

Lead Examiner Report 1901

January 2019

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

**Unit 4: Enquiries into Current
Research in Early Years
Practice (31599H)**

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January 2019

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Grade Boundaries

What is a grade boundary?

A grade boundary is where we set the level of achievement required to obtain a certain grade for the externally assessed unit. We set grade boundaries for each grade, at Distinction, Merit and Pass.

Setting grade boundaries

When we set grade boundaries, we look at the performance of every learner who took the external assessment. When we can see the full picture of performance, our experts are then able to decide where best to place the grade boundaries – this means that they decide what the lowest possible mark is for a particular grade.

When our experts set the grade boundaries, they make sure that learners receive grades which reflect their ability. Awarding grade boundaries is conducted to ensure learners achieve the grade they deserve to achieve, irrespective of variation in the external assessment.

Variations in external assessments

Each external assessment we set asks different questions and may assess different parts of the unit content outlined in the specification. It would be unfair to learners if we set the same grade boundaries for each assessment, because then it would not take accessibility into account.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, are on the website via this link:

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

Unit 4 – Enquiries into Current Research in Early Years Practice (31599)

Grade	Unclassified	Level 3			
		N	P	M	D
Boundary Mark	0	9	19	30	42

Introduction

This was the second series of the new specification, and as such, the first time that this unit has been externally assessed in the January 2019 series. Learners did not appear to be as well prepared for this series as for the Summer 2018 sitting.

It is recognised that the publication in August 2018 of the Sample Assessment Materials for this revised paper resulted in centres having less time to prepare learners for the January sitting, and that this may have impacted negatively on the quality of the responses learners were able to produce. This was particularly evident in many learner responses which demonstrated limited, or no evidence of secondary research based on the article. Changes to the time allocated for additional research and for the examination itself may also have affected the standard of the responses seen.

It is also recognised that the article itself made reference to broad ranging rationales on the development of children's literacy skills, and to their impact on children throughout their lives. This was confusing for some learners who were unable to focus their own responses on literacy skills, thus making the paper less accessible than in previous sittings.

The question paper follows the format identified in the sample assessment materials. The paper is split into four activities. Each activity requires learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of different aspects of research. This includes research methods, their advantages and disadvantages, the implications of the research for individuals, early years' settings and the wider society. Marks for each activity are allocated in accordance with the specification design.

Each of the questions has been marked using a 'levels based' approach. The overall quality of the whole response is considered rather than the specific number of facts stated from the indicative content, although this does have a bearing on the quality of the response. More detail can be found below in the individual question section of the report.

Introduction to the Overall Performance of the Unit

- Learner performance varied throughout the paper. Learners need to show knowledge and understanding of research methods and their application in early years' practice. Both depth and breadth of information is needed in order to fully address the demands of the paper.
- Activity 1 requires learners to review the stimulus material (an Ofsted report on a small study reviewing the teaching of literacy and language in Reception year settings) and extract information from this report and from research materials that they have sourced themselves. Marks are available for work related to both sources, with additional credit being awarded for learners able to provide comparisons and conclusions.
- Activity 2 requires learners to develop their ideas by relating the findings in the report to practice. This is further expanded on in Activity 3 where learners need to identify and discuss ideas for practice raised by the Ofsted report in reception and to demonstrate an understanding of the implications of doing so.
- Activity 4 focuses on research practices needed to investigate language and literacy teaching in Reception classes, and learners are required to critique a research proposal, making suggestions for improvement where necessary.
- Throughout the paper, where learners were able to show evidence of their own research and application of their knowledge, they were able to access the higher mark bands for the activities. Where basic knowledge was evident, but little reference to secondary research and/or the application of knowledge and understanding was demonstrated within the responses, learners were not able to do this.
- It should be note that responses overall were of a very varied standard, with a small number of learners able to address the paper effectively, and many learners whose responses suggested minimal preparation and little understanding of research practices or findings.

Individual Questions

Activity 1

Some learners were able to identify some or all of the research methods used in the stimulus material. They were able to comment appropriately on the reliability of the research methods used. The authors of the paper had conducted questionnaires and interviews and referenced other research findings. Some learners were able to provide information about the positive and negative implications of these research techniques.

Stronger responses contained about the reliability and validity of the methods used and presented this in conclusions supported by appropriate evidence. They also included reference to research papers and articles that they had sourced themselves, and were able to provide comparisons and conclusions about the appropriateness of the methods used in these papers also. Learners who accessed the higher mark bands were often able to compare the research methods used in the research that they had sourced with those used in the stimulus material provided.

The work shown below demonstrates a comprehensive approach to this question.

Set Task

Activity 1

One of the research methods used in this article was questionnaires.

How have questionnaires been used in this study compared to others you have researched about the issue?

Your answer should include:

- other methods used to explore the research objective
- how reliable the results of the research methods used are.

(15)

Reference List:

Ofsted, 2017. Bold beginnings: The reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools (online). 1, 36. Available at: http://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/attachment_data/file/614792/Early_Years_Curriculum_Report.pdf (accessed on: 12/12/18)

Department of Education, Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+) June 2015 (online) available at: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/23344/1/R8455_Effective_pre-school_primary_and_secondary_education_project.pdf (accessed on: 12/12/18)

http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/print_article/nursery-world/1147928/free-research-eppse-takes-view (accessed on: 12/12/18)

Two year old pilot study (2009) available online at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/pdf> (accessed on: 12/12/18)

<http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nursery-world/1162992/making-the-most-of-reception> (accessed on: 12/12/18)

<http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/print-article/nursery-world/news/1155149/children-who-go-to-high-quality-school> (accessed on: 12/12/18)

This research explores the issue of the importance of the reception year before children attend year one, and that missing this year could hugely impact children's outcomes for the future.

This includes impact on learning and development on future success. The original source of primary research extracted from the article *Bold Beginnings* (2017) was a report about how reception prepares children for year one. The research data was found using several methods, and involved Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visiting primary schools that were rated good or outstanding in summer 2017. I believe that visiting only good and outstanding schools rated by Ofsted would have impacted upon the validity of results (what the research is meant to measure). This is because the research has not taken into consideration of schools which are rated poor or needs improvement which would greatly influence the outcome of results and data. HMI however visited 41 primary schools across England from a diverse range of schools including 28 schools in 40% most deprived areas, and 9 schools in 40% least deprived.

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I must admit that looking at 41 different schools of different backgrounds improves validity, even though there is an uneven percentage of schools in most and least deprived areas - which may change/alter the validity. In addition, by using 41 schools would improve the reliability of results as using a lot of schools ~~to~~ ^{would} improve how consistent the results and data will be. Furthermore, I am going to analyse the validity and reliability of the methods used during this research. Firstly, questionnaires have been used in this study. Questionnaires were used to ask about the context of the setting, and questionnaires were handed out to headteachers which included both open and closed questions. This method I find is ~~both~~ useful for qualitative and quantitative data as questions are broad when using both open and closed questions. However, I feel that having too many open ended questions would ~~yes~~ be detailed but more challenging for researchers to analyse and extract accurate and valid results from too detailed answers. Therefore, I would use mostly closed questions when people answer yes or no. Another method used was ~~to~~ questioning staff on their views, skills and knowledge. As effective this method may be, questioning staff on their views in particular could create invalid results because they may not discuss the truth, feel pressured

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and therefore not speaking ^{about} what they actually feel or it would only be their personal opinion. Therefore, this method could produce biased and invalid results. I would use questioning online so that everyone remains anonymous (remaining confidential and with written consent) so that people are not afraid to speak the truth. However, this should be done whilst taking into consideration ethical issues. Another issue with the validity and reliability of the results is that, Ofsted reviewed 208 questionnaires and 76 schools responded. Having this large sample/amount of feedback would massively improve the consistency/reliability of the results of the research. Another method used was observations of the children throughout the day on their reading, writing and maths. Although it provides broad results by looking at several areas of learning, they have not considered that the children may behave in a different way if they are being observed. Therefore, a different strategy may be better in terms of providing validity and reliability. Additionally, not many methods were actually used to represent the results that were achieved which could impact on the validity of the results gathered.

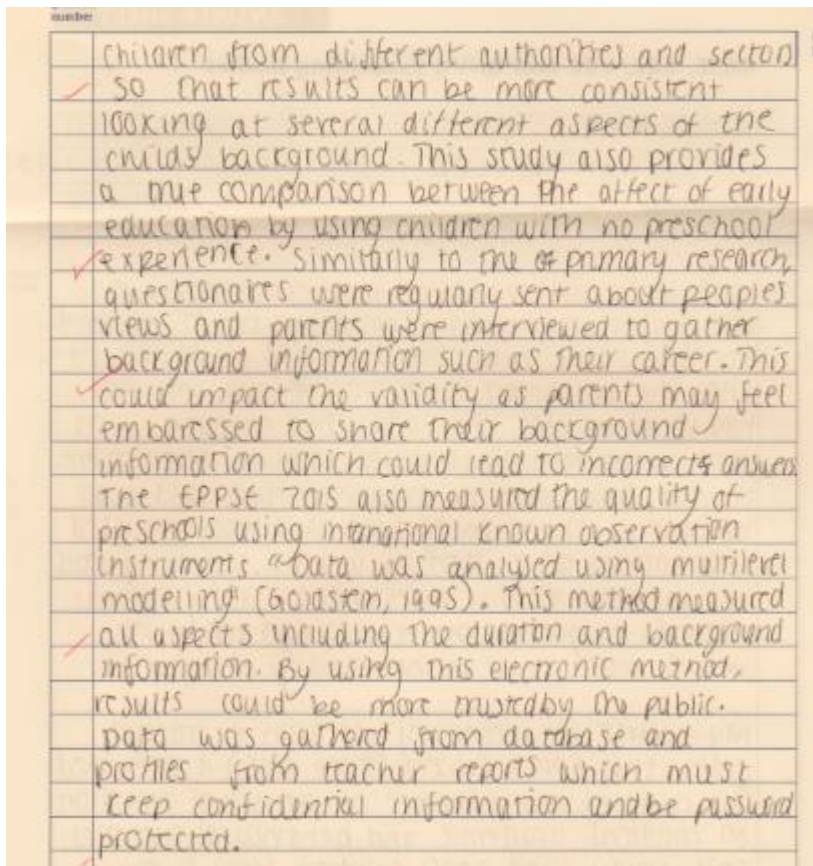
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1 The data was collected and represented in a bar graph which was a clear and precise method to show the data. The disparities made showed that the proportion of children ~~to~~ from 2013-2016 had increased each year and that children with free school meals had lower levels of development. However, there was no evidence that this was because of their background. This research used observations on children as well as screening tools and informal teacher assessments. Using several methods to gather the results can also give people more trust in the validity of results.

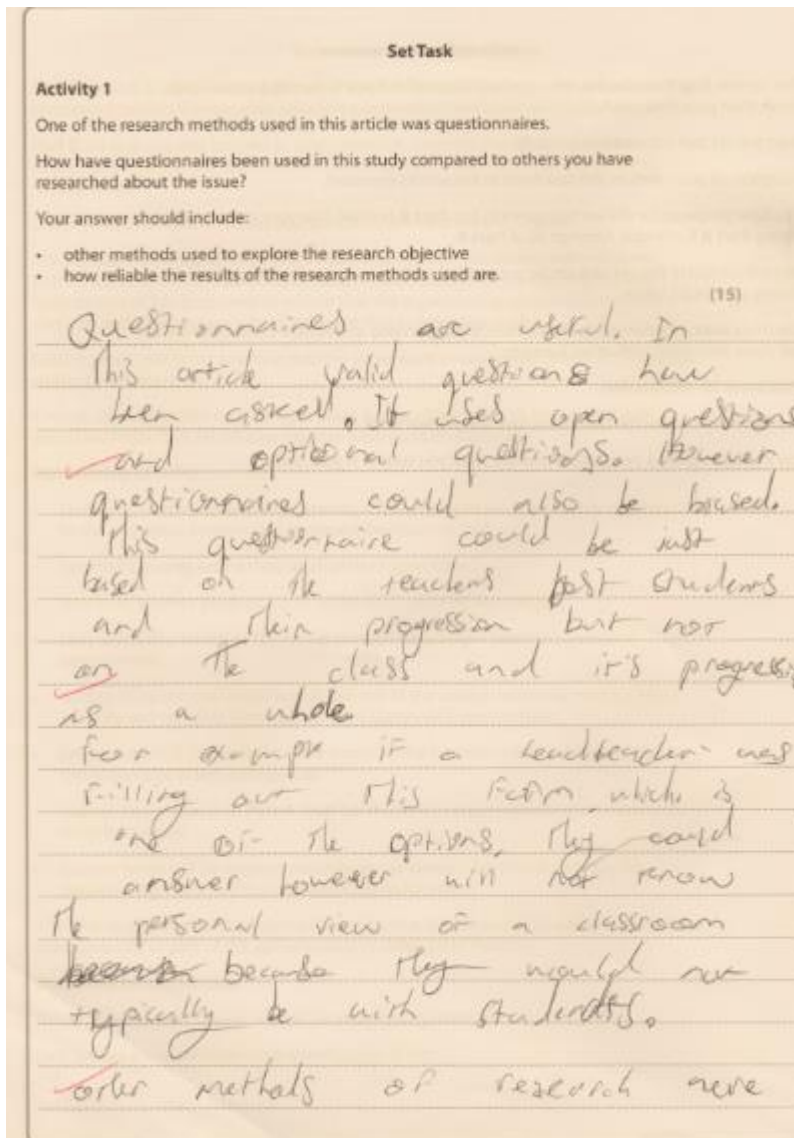
My source of secondary research extracted from the EPPSE Project (June 2015) also explored the issue of the influence of pre-school provision on children's academic and behavioural outcomes. This study used 2800 children from 6 English authorities who attended 141 pre-schools of different sectors including private and voluntary (Sylvia et al, 2004). Then once these children started school, another 380 children with no preschool experience also joined the study. This study of research improves the validity of the results as their sample uses many



Weaker responses made little reference to additional material, or did not show any realistic understanding of the way questionnaires have been used in the study. Suggestions of other methods used to investigate this issue, and comments on reliability and validity were not always addressed. Many weaker responses referred to Free School meals in their responses. This was not appropriate as this information was included in the report as part of the wider Ofsted commentary on children's achievements in early years.

Other responses referred to bar charts/graphs as a 'research method' and did not demonstrate understanding of the difference between finding information through research and the presentation of the findings.

The example below provides an example of work that fails to address key areas of the question:



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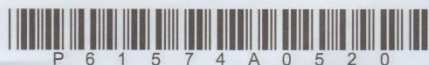
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also used. Bar charts were also used in this article.

Bar charts are useful because they show an exact number of students with or without free school meals. They also show titles of what the bar chart is about. This can clearly show an example of good results and bad depending on the height of the bar.

However the bar charts do not explain how this impacts children and education.



P 6 1 5 7 4 A 0 5 2 0

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Turn over ►

Activity 2

Learners should be able to show an understanding of the key points in the research provided in the Ofsted article. They should be able to develop this by using the information about children's early literacy skills and comparing these findings with the findings in their own secondary research. They should show how this can link to issues in the wider society. For example, children from poorer backgrounds often do not have access to books and other literacy materials at home, and so are less likely to begin school with good literacy and language skills, unlike their better off peers. These children are more likely to qualify for free school meals throughout their school life, and this is recognised in the Ofsted report.

Work for this activity gained marks across the range of the mark bands, although the majority of responses were awarded mark band 2.

Work that achieved in the higher mark bands identified factors that contributed to the successful teaching of language and literacy in early education. Where learners demonstrated links to their own research to support their work they were able to show higher levels of understanding and application of knowledge within their responses to this question.

The example below illustrate the links between the source material and learners' own findings, with reference to the future impact of good language development in the reception year.

Activity 2

The research article explores the factors that contribute to the successful teaching of language and literacy in the Reception Year. The article states 'A good early education is the foundation for later success.'

How do the findings in the article and the conclusions drawn relate to your own secondary research?

(15)

There were many findings in the article and the main one at heart was that 'A good early education is the foundation for later success'. They also concluded many other results as follows: They found that almost 95% of staff believed that reception signalled the start of school 'The beginning' as it is the time in which staff establish the rules, routines and expectations of learning to the new children; for some this was their first experience in an educational setting. // If done well, they believed it could have a huge impact on a child's GCSE results when older. "The curriculum - it's hugely important" this stresses the importance of following the curriculum properly. However, they found that reception was for

from successful for too many children. They said it was "a false start" and that it would effect the children by having "years of catching up rather than forging ahead". // In 2016, 1/3 of children did not have the essential knowledge and understanding they need for a good level of development. They were achieving good development if they met the expected level in their early learning goals in the prime and specific areas by the age of 5. Over 1/2 had the knowledge to give them the positive start to year one. Figure one showed that children who have free school meals achieve a lower level of development. This only increased by 1% in 3 years from 2013-2016. These results could suggest there are more low income families and could indicate the start of the first ever setting due to income and this can lead to them children having a disadvantage. By the end of reception it is fundamental for children to have the ability to read, write and use numbers. Figure two

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Shows children are achieving the best expected standard in health & self-care and technology at 92%. The lowest achieving is writing at 73% and this is fundamental for the end of reception.

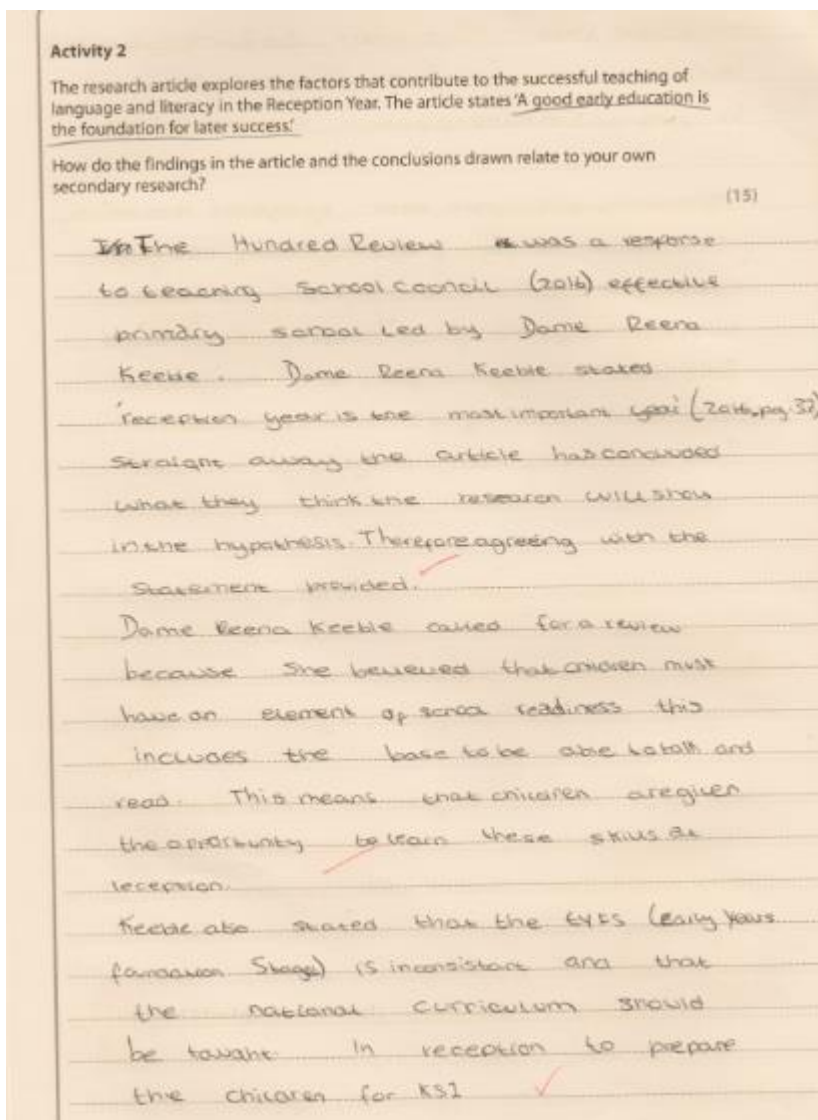
Observed lessons showed that using a direct, interactive whole-class intervention was ^{the} most efficient way children learnt. All schools visited used role play to increase children's opportunities to talk. "Many had more than one role play area, one for familiar contexts; other based on the book read in class." 'Nursery World' wrote that "Reading is at the heart of the curriculum in the most successful classes" however, they found that teachers should focus more on developing children's spoken language and teaching to read using phonics".

'Better Communication Research Programme' had many findings these were as follows. They found the group most at risk of difficulties are

boys, children with EAL and those eligible for free school meals. Demographic variables were accounted for differences between children in communication, language and literacy as measured by the EVFSP. Children who achieved lower than the expected level in reading at the end of KS1 were already developing slow at the end of reception. The progress in phonics would be poor. Early identification should be built into a system of formative assessment. There were moderate to strong correlations between EVFSP total scores and KS1 total. This can highlight the impact of social disadvantage on development. Environmental disadvantage also had an impact at the end of KS1 when 17% of children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are failing to show expected progress in ^{reading} writing and in writing and 12% in maths.

① It can be concluded that the EVFSP provides valid measure for predicting pupils' progress. It is a useful tool to identify children at risk of later educational difficulties. The link between my research and the article would be about the disadvantaged families and how that impacts their children's educational progress. Income is a big indicator on how well a child can do at a setting.

Weaker responses were sometimes able to present relevant information, although this was limited in relation to the links between their own research and the Ofsted report. Learners were able to make some reference to the factors contributing to the development of literacy and language in Reception classes, and made some brief references to the implications for this within the wider society. Weaker responses contained little or no justification for the suggestions made. The work below illustrates this point:



According to Bernstein (2000) 'disadvantaged children may not be familiar with the performance and expected values and behaviours in the education system'. This means that if reception year is used or is not used effectively children can become disadvantaged and teachers may struggle with behaviour management and focus in lessons. This may cause the whole class to become disadvantaged a way to overcome this could be after school clubs such as football where children must follow instructions and focus. The hundred review states that disadvantaged children are 'seen as failures from an early age'. Therefore it is important that practitioners are open minded about all learning opportunities as nobody should think that way.

In the article provided it was concluded that most children go to reception year and in 2016 one third of children did not have essential knowledge to enter KS1. This was mainly disadvantaged children. Only just over half of disadvantaged children were ready and had

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the knowledge to start yr 1. It was found that since 2014 expectations have increased by Ofsted to ensure that children have a good understanding to read, write and maths for year one. English is a priority in all schools as it is the foundation of each subject. Head teachers have also seen with the 'no catch up later' views on school therefore children must have interventions etc to ensure they know the essential knowledge before moving on to a new topic. Schools are also making more referrals so that children receive the best start in their education.

The research provided has also shown that disadvantaged families with FSM (free school meals) have received lower grades since 2013. This was shown in figure one. In figure 2 it was seen that at the end of reception children must be able to read and write to help in KS1.

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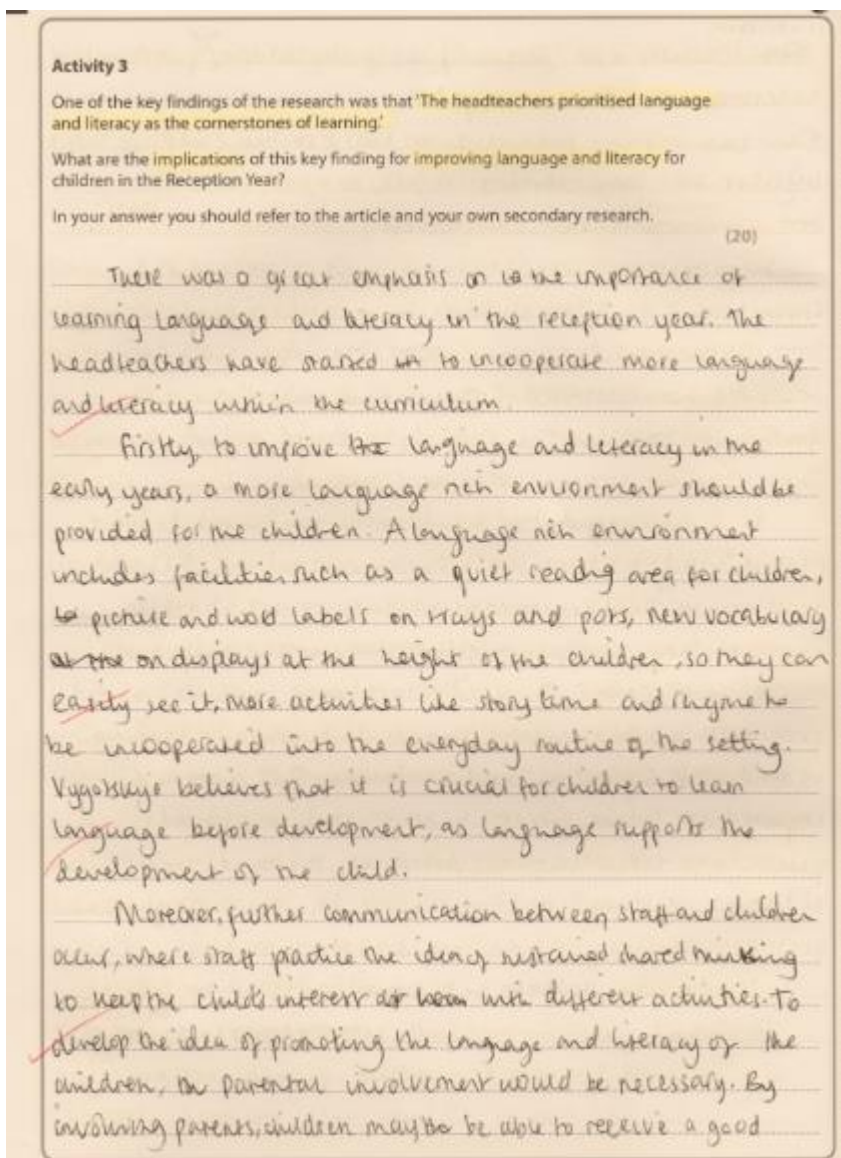
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Activity 3

More learners were able to access the demands of this question, albeit with varying levels of skill. Stronger responses demonstrated an understanding of appropriate implications of improving literacy teaching in the Reception year supported by justifications from the Ofsted article and learner’s own research findings. Reference to wider society and future opportunities for children showed learners’ understanding of the implications of good quality literacy teaching in the early years.

The work below provides an examples of work that addresses key areas of the question:



home-learning environment, as this idea has been reinforced by the EFFE project. A home learning environment could include the parents taking the children to the local libraries or reading/ supporting them at home. ^{this also promotes the staff and parent relationships, promoting the children's development further.}

It has been noted that 'reading is the context in which the typical reception child encounters new vocabulary,' as suggested by the extract in *Bold Beginnings* (2017, 10). Teachers need to make that they plan their lessons with which would benefit the children. When the children learn new phonemes or graphemes, they should be able to practice this outside of the structured lessons to be able to develop their skills by watching the reading schemes, for example the ~~ext~~ Oxford Reading Tree books to the lessons learnt in class, allows the child to develop their knowledge and sustain it for longer since it has been reinforced within to them.

Furthermore, teachers themselves need to be aware of the requirements of the National EYF5 and the children's transition from Reception to the new year 1. Due to ~~constant~~ continuous changes within policies, and procedures and curriculum, all the staff members should receive appropriate training. Teachers need to feel good confident with teaching the curriculum as this would be reflected on the children's outcomes.

In the *Bold Beginnings* articles (2017), moderators had asked teachers for 'three pieces of evidence for every separate sentence within the early learning goals', this

states the pressure teachers receive receive in the reception year to maintain evidence that children are competing the ~~best~~ to early learning goals. This would maybe distract the teachers from their core purpose of teaching, in this case it would be literacy and language skills.

If the early learning goals change then there maybe a chance that it may occur that teachers would pay ~~less~~ ^{more} attention to let the quality of pedagogy they deliver to the children. However TACTYC (2017) disagree with the idea of a more formal education as the children may ~~become~~ have a 'lowered self-esteem', 'lack confidence' or even have 'anxiety'. ~~Teachers~~

Moreover, to improve the language and literacy of the children, teachers are using the National Curriculum (2014) designed for year 1's to inform their planning. As seen in this OFSTED (2017) report the teachers are "promoting children to 'say out loud what they are going to write about, composing a sentence orally before writing it, sequencing sentences to form short narratives, re-reading what they have written about their writing'. This has been is something required by the National Curriculum (2014) yet has been ~~started~~ to implemented by the reception classes. The schools that have evidently used this approach are the good/outstanding schools where even 'disadvantaged' children receive good or above average results. If this ~~is~~ starts to be implemented in all schools, then maybe the standards

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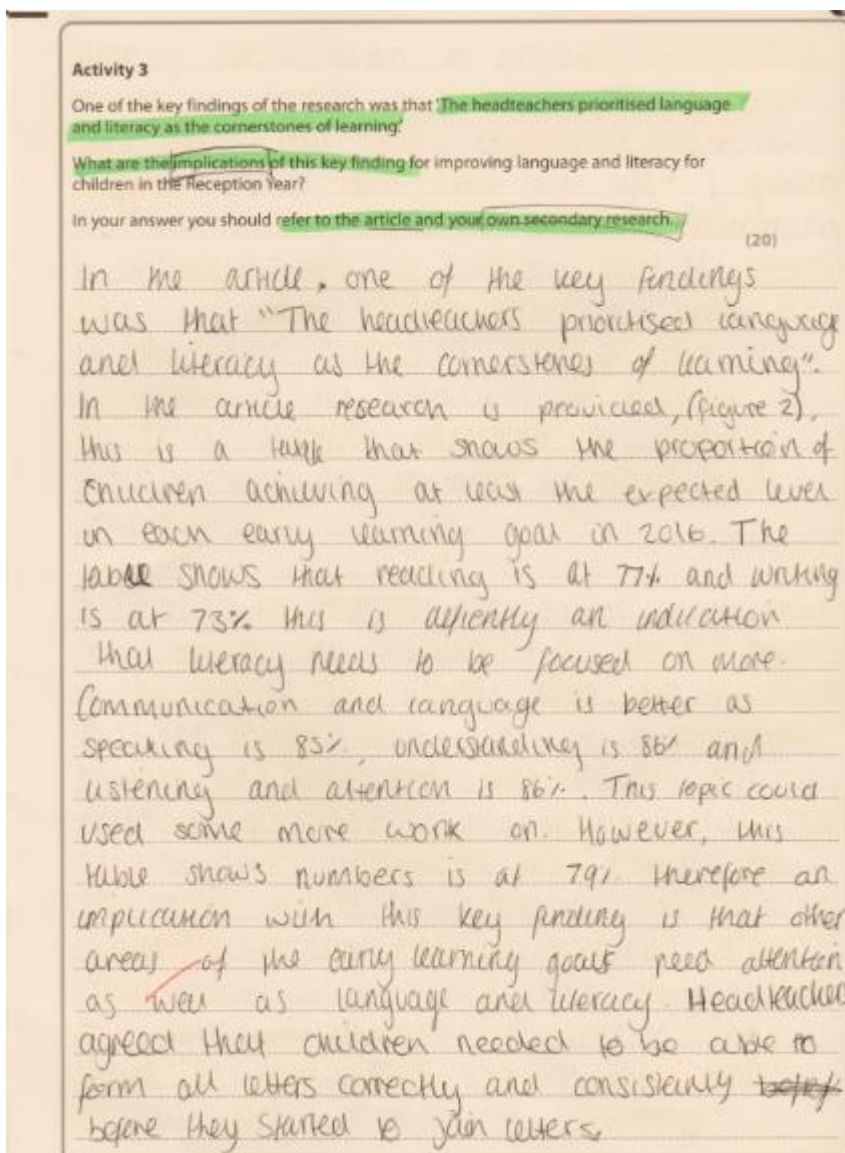
of reading and writing would rise greatly.

However, improving the expectations for language and literacy may not work for all children, this includes children who have English as an Additional Language and children who have special educational needs. They may suffer to 'catch-up' with their peers since the rise in expectations.

Within the early years, the teacher should involve both child-initiated and adult-led opportunities, this would help with providing the language and literacy of children. The Hundred Review (2017) suggests how 'extending the child-initiated play, ~~also~~ coupled with the provision of teacher-initiated work are the most effective vehicles for learning'. The good/ outstanding schools within the Bold Beginnings ~~article~~ article have shown that a balance is important.

The Department for Education (DfE) have planned to reduce the gap between the transition from reception to Year 1. They have 25 schools who have pilot revised the EYF - Early Learning Goals for the end of reception. The aim of this was to reduce the teacher's workload and support children's engagement and skills in lessons. This includes a more ^{focus} focused ~~on~~ and direction to help promote the language and literacy skills along with mathematics.

Weaker responses demonstrated a limited understanding of some of the implications for improving literacy teaching in the Reception year. Most suggestions were not well supported within the work. Reference to wider society and future opportunities for children were only briefly mentioned and overall the work demonstrated a limited understanding of the implications of literacy teaching in the early years. The work below provides an example of work that illustrates this type of response:



My secondary research suggests that not just language and literacy should be focused on but that all schools should "devote a sufficient time each day to the direct teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, including frequent opportunities for children to practise and consolidate their skills." I gathered this information from Her Majesty's chief inspector (HMCI) commissioned an Ofsted-wide review of the curriculum, January 2017. Also, some children could be at different levels to others and if language and literacy became prioritised then some children may be far behind trying to keep up and some children might be gifted in this area and finding it too easy. It is important to work on all subjects in school.

Schools have to follow the curriculum therefore they can't just focus on language and literacy.

Activity 4

The majority of responses for this activity meets the requirements for mark band 1. Stronger responses demonstrated the learner's understanding of essential aspects of research processes, including reliability, validity, sample size and implementation practices. Learners were able to critique the suggested research plan and suggest ways in which it could be improved, taking into account essential aspects, as mentioned above. Suggestions for change were appropriate and well supported and links to the case study were evident.

The example below demonstrates how more marks can be accessed when learners show an understanding of research processes and how these should be effectively implemented within research practice.

Activity 4

Your headteacher has asked you to investigate the effectiveness of language and literacy teaching in Reception classes.

The headteacher has produced the following research proposal:

- visit three settings
- interview classroom staff to discuss their role in teaching language and literacy
- observe and record activities that support reading and writing development
- ask parents/carers to complete a written questionnaire about home school reading
- store the data you collect away from each setting.

Drawing on your understanding of research methods, provide the headteacher with a report that critically analyses their research proposal, to include: your preparatory research into language and literacy, observations, planning and assessment.

In your report you must cover the following:

- the ways in which this research could provide valid and reliable data analysis of language and literacy teaching in your Reception settings
- 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)

In order to effectively investigate the effectiveness of language and literacy teaching in Reception classes it would be sensible to go to multiple settings to gain a broader understanding of how differently some settings work and apply the EYFSP requirements to the curriculum. By visiting three settings I can gain three different sources of information first-hand to make it more reliable and then effectively compare how each reception class promotes the children's language and literacy skills. During

These visits I would observe and record both the reception teachers and the children to evaluate how much they understand. A limitation of this would be that it will take a considerable amount of time in order for it to be completely valid and reliable, making sure as much information is recorded as possible. Whilst doing these observations I must ensure that all the parents of the children involved are aware of what I am carrying and given the chance to stop me from observing their child for whatever reason to make this an ethical practice that does not put children at risk. It will be explained that access to my research would be limited to myself, the parents of individual children and the headteacher of the school I work for, with all my findings being stored confidentially so no-one else has access.

When interviewing classroom staff I must ensure that I have permission from the school and the individual

to ensure I am carrying out good practice in my research. Using this method could produce some bias results or unreliable results depending on how much the staff are willing or able to discuss with me in ~~term~~ terms of the effectiveness in which language and literacy is carried out in their class. To make ~~the~~ interviews more reliable they could be recorded so that no information is looked over, however, some staff may not consent to this so I must ensure that if they do decide to go ahead with a recorded interview then their voice can be altered and their face blurred or not recorded.

Finally, the last research method that has been proposed is asking the parents/carers to fill out a questionnaire regarding home school reading. This would be useful as we would have the parents' input on their child's

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literacy and language development. A limitation of this method is that I cannot guarantee that the answers given ~~are~~ are entirely ^{true} unless I am given parental and school permission to look at some children's reading records to see how often individual children read at home. This could also cause a problem as some parents can't always record everytime they read with their child at home which impact my view and results of the investigation. To thoroughly research this I could do my own reading sessions with some children in school to determine how developed they are in the areas linked to reading. This would become another method of research (focus groups) as I would be focusing on certain children and comparing their understanding and evaluating what they can do to develop. Parental permission would need to be gained for this.

Weaker responses were able to identify some research processes and show a tenuous link to the plan suggested. Sometimes they were able to identify validity and reliability as important elements in the process, but few were able to relate these to the plan suggested. Occasionally, learners linked their comments to suggestions for improvements.

The work demonstrates limited understanding of the requirements of the activity.

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- ✓ 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)

By interviewing different Classroom Staff, you can collect enough sources of how literacy & language are taught and you can compare it to your observation to see if the results are reliable enough or whether you need to take further action.

This research could provide reliable data analysis because

you are seeing the practice being
down but also compare
it to the government
guidelines.

weaknesses that could occur include
things like children's behaviour
or if there is a staff absence.
this can cause problems because
if the children's routine
changes they may not learn
to the best of their
ability.

when setting up the research
activities make sure that all
staff present are aware of
what's happening, make sure
the children are aware
and know why they are
there and just observe
what you want to
observe and collect and
store in the correct way.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, learners should:

- Have a limited understanding of research methodology
- Be able to review and comment on particular research methods in relation to the information being sought
- Show a very limited understanding of key issues such as validity, ethics and consent when considering research findings
- Be able to comment on research findings and draw basic conclusions
- Be able to make some basic links between research findings and the implications for early years practice
- Know that there are links between research findings and later academic performance
- Be able to present their ideas and understanding in writing

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