

BUSINESS PLAN



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Part one

Early years education is evolving continuously, and this is proven in the New Curriculum for Wales and according to Bottrill (2022, p. 25) and McInness, *et al.* (2013) play is a major factor in children's development and learning allowing children to develop skills, to explore and to make sense of the world. As an early years' practitioner of thirteen years, keeping children engaged and thirsty for adventure can be a diligence task in achieving goals. Finding a balance between fun, play and learning may not always be possible if a practitioner needs to observe the children for development reasons (Brussoni, 2019).

A bilingual educational app that would help children aged two to four that may be used indoors, if outdoor space is limited but especially for outdoor play, that would engage children further in the playing process came to the forefront of ideas. The world is becoming increasingly bilingual and multilingual therefore, according to Mourao and Lourenco (2015, p. 16) during early years children with sufficient exposure acquires another language easier. Age two to four is an important age when it comes to learning a language because it brings linguistic benefits (Mourao and Lourenco, 2015, p. 15; Pot, Porkert and Keijzer, 2019).

After some research it came apparent that there was a gap in the market for such app to download here in Wales. Funding for establishing the business come from a 'Business set up grant' from the Welsh Government allowing a specialist team of various technology designers to create an app of a high standard through outlining core features, creating mockups, creating a great app security, leading to coding to begin, and perform multiple tests while gathering and implementing feedback from users. The app produced is available for downloading on to an iPad, tablet or a phone.

Marketing Strategy

McCarthy.1964 model of the four Ps of Marketing, product, price, place, and promotion was considered when marketing this product. The model can be used to select a successful marketing mix, this may take time and effort, but it is necessary to satisfy customers and create a profitable business. Once a solid marketing mix has been achieved—the appropriate product at the appropriate price, placed in the appropriate location, and effectively promoted is achievable the app can be launched

on the platform for purchasing. It is important to evaluate changes in the market constantly and adjustments to the marketing mix may be necessary. The marketing component of the business is an ongoing endeavour. Customers feedback is an important tool, it will give necessary information to improve any elements of the marketing strategy that are not successful and needs improving (Yudelso, 1999),

The name 'Cynefin' has been chosen for the business and the app as the word 'Cynefin' plays an important role in the Curriculum. It means children should be made to feel that they belong that the surroundings, sights, and sounds are comfortingly familiar and known to the child. It is also a model for solving problems and designed to assist children in making decisions. Its foundation is the that each problem is distinct and calls for a different strategy to be solved, learning in the process (Welsh Government, 2019).

The app may be used in a Welsh, a bilingual but also in an English only setting where Welsh must be introduced as a second language as part of the New Curriculum for Wales building confident and bilingual children (Welsh Government. 2019: Welsh Government 2022).

Children are living in a digital era and technology is evolving constantly. Parents income levels influence how many sessions a child attend and what nursery settings they attend therefore it is not always accessible for children to access digital devices (Vaportzis, Giatsi Clausen and Gow, 2017). This could be a barrier but by offering the opportunity to access this app at a setting it promotes inclusiveness, it will give children the opportunity to feel they belong and to engage while learning at the same time, building confidence and bilingual children.

The app may be downloaded on to an iPad, a tablet, or a phone for accessibility there will be a fee, but it will be competitive to the existing market. It is paramount that a high standard of quality is achieved in the design of the app, it must be exciting, colourful, and engaging for the children. The app needs to capture children's attention and fire the imagination within.

Sales of the app will commence with educational setting such as pre-school nurseries, it must capture the attention of practitioners of settings, expanding to nurseries in schools, and older children in schools to parents and the public, giving the product a social value. These values will start with the children but also a positive

impact on society and communities when the children are with families, attending social events and activities. These values are underpinned by Bronfenbrenner theory where each environment influences a child's development (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022, p.20).

Advertising

Posters and flyers will be sent to the Mudiad Meithrin for distribution, they organise Cylchoedd all over Wales for children aged two years old until they go to school, they also run and promote Ti a Fi groups for younger children. children have the opportunity in these settings to learn through play in Welsh. Social media will also be used to advertise the app in the form of Facebook, Instagram, these platforms can be accessed anywhere on a variety of devices. According to the study conducted by Sarah *et al* (2019) social media word of mouth has the power to reach more people and has the capacity to build a network of supporters quickly regardless of customer characteristics for example, gender, social media ownership or frequently used. It is perceived as very effective and efficient tool for business entrepreneurs for advertising products. Word of mouth spreading on the Internet influence customers significantly and has now become crucial for any new business or product on the market.

A negative effect of marketing may be, not enough people buying the app due to lack of awareness, further advertising and promoting is needed but this can be costly. Therefore, further promoting and advertising is needed, and this may be in schools, playgroups, libraries in Welsh classes for example 'Clwb Cwtsh' run by the Mudiad Meithrin where the programme focuses on speaking Welsh with young children and 'Cymraeg i Blant/ Cymraeg for kids' also run by the Mudiad Meithrin where there is the opportunity for parents to socialise and to start using Welsh with the babies or toddlers. The parents can download the app at home and enjoy with own children while learning Welsh at the same time.

Operations and logistics

It is important to keep up to date with any changes in the regulations or any changes in guidelines. It may be necessary to apply for further finance or grants to help with the costs of the updates of the app. These improvements to the app are necessary to keep interest also making sure policies set out by the Welsh Government,

National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare and guidelines and procedures by regulators such as Child Inspectorate Wales are followed and met.

Cost and pricing strategy

Pricing the app must be competitive with other apps on the market to be competitive (Roma and Dominici, 2016). Although this app is different and unique to what is currently on offer on the market, the cost of the app must be attractive and appealing to potential buyers.

Managing finance is a vital part of running a successful business making sure enough money is coming in to the business to cover all the expenses and to make a profit. A cashflow forecast is important as it shows the amount of money coming in and going out every month alongside a profit and loss account that shows the financial performance of the business. The figures should be realistic and accurate as possible. These figures are used by HM Revenue and Customs for tax purposes and to show the business performance for potential investors (Welsh Government, 2024).

Regularly review of the business plan is good practice, it is important it takes into consideration future plans of the business, monitoring funding and cash flow, ensuring there is a budget for the worst possible scenario, search for additional income from other sources for example, grants that are available or investors. Increasing the fee to download the app may be a possibility once the business is established.

The operating system that was chosen was a cross-platform framework as it works for both ios and Android. It was the best and the simplest way to set the app up for sustained success, maximising the potential buyers able to access it.

Research was carried out in pre-school nurseries therefore knowing the target audiences and understanding who needed to be targeted initially was important, finding out the goals, the behaviours and preferences and the platforms and mobile devices used within the settings. It was important that the app needed to cater the targeted audience for enjoyment and continual use.

Consideration was needed that the app was a solution to an existing problem and a gap in the current app market and consideration of how it would help the early years

to improve learning. The app is specific to the early years but can also be used at other settings, childminders or at home with children of the same age, making the app transportable. Planning the app design and security was important, the programme had to have a friendly user interface. The easier it is to use; the more inclined users will be to download the app and its success.

Part Two

Practitioners are constantly looking at new ways of improving the setting resources and activities, keeping staff and children motivated and excited to learn.

Many children come to pre-school settings from English speaking families and the only opportunity they may have to hear Welsh is during the time spent in the nursery. The 2015 'Technology and Play' research by Marsh, *et al*, explored tablet ownership it showed that twenty five percent of zero to two year olds and thirty six percent of three to five year olds in the study owned an iPad and research from Childwise (2015) shows that the number of children under five use a tablet and computers at home. The idea behind the app Cynefin is to incorporate enhance play for the children alongside using an iPad or a tablet which children are already familiar with.

Therefore, with the help of a specialist team of technology experts the app Cynefin was designed with the potential of enhancing play and offer equal opportunities for all children to receive an education through the medium of Welsh but also bilingually to build confident and bilingual children.

This a fun learning app for outdoor or indoor play if outdoor space is limited, suitable for children aged 2-4 years old to be used in a Welsh, a bilingual, and in an English only childcare setting here in Wales where Welsh must be introduced as a second language as part of the New Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government 2019 and Welsh Government 2022). Learning languages at an early age has linguistic benefits leading to enhancing core cognitive reasoning, problem solving, improving memory, communication, and intercultural skills (Mourao and Lourenco, 2015, p. 15; Pot, Porkert and Keijzer, 2019).

The Curriculum for Wales defines the cynefin framework as a framework where children feel like they belong, where other children and the surroundings are familiar,

and where the sights and sounds are comfortingly known as underpinned by Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory where humans are social creatures and crave interaction with others.

According to Vaportzis, Giatsi Clausen and Gow (2017) it is not always possible to access digital equipment due to the cost involved. However, Aubrey and Dahl (2013) suggest, it may be the lack of confidence, knowledge, instructions, or guidance that technology may not be used. Adults may also be concerned exposing children to too much screen time and the health implications it may cause to development and behaviour (Lissak, 2018).

It is a model for solving problems designed to assist children in making decisions. Its foundation is the notion that each problem is distinct and calls for a different strategy to be solved, learning in the process.

Therefore, the name 'Cynefin' plays an important part in early years and this has been the reason behind the name.

The children will be able to choose from four options within the app. These are water, sand, soil or wood. The most versatile elements and child friendly in an outdoor play area. Each option will offer an explanation about the element chosen in an age-appropriate manner in Welsh and English. This will encourage choices, independence, curiosity and exploration during the playing process.

Introducing a new early years app can face barriers initially therefore a good marketing strategy is important. The app may face a challenge from potential sales due to the market being saturated with other early years apps.

According to (Roma and Dominici, 2016) effective marketing is needed to develop a high-quality app to stand out in the app store and to reach the target audience. However, Kaufman and Horton (2015, p. 100) states it may be costly and requires a financial investment for ongoing maintenance as it may end up costing more than anticipated. This is due to customers inundated with thousands of marketing interruptions daily and is finding new ways of blocking them.

According to Aldafeeri, Palaiologou and Folorunsho (2016) and Dwyer, Jones and Rosas (2019) practitioners are confident in using digital devices personally to find resources however, Nikolopoulou and Gialamas (2015) and Palaioligou (2016) states

professionals are reluctant to use digital devices in the daily pedagogical practices, largely because of the concern around digital technology's role in play-based pedagogy. However, Palaioiougou (2016) states re-conceptualisation of young children learning in early years pedagogy should be considered as children under five are engaging more with digital technologies in playing and learning at home and this cannot be overlooked and should be incorporated in early years education.

Moreover, Kankaanranta, *et al.* (2017) states digital apps can foster children's learning and motivation as it takes them to an imaginary world, enhancing creativity play, Nuemann and Nuemann (2014) study found the use of tablets can improve awareness of print concepts and literacy skills through sharing experiences with peers. Using tablets can make the learning and pedagogy process mobile, taking the learning experience from the classroom to the outdoors (Tavernier and Hu, 2020).

Keeping young children engaged can be a challenge, ensuring the app is interactive, educational, and enjoyable is important, the content must be age- appropriate and aligned with educational standards to be effective. The correct regulations and compliance requirements are needed for data privacy and child safety while using the app (Hirsh-Pasek, Zosh and Kaufman, 2015).

Practitioners and adults are gatekeepers to children's app usage and in a setting, it is the practitioner's responsibility to gain parents approval. Discussions and explanations of the apps used in the setting is an opportunity to fosters good relationships between the practitioners, parents, and the children (Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova, 2014). However, according to Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova, (2014) some parents may not acknowledge the important levels of accomplishments and the independent learning the children may experience.

There may be some technical challenges through compatibility across various devices and operating systems, along with maintaining usability and performance.

Settings may experience a weak internet connection, therefore accessibility to the app is limited or impossible and the digital devices in the settings could have limited memory storage therefore unable to download the app. These challenges may be overcome by receiving advice from a knowledgeable and expert technician.

In conclusion, overcoming these barriers requires careful planning, market research, a solid development team, and a clear understanding of the target audience's needs and preferences on the success of the app. Future development is possible by extending the number of options on the app and with further research it may be possible to extend the app to older children. It could in time include songs, games and puzzles that can be incorporated with outdoor play. This project will commence on a small scale in early years setting but with the sufficient financial support and the appropriate marketing strategies the app will become a success with the possibility of extending to schools and the public. Continuous improvement will be based on user feedback as this is vital for the long-term success of the app.

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