the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning is described as 'creating and thinking critically – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas and develop strategies for doing things'.

- However, Fumoto (2012, 120) proposes that some of the challenges faced by the early years workforce in promoting SST include 'practitioners' pay and conditions, the training of the workforce, the resourcing of early childhood provision and practitioners' professionalisation'.

- The Nutbrown Report (2012) raised concerns about the standard of qualifications and career pathways in the early years, stressing that high quality early education and care should be led by well-qualified staff.

  - Nutbrown (2012, 12–13) states that 'children learn much in sustained interaction with other children, as well as adults who are attuned to children's learning and development needs who can support their play and foster early interactions between young children'.

  - Nutbrown's recommendations (2012), if implemented, should help practitioners to be equipped to support children's thinking skills.

- Fumoto (2012, 128) concluded that practitioners' efforts to engage in SST with children would be enhanced through commitment by policy-makers to this interaction evidenced by adequate resourcing and training. It appears that the government has recognised the link between effective SST and high quality settings but has not followed this up with funding to develop training. In the knowledge that engaging in SST has been identified in the Teachers Standards (Early Years) (Teaching Agency 2013) as part of promoting good progress and outcomes by children, it will be interesting to see how the training for early years teachers proceeds.

Synopsis of literature review in defining SST

- Guided participation

- Sharing the thinking through language

- Co-construction as important themes

Challenges for practitioners

- Talk about thinking

- Listen

- 'Tune in': know each child well

- Provide strong emotional support

- Be committed to the interaction

The aim of the research

The aim of this research was to find out practitioners' experiences of SST, thus the research questions that guided the study were as follows:

(1) How do a group of practitioners conceptualise SST?

(2) What do practitioners consider to be the benefits of SST?

(3) What do practitioners consider to be the challenges of SST?

Method

In terms of methodology, the aim of qualitative research is to 'understand individuals' perceptions of the world' (Bell 2010, 5) – in the present case, the ways in which a group of early years practitioners conceptualised and used SST.

Data-gathering techniques:

○ Writing frames, similar to those used by Egan (2009), were chosen because respondents could use their own words without judgement, the researcher could take a non-participatory approach, participants were empowered and writing could be as detailed as wished.

○ Taking into account the limitations of the open question style of the writing frame, principally in the way they make data analysis more complicated (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2007, 330).

○ Focus group interviews allowed power to be shared between facilitator and group members (Mukherji and Albon 2010, 123).

○ Questionnaires, with some open questions, allowed for in-depth replies and easier data analysis.

Using these three different methods of collecting data would, it was felt, enhance the validity of the research (Mukherji and Albon 2010, 194).

Context

Using one setting provided the opportunity to 'see effects in real contexts, context being a significant determining factor of both cause and effect' (Cohen Manion, and Morrison 2007, 253).

Sample

My sample comprised 19 practitioners in one nursery. Practitioners were asked to reflect on their experiences of SST using the writing frame, to participate in a focus group discussion and to complete a questionnaire. Practitioners were asked to reflect on any recent experience of SST with any child or group of children in any location in the nursery at any time of day during any type of activity for as long a period of time as the practitioner wished.

Ethical considerations

A consideration of ethics is important at every stage of the research process (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, 51; Mukherji and Albon 2010, 40).

Letters of consent were collected and confidentiality maintained as no names could be matched to any data.

Reliability and validity

Reliability could have been influenced by:

○ The researcher's values and beliefs but with only one researcher the influence would have been the same for each focus group.

○ Honesty is critical at all stages of the research process (Walliman 2005, 337), since the researcher is accountable. 'Silently rejecting or ignoring evidence which happens to be contrary to one's beliefs constitutes a breach of integrity' (Walliman 2005, 337).

This was considered when transcribing the focus group interviews and analysing data.

Validity was to be enhanced in case studies where participants should be allowed to have their own voice, since respondents' own words are often rich in detail and more illuminating than researchers' words (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, 254).

Research approaches

Both deductive and inductive research approaches were used.

○ Where the questions were closed, as in the questionnaire, then this 'top-down' approach or deductive method enabled it to move from the general to the more specific (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995, 22).

○ Where the questions were open, for example in the writing frames and in the focus groups, a 'bottom-up' inductive approach allowed the ideas of the practitioners to be compared to the literature to see if they expressed new insights.

Data analysis

○ The data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke's 2006, 82), which involved 'searching across a data set…to find repeated patterns of meaning'.

○ The process of analysis involved six distinct phases. After becoming familiar with the data through reading and rereading, and the transcription of the focus group interviews, some initial codes were generated manually, driven by the three research questions. Once all the data was both coded and collated, decisions were made about combining various codes to configure an overall theme using tables as a tool to facilitate the analysis. After reviewing, refining, defining and naming the themes, the final phase involved writing a report by producing an analytic narrative of the data.

Results

Although all the 19 practitioners agreed to take part in the research, four practitioners did not return their writing frames. Fifteen questionnaires were distributed but only seven of these were returned. There were four focus group interviews involving a total of 15 members of staff.

The first research question asked: How do a group of practitioners conceptualise SST?

Participation

Practitioners' comments such as 'sharing of ideas', 'encouraging a deeper level of understanding through shared research' and 'learning alongside each other' showed their agreement with many concepts expressed in the initial definition of SST. Such responses may also be linked with Rogoff's (1990) explanations of 'guided participation' in cultural activities and developing understanding through 'shared endeavours with other people building on the cultural practices and traditions of communities' (Rogoff 2003, 237). Linked with this, the idea that cognition is '"situated in" specific contexts' (Rogoff 2003, 237) was evidenced by the attention that was drawn to emotional contexts where children 'feel confident and at ease', where 'it is quiet' and 'plenty of staff' can support. Practitioners highlighted the importance of their own attitude to learning, such as 'learning alongside each other', 'by accepting as an adult you don't have all the answers', 'adults can learn from the child' and 'shared research'. Salmon and Lucas (2011, 373) conclude that when thinking is valued, children are more likely to value thinking too.

Enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism are clearly needed to engage in SST as reflected by the high level of skills practitioners considered necessary and also comments such as 'the more committed and enthusiastic you are the more you do it', 'you need to practise it and do it again' and 'if you're not truly passionate I don't think it's something you would do'. Numerous participants pointed to the need to listen effectively to children as part of SST including 'showing an interest', 'tuning in with children' and 'listening to the ideas, not interrupting them'. This is supported by many discussions about listening skills and SST including those of Siraj-Blatchford (2005), Dahlberg and Moss (2005, 99), Egan (2009) and Fumoto and Greenfield (2012, 48).

The role of the adult in sustaining thinking

In this study, when practitioners were asked to plan a session of SST, many said they could not as it would not then be SST as SST is initiated by the child. This view is also seen from their responses such as 'learning that is child led'. Practitioners at this nursery considered SST as child initiated, not adult led. Once initiated, the interaction progresses as a 'shared' activity indicating that the thinking and interaction between the two participants is apportioned. Olusoga (2009, 48), in a discussion of the concept of 'control' in adult-child interactions, suggests that SST is different from teacher-directed play, for in SST power is shared with control being passed from one participant to the other, but in direct teaching control is in the practitioner's hands. The word 'shared' does not indicate that it is just a sharing of time or resources but indicates some sharing of power, of direction and guidance. This was made clear in responses such as 'asking open-ended questions', 'exploring and extending an idea', 'encouraging a child to make connections', 'adults guiding the children', 'suggesting to a child', 'you have to keep the conversation going' and 'by helping to lead them in their thinking'. Practitioners considered that they have a crucial role to play in SST.

These ideas of the practitioners are clearly supported by the literature. For example, Siraj-Blatchford (2005) lists strategies to support children's SST including tuning in, showing real interest, recapping, clarifying, suggesting and speculating. Dowling's (2006) teaching materials to support SST are based on these strategies. Strong links can be seen with co-construction as evidenced by comments such as 'generating new ideas', 'engaging with and alongside children to encourage a deeper level of understanding through shared research, questioning, active dialogue and participation', 'by sharing suggestions', 'by sharing ideas' and 'making meaning, constructing understanding'. This supports Siraj- Blatchford and Sylva (2004, 720) in their premise that SST includes elements of co-construction in which both parties are 'involved' and the content is 'instructive'.

The second research question asked: What do practitioners consider are its benefits?

SST can 'allow a child to explore with wonder and excitement and be really engaged'. In addition, SST can 'allow children and adults to discern their interests and see how the child explores and discovers', and SST 'helps you understand the child better', which supports the suggestion that SST provides an opportunity to learn more about children's thinking and learning styles (Robson 2006a, 3). Practitioners have suggested SST 'expands the child's learning', 'helps a child share and express ideas' and 'helps to further the child's development'. This adds to evidence from literature including the EPPE project suggesting that children do better when their thinking skills are supported by adults rather than developing alone or with other children (Sylva et al. 2004), research by Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004, 720) suggesting higher cognitive outcomes are closely linked with interactions such as SST and Sylva et al.'s (2007) reference to cognitive and linguistic outcomes being better as a result of SST. Social and emotional wellbeing is also considered a huge benefit, shown through comments such as: 'helps them be a confident learner', 'high level of well-being, self-esteem and trust' and 'better relationships and foundation of trust'. Sylva et al. (2004), supported by Fumoto and Greenfield (2012), suggest children's progress was improved where adults made close relationships with them.

The third research question asked: What do practitioners consider are its challenges?

Finding sufficient time was considered 'hard, especially finding equal time for each child and finding time to finish the activity'. Perhaps the revised, simplified EYFS (DfE 2012) will help staff to have more time to spend with children. Although it is suggested by McInnes et al. (2010, 19) that children might lose confidence when adults engage with them in their play, practitioners expressed the view that you should wait for children to 'invite you to join in', and most effective is 'waiting for them to introduce me into their play' and 'you need to take a step back and really listen to the children first'. This provides more evidence for Nutbrown's (2011, 149) ideas about tuning into children to ensure you are supportive and not interfering.

The most important challenges seen by staff were 'exhaustion and long hours' and 'ratio-group size or one to one, or understaffing'; also mentioning that 'others can distract and interfere'. Fumoto (2012, 120) drew attention to pay and conditions, training and resourcing for early yearsstaff. Participants highlighted the importance of 'the whole team needing to understand SST' and 'lack of understanding or support by other practitioners'. Robson's study (2006b) of 80 early childhood professionals concluded that training needed to focus more specifically on teaching thinking skills. Changes recommended by Nutbrown (2012) might help to alleviate this.

Conclusion

Implications for practitioners

This research has several potential implications for practitioners. Recognising the immense value of engaging in SST should give practitioners pride in their work knowing that their involvement with children can make a difference. In terms of SST the following attributes have been recognised through this study as being most significant:

○ Seeking opportunities to make meaning together.

○ Providing meaningful contexts based on children's interests.

○ Having an attitude to learning that recognises that in some situations the child will know more about the topic than the adult.

○ Being prepared to make their own learning and thinking visible.

○ Listening carefully and approaching all interactions with sensitivity.

○ Using detailed knowledge of the child to use SST effectively as a way of guiding a child to perform tasks beyond their current level of ability.

○ Using scaffolding at certain points in the conversation.

○ Developing the best environments for SST to nurture the child and provide love, warmth and support.

○ Looking for ways to reflect on previous episodes of SST.

○ Seeking training to enhance these skills further and celebrating effective SST.

There are also important implications for settings as practitioners suggested that 'higher engagement leads to a calmer environment' that 'deeper understanding of the child leads to a more motivated team, higher adult engagement and staff retention'. It also points to settings being organised so that the environment provided is of a quality to enhance thinking skills with the best resources and with staff appointed who can provide the correct emotional context for learning with commitment and enthusiasm for the role. It also points to settings providing opportunities for and encouraging dialogue between practitioners so they can learn from each other and can share and celebrate learning that has taken place. In addition, in their partnership with parents, settings could be encouraged to share their understanding of SST and instances of learning that have occurred through SST so that such interactions could be continued and built on in the home environment. Further training in SST, especially for those new to the role, would, therefore, be beneficial.

Challenges for practitioners

○ Understaffing

○ Finding time

○ The fact that the 'whole team need to understand SST'

○ Not having the right resources

○ Lack of understanding or support by other practitioners

○ Exhaustion

Fumoto (2012, 120) proposes that some of the challenges faced by the early years workforce in promoting SST include:

○ Practitioner pay and conditions

○ The training of the workforce

○ The resourcing of early childhood provision

○ Practitioner professionalisation.

'We need political commitment to creating safe and secure environments in which good early childhood practice can thrive' (Fumoto et al. 2012, 137).

Nutbrown (2012, 12–13) states that:

○ 'Children learn much in sustained interaction with other children, as well as adults who are attuned to children's learning and development needs who can support their play and foster early interactions between young children'.

The Teachers' Standards (Early Years) (Teaching Agency 2013) identified:

○ 'Engagement in SST as an important part of promoting good progress and outcomes by children (criteria 2)'.

The revised EYFS (DfE 2012) has been met with a mixture of support and criticism from the early years workforce. Part of the rationale provided for producing a revised EYFS (DfE 2012) was to make 'a step towards a lighter touch regulatory regime', in order to rely more on the professional judgement of early years practitioners and be less prescriptive. Although this is positive, more could be done in the knowledge that when we are constantly told what to do by authorities, government, employers etc. we begin to lose our sense of control over our lives. We may become unable to maintain our psychological space to consider other's thoughts and emotions as we are too busy trying to gain control over what we are doing ourselves. (Fumoto et al. 2012, 133)

The government needs to invest in high quality training for early years professionals to ensure that all involved have a full understanding of SST; this crucial interaction, which can clearly be seen to have many benefits and is a valid criterion for a quality setting. This study has contributed to the understanding of SST, its benefits and its challenges. However, the topic of SST would benefit from further research. It would be valid to discover practitioners' perspectives from other nurseries to compare their views. It would also be helpful to gain the perspectives of parents and the views of children themselves which, owing to the limitations of this study and the time frame, I was unable to do.

However, practitioners at the nursery in this study have spoken passionately about the benefits of SST, which has contributed to our understanding of this interaction. Although difficult to define, SST can be recognised by deep-level learning, evidenced by children who are completely captivated by the interaction and not affected by the usual distractions of a nursery setting. Children become totally absorbed and wish to revisit their investigation later showing that their learning is truly 'sustained' over time.

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Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals

Write your name here

Surname		Forename	

Level **3**

Learner Registration Number	Centre Number

Children's Play, Learning and Development

Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice

Extended Diploma
Sample assessment material for first teaching September 2016

Part **B**

Marks

Supervised hours **3**

Instructions

- ○ **Part A** will need to have been used in preparation for completion of **Part B**.
- ○ **Part B** booklet must be issued to learners as defined by Pearson and should be kept securely.
- ○ **Part B** booklet must be issued to learners on the specified date.
- ○ **Part B** is specific to each series and this material must only be issued to learners who have been entered to undertake the task in that series.
- ○ **Part B** should be kept securely until the start of the supervised assessment periods.

Information

- ○ The total marks for this paper is 65.

Paper reference
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PEARSON

Instructions to Teachers/Tutors

Part B set task is undertaken under supervision in a single session of **3 hours** in the timetabled session. Centres may schedule a supervised rest break during the session.

Part B set task requires learners to apply research. Learners should bring in notes as defined in **Part A**. The teacher/tutor needs to ensure that notes comply with the requirements.

Learners must complete the set task using this task and answer booklet.

The set task is a formal external assessment and must be conducted with reference to the instructions in this task booklet and the Instructions for Conducting External Assessments (ICEA) document to ensure that the supervised assessment is conducted correctly and that learners submit evidence that is their own work.

Learners must not bring anything into the supervised environment or take anything out without your approval.

Centres are responsible for putting in place appropriate checks to ensure that only permitted material is introduced into the supervised environment.

Maintaining security during the formal supervised assessment period

- During supervised assessment sessions, the assessment areas must only be accessible to the individual learner and to named members of staff.

- Learners can only access their work under supervision.

- Any work learners produce under supervision must be kept secure.

- Only permitted materials for the set task can be brought into the supervised environment.

- During any permitted break and at the end of the session materials must be kept securely and no items removed from the supervised environment.

- Learners are not permitted to have access to the internet or other resources during the supervised assessment period.

- Learner notes related to **Part A** must be checked to ensure length and/or contents meet limitations.

- Learner notes will be retained securely by the centre after **Part B** and may be requested by Pearson if there is suspected malpractice.

After the session the teacher/tutor will confirm that all learner work had been completed independently as part of the authentication submitted to Pearson.

Outcomes for Submission

This task and answer booklet should be submitted to Pearson.

Each learner must complete an authentication sheet.

Instructions for Learners

Read the set task information carefully.

This session is of **3 hours**. Your teacher/tutor will tell you if there is a supervised break. Plan your time carefully.

Complete all your work in this taskbook in the spaces provided.

You have prepared for the set task given in this **Part B** booklet. Use your notes prepared during **Part A** if relevant. Attempt all of **Part B**.

You will complete this set task under supervision and your work will be kept securely during any breaks taken.

You must work independently throughout the supervised assessment period and should not share your work with other learners.

Outcomes for Submission

You should complete the task in this task and answer book.

You must complete a declaration that the work you submit is your own.

Set Task

Activity 1

One of the research methods used in this article was a 'writing frames' method using a sample of 19 practitioners. How has the 'writing frames' method been used in this study compared to others you have researched about the issue?

Your answer you should include:

○ other methods of research used to explore the issue

○ how reliable the results of the research methods used are.

15 marks

Activity 2

The research article discussed the benefits of Sustained Shared Thinking in practice and concluded that having a '…deeper understanding of the child leads to a more motivated team, higher adult engagement and staff retention'.

How does the issue and conclusions in this study relate to your own secondary research?

15 marks

Activity 3

The research study concluded with a number of challenges facing practitioners including the 'need for the whole team to understand SST'.

What implications does this part of the conclusion have for improving provision for children in the early years?

In your answer you should refer to the article and your own secondary research.

20 marks

Activity 4

You have been asked to investigate the effectiveness of sustained shared thinking by the manager of a large nursery chain of 20 nurseries.

The manager has produced the following research proposal:

○ visit 3 settings

○ focus on the 4 year old age group

○ set up cameras to record the children during an activity with puzzles

○ the recordings will be used to compare children's ability to complete puzzles on their own, compared to when they are supported by different adults

○ the footage is to be reviewed away from the setting.

Drawing on your understanding of research methods, your preparatory research into sustained shared thinking and your understanding of early year's settings, provide the managers with a report that critically analyses their proposal.

In your report you must cover the following:

○ the ways in which this research could provide valid and reliable data analysis of sustained shared thinking

○ potential limitations or weaknesses of the research proposed and how these could be addressed through suggesting changes or additions

○ factors to be considered in setting up the research activities which may include purpose and objectives, research skills and ethical considerations.

15 marks

Total for Activity 4 = 15 marks

END OF TASK

TOTAL FOR TASK = 65 MARKS

Unit 4: Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice - Sample mark grid

General Marking Guidance

- All learners must receive the same treatment. Examiners must mark the first learner in exactly the same way as they mark the last.
- Marking grids should be applied positively. Learners must be rewarded for what they have shown they can do rather than penalised for omissions.
- Examiners should mark according to the marking grid not according to their perception of where the grade boundaries may lie.
- All marks on the marking grid should be used appropriately.
- All the marks on the marking grid are designed to be awarded. Examiners should always award full marks if deserved. Examiners should also be prepared to award zero marks if the learner's response is not rewardable according to the marking grid.
- Where judgment is required, a marking grid will provide the principles by which marks will be awarded.
- When examiners are in doubt regarding the application of the marking grid to a learner's response, a senior examiner should be consulted.

Specific Marking guidance

The marking grids have been designed to assess learner work holistically.
Rows within the grids identify the assessment focus/outcome being targeted. When using a marking grid, the 'best fit' approach should be used.

- Examiners should first make a holistic judgement on which band most closely matches the learner response and place it within that band. Learners will be placed in the band that best describes their answer.
- The mark awarded within the band will be decided based on the quality of the answer in response to the assessment focus/outcome and will be modified according to how securely all bullet points are displayed at that band.
- Marks will be awarded towards the top or bottom of that band depending on how they have evidenced each of the descriptor bullet points.

Activity 1

Assessment focus	Band 0	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
	0	**1-4**	**5-8**	**9-12**	**13-15**
Understanding research methods, validity and reliability of results of research.	No rewardable material.	• Basic description of research methods referred to in the article with some reference to data usage/extraction. • Reference to other research methods used to explore the issue is superficial and descriptive. • Conclusions on reliability may be offered but are not supported.	• Research methods referred to in the article are described demonstrating a basic understanding of data usage; response may include unsupported evaluative judgements on suitability. • Reference to other research methods used to explore the issue demonstrates a basic understanding. • Conclusions on reliability are offered but not always supported and demonstrate a grasp of the concept in the context of the methods used.	• Research methods referred to in the article are explained demonstrating an understanding of data usage; response likely to include some supported evaluative judgements on suitability. • Reference to other research methods used to explore the issue demonstrates a good understanding. • Conclusions on reliability are offered and supported demonstrating understanding of the concept in the context of the methods used.	• Research methods referred to in the article are explained demonstrating a thorough understanding of data usage; response includes fully supported evaluative judgements on suitability. • Reference to other research methods used to explore the issue demonstrates a thorough understanding. • Conclusions on reliability are offered and fully supported demonstrating a thorough understanding of the concept in the context of the methods used.

Activity 2

Assessment focus	Band 0	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
	0	**1-4**	**5-8**	**9-12**	**13-15**
Understanding the relationship between own secondary research and how this relationship reinforces the importance of the issue.	No rewardable material.	• Basic description of the issue and conclusions are superficial; limited examples of effects on individuals and/or wider society given from wider research. • Basic description of secondary research findings with isolated links to the issue within the article.	• Describes the issue, leading to concluding statements about the issue's importance being offered. Provides some relevant examples of effects on individuals and/or wider society that might be supported by research findings. • Secondary research findings are described and linked to the issue within the article; demonstrates a basic understanding of the relationship between the two.	• Explains the issue leading to conclusions about the issue's importance. Provides relevant examples of effects on individuals and/or wider society, which are supported by research findings. • Secondary research findings and their relationship to the issue in the article are explained; demonstrates a good understanding of the relationship between the two.	• Analyses the issue leading to conclusions about the issue's importance. Provides relevant examples of effects on individuals and/or wider society, which are fully supported by research findings. • Secondary research findings and their relationship to the issue in the article are explained; demonstrates a thorough understanding of the relationship between the two.

Activity 3

Assessment focus	Band 0	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
	0	**1-5**	**6-10**	**11-15**	**16-20**
Research implications for future provision and/or practice	No rewardable material.	• Basic description of implications of the research for provision/practice in the sector. • Implications referred to will be generic and not linked to the issue in the article and wider research. • Rationale for implications may be offered but are superficial and not supported.	• Implications of the research for provision/practice in the sector are described. • Implications referred to demonstrate an understanding of the issue and its context in the article and wider research. • Rationale for implications are offered but not always supported.	• Implications of the research for provision/practice in the sector are analysed and explained systematically. • Implications referred to demonstrate a good understanding of the issue and its context in the article and wider research; may include recommendations for change. • Rationale for implications are offered but not always supported.	• Implications of the research for provision /practice in the sector are analysed and explained systematically. • Implications referred to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the issue and its context in the article and wider research; likely to include recommendations for change which are justified. • Rationale for implications always offered and fully supported.

Activity 4

Indicative Content

The indicative content that follows is not prescriptive and answers should be rewarded for other relevant answers.

- Purpose and objectives of research links to EYFS and expected development of children within the age group
- Sample size is discussed in relation to reliability and validity
- Personal research skills relate to the individual's ability to plan and manage a research project in this context
- Research methods are discussed using the terms quantitative and qualitative
- Ethical issues regarding data collection refer to principles of legislation
- Secondary research is used to support the points made for changing the research proposal

Assessment focus	Band 0	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4
	0	**1-4**	**5-8**	**9-12**	**13-15**
Critical Analysis research proposal	No rewardable material.	• Demonstrates limited understanding of validity and reliability of research in the context given	• Demonstrates some understanding of validity and reliability of research in the context given	• Demonstrates good understanding of validity and reliability of research in the context given	• Demonstrates thorough understanding of validity and reliability of research in the context given
		• Limited identification of some of the limitations or weaknesses of the research proposed, with little reference to the case study	• Identification of some of the limitations or weaknesses of the research proposed, links back to the case study would be basic	• Identification of the majority of limitations or weaknesses of the research proposed, with links back to the case study, however not all suggestions for changes or additions are justified	• Identification of limitations or weaknesses of the research proposed, with clear links back to the case study used to justify changes or additions.
		• Changes suggested to the research proposal, but they are unsupported, and unlikely to result in more valid or reliable conclusions.	• Changes suggested to the research proposal are likely to result in more valid and reliable conclusions, but they are impractical or largely unsupported	• Changes suggested to the research proposal would result in more valid and reliable conclusions, and are mostly realistic,	• Changes suggested to the research proposal would result in more valid and reliable conclusions, they are realistic and

• Demonstrates limited identification of the factors that need to be considered, no realistic solutions are offered.	by any justification • Some factors are identified, with some solutions for how they should be managed. However, not all of these would be realistic	however they are not all linked to a justification • Most factors are identified, with solutions for how they should be managed practically and realistically.	linked to a justification • Range of factors are identified, each with a clear practical approach for mitigating it.

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