

CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education

Research Task: Chief Examiner's Report: January and May 2009

This report summarises the external assessment of the Research Task (the task) and the issues identified by Principal Examiners.

1. Understanding of the Research Task.

'It is important to plan to meet the care and learning needs of all children'

The research aspect:

Learners are asked to provide a synopsis of current research and theory through a literature review to support the subject of the task. They can use the knowledge they have gained throughout the course together with secondary research. Many candidates performed well when explaining different approaches to planning for learning but less favourably in relation to planning for care where they could have referred to their work in the core units. The linkage between the learning and portfolio assessments for Units 6, 7 and 8 and the task often were not realised or used to advantage.

Many candidates made close reference only to the Task Guidance. This hindered their opportunities to develop their responses in relation to their wider reading or own experiences by restricting them to the listed theorists, appropriate environments or ways of evidencing professional skills.

Specific examples of good practice were shown where candidates had undertaken individual work, often with placements and were then able to write meaningfully about planning in practice, thinking in equal terms about children's care and learning needs. Candidates who considered their work in practical placements and linked this with the criteria were more likely to respond with the confidence of experience and were more able to demonstrate application of knowledge.

Primary research only enhanced candidates' grades if it related specifically to the assessment criteria and if the evidence from primary research was used productively to increase the depth and breadth of responses to the assignment criteria. Occasionally centres guided candidates to undertake research projects on children's individual needs. This resulted in material that bore no relevance to the task.

A minority of candidates submitted work with evidence of higher order skills such as meaningful analysis and detailed evaluations containing judgements and conclusions, often linking theory to practice.

The literature review:

Candidates showed some evidence of wider reading and research in their bibliographies. Candidates are not required to say how they have reviewed texts or which texts they have reviewed. Candidates who provided an overview of texts used the word limit and reduced the amount of words available in which to respond to the criteria.

Excellent use was made of the internet for resource material but many candidates would have benefitted from examining a wider range of materials including current professional journals. Candidates seemed better informed where they had used current journals or where they were aware of current frameworks and legislation.

2. Presentation of the Research Task

Identifying criteria (signposting)

Candidates who worked through the criteria individually appeared to be more focused in their responses, often giving supporting evidence. Candidates generally remained focused on the particular criterion and the allocation of marks. Thus, their work was clearly presented without the risk of missing a criterion. However, by examining each criterion in isolation, some candidates omitted to relate closely to the task statement. Signposting was beneficial where it was used in ways that ensured that work was not disjointed or lacking in cohesion. Where candidates had identified criteria, research and reading it tended to be more limited.

Candidates frequently used the criteria statements as headings for each section. Many candidates paraphrased or shortened the statements and in doing so they changed or lost the focus of the statements or omitted the key command words and this led to inappropriate responses. Introductory or 'command' words are crucial to the requirements of the criteria; if they are missed it is likely that the content will not meet the criteria requirements accurately. Achievement of higher grades is less likely if pertinent aspects in the criteria are not addressed.

Linking the criteria (holistic approaches)

Candidates who approached the task holistically were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a more cohesive way. Discussion and analysis of issues were more frequently addressed. However, there were examples of overlooking criteria, repetition and a loss of focus.

When candidates linked the criteria together (i.e. 2 + 6; 4 + 7; 8 + 9) their responses sometimes lacked sufficient depth to achieve the higher marks. Candidates needed to be mindful of the total marks that a linked answer represented and to ensure they had covered all the requirements of each criterion. Criteria 6, 7 and 8 require analysis and if this was omitted from a linked answer, candidates missed the opportunity to achieve higher marks.

The advantage of a holistic approach to the task was that candidates seemed more able to develop each point of interest according to their own experience and personal research and to show more depth of analysis and evaluation.

Individual presentation

It is expected that candidates collate and present their research task in an individual way. Scripts from some centres took a very similar approach to the task and this resulted in repetition of theory, similar professional skills and discussion of the environment which sometimes focused only on outdoor play. Candidates who were provided with a 'template' often limited their responses. In some instances this cast doubts on the authenticity of candidates' work.

Where candidates had taken an individual approach to the task there were positive and sometimes innovative examples shown in personal ideas and opinions.

Using the word limit

Candidates who used the full word limit were generally more able to develop their answers with an analytical and evaluative approach, avoiding generalised comments, particularly in criteria 8 and 9 where they were able to use research evidence to support the need for effective planning and to evaluate the importance of planning.

3. Content of the Research Task

There were scripts that were well presented and demonstrated clear understanding of the criteria throughout.

1 Provide a rationale for the identification of the care and learning needs of all children.

Candidates are asked to provide a rationale for the identification of the care and learning needs of all children. This should be stated clearly and comprehensively to reflect the possible overall content of the task - not just sections of the task. This can become a check to ensure all aspects of the task have been completed.

Many candidates found it difficult to provide a rationale that demonstrated a clear knowledge and understanding of the task. Although this section carries 5 marks only, candidates achieved higher marks only where their work was detailed. Candidates often used the examples given in the task guidance, not as a starting point to show their knowledge and understanding of how the example related to the criteria, but to write without being selective, about anything they had researched relating to that particular topic.

2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of different approaches to planning for children's care and learning.

Responses to this criterion would suggest that some candidates lacked opportunities in their placement to observe and to be involved in planning.

3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of child development theory that supports children's identified care needs.

Candidates seemed to lack understanding of how to bring the work theorists to life. For example, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was often quoted in relation to care and candidates provided explanations of the theory but struggled to show how this theory applied to the work that they did with young children in order to meet their care needs. Candidates who lacked the ability or opportunity to relate a theory to practice and to include examples from practice were unlikely to achieve the higher marks.

4 Demonstrate the application of relevant theoretical approaches to play, learning and education to meet children's identified learning needs.

Although most candidates identified appropriate play theories and seemed to have some understanding of them, they rarely demonstrated application of this knowledge in their own words, particularly in relation to learning needs. Many candidates chose to demonstrate their research skills through this criterion and included lists of irrelevant references.

5 Provide evidence of why it is important to establish an environment that meets the care and learning needs of all children.

Candidates often provided valid descriptions of what constitutes an enabling environment, but did not go on to develop the response as to why these factors are important in meeting the care and learning needs of all children. Care needs were often not included in the response to this criterion.

6 Analyse evidence of the professional skills required when planning for children's care and learning.

Generally this was answered well, but few candidates included any additional points beyond the examples given in the task guidance. Many candidates made insufficient reference to planning for care and learning. Very few responses to this criterion were supported by references. Desirable requirements often misconstrued as professional skills were qualifications needed by practitioners, issues such as time keeping or patience, which are professional attributes and CRB checks.

7 Analyse the evidence of the role of play in children's learning.

Many candidates had difficulty in knowing how to analyse the role of play in children's learning. They often included relevant approaches or international perspectives but found it difficult to analyse this information.

8 Analyse the evidence which supports the need for practitioners to plan effectively.

Many candidates omitted to bring forward, use and analyse evidence introduced in earlier criteria and instead produced new material which was not required at this point in the task. Some candidates wrote descriptively about what they did rather than why their research evidence supported them to plan effectively.

9 Use the evidence from the literature review to evaluate why it is important to plan to meet the care and learning needs of all children.

Many candidates appeared to find it difficult to link their views to their research. In summarising their findings they often repeated information they had already included elsewhere. Candidates listed various types of planning without discussing the strengths and weaknesses and few candidates effectively used their findings to help them to consider the evidence from different perspectives and make valid conclusions. However, this aspect of the task allowed the more able candidates to demonstrate academic skill and a minority responded well to this criterion.

4. Use and application of research

It was encouraging to find that the majority of centres guided candidates to refer to current initiatives and include current theorists; however some centres were too reliant on long-established theorists.

There was some evidence that where candidates were researching current theory and initiatives, their ability to use this to enhance their work was limited e.g. Forest Schools were written about often, but few candidates used what they discovered from this research to provide evidence of why the initiative is important in meeting care and learning needs.

The majority of scripts contained large chunks of reference text used to answer the criterion, with very little input from candidates to show that they had understood what they have researched. In many instances the references included did little to enhance the candidates' work and in extreme cases the use of references had limited candidates' opportunities to demonstrate their own knowledge and understanding.

Candidates should avoid giving biographies of theorists or using photocopied sheets from publications as references instead of producing their own work. Some candidates used only a limited range of resource material to inform their work.

Some candidates appeared to have difficulty in using what they had researched in a purposeful way; this may reflect a lack of experience in applying higher order skills.

5. Issues that affect the work of examiners

- Candidates who may have been misled by the guidance they had been given;
- Candidates within a centre who produced almost identical work;
- Candidates who were unable to link practical experience to link to the task;
- Candidates who had worked strictly to the Task Guidance;
- Work written holistically in which there was significant repetition;
- Re-submissions in which improved work was formulaic and showed little change from the first submission. Typically, candidates added only a few sentences to the section(s) they hoped to improve, without evidence of improved understanding.

6. Key issues

- Ensure the balance of emphasis between learning and care.
- Support and guide candidates in the choice of literature they review and the strategies to enable them to select information from the review to inform their work.
- Enable candidates to decide for themselves which theorists, philosophies and initiatives to research.
- Use appropriate referencing techniques to avoid candidates submitting large quotations linked by a few sentences of their own work.
- Use the full word limit to give scope for candidates to demonstrate their own knowledge and develop some analysis.
- Appendices are not required and, if used, should contain only relevant material which must be referenced into the main body of the text. Appendices should not be a collection of reproduced material.

7. Achievement

Achievement in May 2009 showed that centres had worked hard to develop positive strategies which would assist their candidates in understanding and responding more appropriately to the requirements of the task. The achievement rates are:-

<u>Test Date</u>	<u>No of sites</u>	<u>No of candidate entries</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>Refer</u>	<u>Pass mark</u>	<u>% Pass</u>	<u>% Refer</u>	<u>A (%)</u>	<u>B (%)</u>	<u>C (%)</u>	<u>D (%)</u>	<u>E (%)</u>	<u>Refer (%)</u>
Jan-09	56	930	3	18	101	273	262	273	37	70.6	29.4	0.3	1.9	10.9	29.4	28.2	29.4
May-09	132	1957	25	235	496	643	350	208	37	89.4	10.6	1.3	12.0	25.3	32.9	17.9	10.6

Date of report: 26th August 2009