Putting educators at the heart of ‘quality’ in early childhood education for sustainable development.

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Today

• Outline of theoretical background
• Case study of action research in the early years sector
• Some conclusions …
Focus of this paper:

- Practitioners’ understandings of ESD linked to socialisation influences
- Practice initiatives
- Their understandings used as starting points for collaborative activities, co-designed by participants with researcher to focus upon different aspects of ESD
Theoretical approaches

- Foundational theorists e.g. Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, Montessori and McMillan who were all advocates of active and experiential learning opportunities, mediated by skilful educators
- Care-full pedagogy (Luff & Kanyal, 2015) which draws upon ethics of care (Noddings, 2012)
Case study – early years setting

- An action research involving practitioners and children in a day nursery
- Co-construct understandings of sustainability with and for early years education and care
Methodology and methods

- Action research in 3 phases
- Initial semi-structured interviews with practitioners
- Ongoing ‘pedagogy of listening’ (Rinaldi, 2006)
- Shared curriculum documentation
- Observation of participants’ actions and children’s works
- Thematic analysis
- Findings shared with practitioners as a basis for reflections on children’s learning and planning for ESD in the next phase
Findings:

- Practitioners’ initial understandings of ESD developed from family, media and workplace

- On-going practice analysed through the lens of UNESCO’s (2010) four dimensions of SD
Practice initiatives – natural
Practice initiatives – social and economic

- Children care for themselves and each other; listen to one another
- Caring for nursery pet rabbit
- Gaining lifelong skills e.g. road safety
Practice initiatives – social and political

- Looking after things with respect – to last longer
- Making sure children are treated equally
- Having Golden Rules and routines for the children
Conclusions and implications

• ‘Quality’ in early years ESD is shaped by knowledge, skills and values of educators
• Understandings of ESD and notions of quality can be negotiated and developed in more holistic ways
• Collaborative working in planning and implementing activities
  Democratic participatory approaches
• Relational pedagogy
• Negotiation of curriculum and assessment
• Opportunities for growth of individuals
• Potential for community development and social change
Thank you

Questions for discussion?
References