

Element 4: Professional Practice

Activity A: Professional Role

The practitioner's role is fundamental in supporting all children to learn and develop to their full potential. Yet, the demands of this role can often be overlooked or misunderstood by parents, other professionals, the community and wider society. The way in which practitioners view, describe and explain their role impacts on how it is seen by others. This image and sense of identity as a professional can, in turn, influence how practitioners feel about their own role, carry out their work with children on a daily basis and interact with parents and other professionals.

Activity A is designed to help you as a practitioner, to reflect on the importance and complexity of

your role in supporting children's early learning and development. It also supports you to develop a description of your role which you can share with others. The activity is divided into two parts. Part one supports you to consider your own role while part two explores your understanding of the role as part of a team or profession.

Activity A, Part 1: Self-identity as a practitioner in early childhood

Try to complete this activity alone and then review your reflections with your team, manager or with the support of a mentor.

Why did you decide to become an early childhood practitioner?

2. **What do you enjoy about the work? What challenges, if any, does the work present for you?**

Blank response area for question 2.

3. **What impact do you think your role has on children's learning and development?**

Blank response area for question 3.

4. **Do you see yourself as a professional? If yes, why? If no, why not?**

Blank response area for question 4.

Activity A, Part 2: Collective identity as early childhood practitioners

Complete this activity with your team, manager or with the support of a mentor.

1. **Do you consider the role of early childhood practitioners to be important? If yes, why? If no, why not? (Think about the impact of the role on children's learning and development, the potential impact on society.)**

2. **What qualifications, dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge do you see as being important for early childhood practitioners? (See the list from *Aistear's User Guide*, pp.7-8.)**

3. Why are these qualifications, dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge important?

Using the information you have gained from these two activities, write a short paragraph that describes your title and role. This description should include the importance of early childhood for children, families and society, and your key role in supporting this.

Review this description regularly (perhaps every 6 months) and share it with colleagues and with new team members, parents and students. Consider updating the role descriptions in your setting to incorporate this image of the practitioner.

After completing this activity you might like to look at the videos:

- *Image and role of the practitioner*
- *What being a professional means to me*
- *Pedagogical leadership supporting professional practice*
- *Supporting others to become professional*
- *Skills needed as a professional in early childhood (Birth-6 years)*