

The fish baking story

beliefs behind your practice

A little girl was watching her mother prepare a fish for dinner. Her mother cut the head and tail off the fish and then placed it into a baking pan. The little girl asked her mother why she cut the head and tail off the fish. Her mother thought for a while and then said, 'I've always done it that way—that's how babicka (Czech for grandma) did it'.

Not satisfied with the answer, the little girl went to visit her grandma to find out why she cut the head and tail off the fish before baking it. Grandma thought for a while and replied, 'I don't know. My mother always did it that way'.

So the little girl and the grandma went to visit great grandma to find out if she knew the answer. Great grandma thought for a while and said, 'Because my baking pan was too small to fit in the whole fish'.

-Ack M Hamanova

Some of you may have come across this fable before, and others may now be wondering 'what does this have to do with my professional practice as an educator?' The fish baking story illustrates how easy it is to keep doing something a certain way just because 'that's the way it's always been done'. This provides an opportunity for reflection on current practices, and the personal beliefs we hold that drive these.

Each educator in your team will hold different beliefs about educational practices, and what's best for children—even though that belief may not necessarily be based on fact. Sometimes this clouds our judgement and we become unclear about the purpose of our actions. Certain beliefs may become embedded in the service culture, where even new educators quickly pick up on the practices that are 'just the way we do things around here'.

Can you think of certain practices and routines that you engage in that may be based on a belief rather than serving a clear purpose for children and their families?

These identified practices can be explored as part of a collaborative approach to critical reflection. Having a clear purpose when educators ask children and families to engage in certain actions and routines is important. This involves knowing the intention behind these practices, and expected outcomes for learning, development and the building of relationships.

As you go about your day with children take a few moments, particularly in those routine times, to pause and reflect. Consider whether you and your team are clear on why you do what you do. As a team, discuss whether there are intentional outcomes for children, and if not, whether this is because 'that's the way it's always been done'.

Reflecting on the beliefs that drive our actions and practices is one way to identify those that could be replaced or altered to add more meaning for children. This helps to ensure each moment children spend in early learning services is truly valued by educators.

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