

ECEC

Main activities and events of the SIG in the past year.

This has been a challenging year with the move to online/blended and connected teaching and learning. However it has produced a range of new online potential activities that we did not have in the past. These have been forwarded to SIG members as and where relevant. The biggest policy development this year is the Government revision of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. This has been designed to dovetail into Key Stage 1 but there have been a range of concerns over the curriculum and the non-statutory exemplification material (Development Matters). These concerns have centred around the challenges with the research evidence used to devise the material and the lack of engagement from sector specialists (the Government focussing on a small number of hand picked representatives which spanned primary and secondary with limited engagement from the Early Years sector). Part of the SIG advocacy role has been: To be part of the grass roots organisation the Early Years Coalition. This has been set up to produce a research informed ground up non-statutory alternative to the Government curriculum exemplification material. This short term project has been working with the sector and aims to produce the Birth to Five Matters material within the next six months. Our role has been to contribute to the process and ensure SIG members are aware and had an opportunity to feedback to relevant consultation. We have drafted a BERA blog post which is in production on the challenges of the new proposed EYFS. We have set up a Twitter feed @ecec sig - if you are on Twitter please follow us and tag us in to your relevant tweets (conferences, events, publications etc.) and we will share this.

What are the key issues currently affecting your Special Interest Area?

The revision to the EYFS curriculum and the exemplification material - Development Matters. There are concerns that this reflects a 'schoolification' of Early Years and does not offer the same equitable research-led direction of the current framework. The sector and academics have acknowledged work is needed on the EYFS but the current version moves towards a more adult-led pedagogy. There have been concerns about the sustainability of the ECEC sector. This has resulted in settings being vulnerable to closure - the cause has been linked to the partial closure of ECEC settings due to the COVID pandemic and the lack of uplift in the funding allowances from Government which do not take into consideration cost of living and living/minimum wage increases. There are broader concerns about the impact of the pandemic on children's outcomes due to the Covid pandemic. This is particularly noticeable for children living in socio-economic disadvantage or with SEND. Concerns focus on supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing and development and learning.

Are there any particular developments for your SIG on the horizon, e.g. newsletters, publications, blogs, events, projects?

Due to the current policy landscape and the accessibility of online spaces we are planning a webinar/online presentation series for April 2021 this will explore the implications of current revisions to the EYFS and Development Matters. We will seek to gain the voices of a range of stakeholders and develop the series over a number of sessions/days. We would also like to develop a bank of podcasts and consider a series of presentations on children's moral development. Future developments will include members of the four nations of the UK and we are developing a list of speakers who could be part of these events. The regular newsletters will continue and we will forward information on events to the SIG as and when relevant.

What other organizations does your SIG collaborate with?

We are looking to collaborate with the History SIG and also have been approached to work with the Philosophy of Education SIG. This will allow members to work with the broader BERA membership and connect to other SIG's of interest.

How has your SIG worked to encourage diversity amongst your membership? How do you plan to encourage diversity in the future?

This is an area for development - as mentioned before we are considering other online initiatives to include members from the 4 nations and are building a list of potential speakers to facilitate further engagement.

We are aware of the initiatives to decolonise the curriculum and the lack of representation in children's books/play etc. This will be a focus area for us to ensure that we have a diverse range of speakers at the events we arrange. It is also key to engage with the sector more broadly to ensure they feel part of the SIG as they are key stakeholders in research and the outcomes of research in the wider ECEC sector.