



Educational Leader

Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

Looking at the element in detail - A service reviewed what the NQF Guide said about element 5.1.1 and understood educators must interact with children in ways that build children's confidence and encourage them to participate.

It may be timely to critically to reflect on John Bowlby's Attachment Theory while considering positive interactions with children. Bowlby, a psychiatrist, developed Attachment Theory in the 1950s together with psychologist Mary Ainsworth. Both believed infants need their mothers' love and care for their proper emotional development.

Yet numerous critics have pointed out substantial flaws in Attachment Theory over the decades – and we rarely hear about them. For example:

- Bowlby failed to ever acknowledge the diversity of child-rearing practices that exist in many different cultures, where mothers are not children's sole or primary carers, or have different approaches to attachment. Bowlby and Ainsworth believed Western cultural values and behaviours about child development were universal
- They only studied how the mother-child bond affects a child's emotional development – no other factors were considered
- Children were studied in an artificial laboratory environment which did not take into account their normal social or cultural contexts and behaviour patterns – a procedure which Uri Bronfenbrenner (1977) described as “..the science of the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time”
- Bowlby used studies of animal behaviour to support his views, and claimed attachment had evolved as part of our biology.

Bowlby and Ainsworth's approach mirrored the times. After WWII many psychologists and social scientists started taking the same approach as that taken in the natural sciences ie relying on experiments, predictions and universal generalisations.

Child developmental studies started to move away from interdisciplinary studies – ie considering lots of different contributing factors. Developmental psychologists began to see children as “self-contained”, basing their studies only on the child rather than considering the child as part of a more complex network of relationships and influences.

Attachment Theory also supported a vision of children that became popular after WWII – a view of children as fragile and highly sensitive to their environments, and lacking any innate resilience.

What does all this mean for educators?

More recent work has confirmed that children, other family members and community members are intrinsic parts of caretaking networks in many societies. Educators have a vital role in supporting children's emotional development. Positive interactions with children matter, and context is important. Educators can strengthen interactions with children by fully understanding each child's particular context eg family, community, culture, interests, fears, needs etc.

How do your educators learn more about each child?

How do educators support children to care for and bond with each other?

Source: Marga Vicedo (2017) Putting attachment in its place: Disciplinary and cultural contexts, European Journal of Developmental Psychology 14:6, 684-699

Week 12, 2 May – 6 May 2022 - 5.1.1 Positive educator to child interactions

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Relationships with Children Policy

Policy contains information and guidance on:

- **interactions with children** eg educators encourage children to talk about their experiences inside and outside service, engage in sustained conversations with children, communicate with children in a respectful, two-way manner, engage with children during routines, participate in children’s play, integrate a child’s culture, language, traditions, interests etc into the curriculum
- **group relationships** eg educators will promote shared decision making and a sense of community at the service, will pre-empt potential conflicts between children and support children’s interactions
- **behaviour guidance** which will be covered in another week
- **inclusion** eg educators will value and promote diversity and equity by exploring children’s culture and other cultures, including activities that break down stereotypes, looking at different family structures, educators will reflect on their own beliefs
- **supporting children through difficult situations** eg typical reactions from children, educator strategies
- **bullying** eg characteristics of children who bully or are bullied, educator strategies
- **biting** eg reasons for biting, biting procedure.

Do you have any feedback or comments about this policy? Please include below.

Educator’s Name	Educator’s Signature

Note we are now listing any Procedures which relate to the Policy reviewed. We have a comprehensive Procedure Pack (in addition to the procedures already included in the policies) which is currently part of our HR Toolkit. Please contact us on admin@centresupport.com.au if you would like a quote for the Kit.

- Procedure – Biting
- Procedure - Working with Professionals or Support Services

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