



Exceptional Care: The First 1000 Days

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Introduction

According to Karakochuk, C. Whitfield, K. Green, T. and Kraemer, K. (2018) from conception through until age two, the first 1,000 days is a crucial period for the growth and development of a child. 1,000 Days (2010) believes that the first 1,000 days hold great possibility and vulnerability. It has a significant impact on a child's capacity for development, learning and flourishing how successfully or how poorly both mothers and children were given care and nourished during this period. A child's development is important during the first 1,000 days. From conception to the age of two, the first 1,000 days provides a foundation for a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Additionally, the first 1,000 days are a significant time for a child to develop their communication skills (A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days, 2021). Practitioners must promote exceptional care between themselves and children in their care, Lindon (2006) states that recent studies have demonstrated that loving and personal interactions between children and caring practitioners help improve young children's development. It matters greatly how a caring practitioner can impact the development of a young child through supporting them from wiping their nose to comforting a child when they are upset. On the other hand, CIW (2010) defines the term excellent care as services that provide exceptional care and support, and can prove that they wish to significantly improve the well-being of children. The Welsh Government (2022) describes the role of the practitioner to be understanding of how crucial their contributions are to the development of every child, particularly during the formative years learning. Practitioners should develop emotionally safe situations that encourage children to begin expressing and managing their emotions and actions in healthy ways. A

practitioner should make the most of the teaching opportunities that arise naturally as they watch and participate in the children's play, practitioners should set an example by modelling a positive attitude to learning and promote and encourage a child's curious mind.

Current Challenges

The genetic capacity to develop in to a distinctive, life-affirming individual exists in every child. How a child will express themselves will depend greatly on the nature and quality of the environment. Children are who they are because of the magnificent complicated interactions between nature and nurture. Children are most likely to achieve their full potential in circumstances that are rich and receptive, especially in a social surrounding (Daniel, B. Wassell, S. and Gilligan, R. 2011). As stated by the Welsh Government (2022) a practitioner must be able to successfully connect to subject across the curriculum in order to deliver a balanced curriculum that takes into account a child's age, current interests, and prior knowledge and experiences. Practitioners must raise the standards of planning and provision in order to meet the needs of all children. A practitioner can be a great influence on a child's well-being by having consistency in their care and setting an example of generosity and compassion. By supporting their choices and actions, practitioners should show their respect for children. Children should be compassionately guided in managing transitions and changes in daily routines by providing them with support in coping with adjustment and uncertainty. In these daily routines, practitioners should always try to maximise the learning possibilities for the children.

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth are the creators of the attachment theory. Bowlby transformed the way people think about a child's relationship with their mother and how separation, malnutrition, and grief can disrupt that relationship. Ainsworth created the concept of the attachment figure acting as a secure base from which a baby may explore the outside world. Maternal sensitivity to baby signals and how it affects how babies and mothers form attachment patterns were concepts discovered by Ainsworth (Goldberg, Muir, and Kerr, 2009). As stated by Shirvanian and Michael (2017) the socio-emotional and cognitive development of a child is substantially influenced by early child-adult relationships. Children from high-risk homes can benefit from child care in regards to their development. Children who have an uneasy attachment to parents have been found to be able to form strong bonds with non-parental carers in high-quality, secure, and comprehensive early child care settings. As a result, child care which is attachment based can drastically lower the frequency of insecure attachments and enhance childhood quality.

Activities

Through play, children develop language, feelings, creativity, social skills, and intellectual abilities. Most children engage in spontaneous natural play; however, some children may require more assistance from adults. Children investigate and discover the world through play both indoors and outdoors in these various surroundings. They put new ideas and skills into practice, take risks, exhibit curiosity, and work together or alone to solve problems (Early Years Matters, 2023).



1 - Treasure baskets

It was Elinor Goldshmeid who created the concept of treasure baskets. This early stage of supporting babies' learning offers a way to guarantee that babies receive variety and quality, based on observations of how small babies learn about the world in various cultures. The treasure baskets should be filled to the top with items, giving the baby plenty of scope and opportunity to choose what items interest them. There are a variety of items that could be included in the treasure baskets which include pebbles, feathers, corks, wooden items such as curtain rings, egg cups, metal spoons and so on (Nutbrown, 2006).



2 - Water play

Gross (2012) mentions how young children can play with water for hours on end, pouring the water, controlling its flow, stopping the stream, splashing lightly, creating waves. A sensory and educational experience of enormous scope can be produced with water and some low-cost equipment. It is important for practitioners in early child care settings to be aware of and support the ideas that young children acquire through playing with water.



3 - Sensory play

Children engage in sensory play every day, whether they are at the beach, mixing and splattering paint with a variety of brushes, building a tower from wooden blocks, or in the forest. Through colour, light, sound, feel, smell and taste, the heart of the experience is both caught and represented. Play that will appeal to one of more of a child's senses is known as sensory play. Unlike other types of play, sensory play focuses on the senses that significantly and crucially provide an additional element to the play. From babies to adults, sensory experiences are excellent for brain development. Sensory play demonstrates a hands-on approach that appeals more to children with a varied thinking and learning styles, sensory play can be an inclusive strategy to promote learning and development. Through sensory play, children can practice problem solving skills, curiosity, and creativity. Sensory play gives the opportunity for children to develop independent learning (Gascoyne, 2011).

Maria Montessori



Macblain (2022) mentions that in order to help young children develop and gain the abilities they see others using to complete daily tasks, Montessori created activities that are similar to those that children see other children and adults doing that young children can be capable of doing. Montessori was aware of the distress young children can experience when they are unable to accomplish what they see other children and adults doing. Montessori emphasised independence and the value of teaching young children to take care of and respect both their surroundings and themselves. Children develop and grow at their own rate, according to Montessori's theory, and children should be taught to internalise the concept that learning is fun. Children are encouraged to explore, interact with others, form relationships and be content and driven by themselves. When preparing classrooms for learning environments it is seen as being of extreme importance since these surroundings offer significant sensory experiences that help children grasp the world in which they are developing.

Environment

The Welsh government (2022) mentions how the atmosphere we build for children, both within and outside of the settings, should be at the center of their real-world experiences. The effectiveness of the surrounding regions should therefore be regularly assessed and evaluated, and any necessary

improvements should be made. One of the major factors during a child's development during early childhood is exploration of the surroundings. By implementing this, children will be able to develop their physical, creative, and imaginative skills in these spaces, which will give them the freedom to securely pursue their interests individually or with other peers. Practitioners should provide these experiences for children to feel wonder and astonishment at the world and spark their curiosity about it, motivate children to get inspired to explore, problem solve, and expand their critical thinking and creative skills.



4 - Outdoors

Younger children benefit more from spending their time outdoors. This will promote the child's well-being and the growth of their social, spiritual, emotional and physical skills. Additionally, children can develop high levels of involvement and independence from spending time outdoors. This will allow children to investigate, practice and improve their talents outdoors. Children who are capable of interaction and develop a connection to nature can develop positive feelings for the environment and become more conscious of their possible effects on society (Welsh Government, 2022).



5 - Indoors

It is considered by Jechura, Wooldridge, Bertelsen, and Mayers (2016) that many practitioners may feel safer working in an environment which is more structured. An alternative to an outside learning environment is to create a natural setting in the classroom. Children are encouraged to explore and participate in learning when the outdoors is brought into the classroom. The appropriate combination of components can stimulate a child's curiosity, inspire investigation and spark thought in them. The outdoors can be brought into any settings classroom in a variety of ways, but doing so does not replicate being completely invested in the sights and sounds of nature, though it does provide a secure place for children in which to learn.

Respectful Care and Meaningful Learning Opportunities



The Early Years Matters (2023) points out that practitioners offer room, time, and correct resources for children. These could include used blankets, clothes, boxes, or buckets to encourage play and excite children's imaginations. Practitioners wait and carefully listen before interfering as they observe children's play and only participate when encouraged by the child. Practitioners value play and offer surroundings which are both safe and stimulating to support and advance children's learning and growth. Michael (2001) defines meaningful learning as the process of acquiring information in ways that enable you to use it. As a result, knowledge is preserved in ways that make it accessible from a variety of beginning points. It is knowledge that has been effectively blended with everything someone knows prior.

Furthermore, Lindon (2006) believes it is not necessary to rush through a child's daily care routine. For babies and infants, physical care is an excellent learning environment that promotes friendly communication and a feeling of self-worth. When contemplating the best practice for working with young children, safety is an important factor to consider. Sitting with babies and infants is essential as it promotes their emotional and social skills. Babies and infants receive benefits from adults' good care habits beyond just immunity to illnesses or accidents. The experience promotes the babies and infants' growth of their early social communication skills, which will encourage all their learning.

Hargrave (2020) claims that caring for children are times that are ideal situations for carers and children to cooperate, become connected, and enjoy themselves together. Those routines are very regulated and predictable, which helps young children feel secure. The goal for the routine of care is something that babies and infants and their carers come to grasp together, and they coordinate their individual responsible and behaviours, an example of this is where an adult can support the child in changing clothes. Babies and infants develop language, acquire self-care and manipulative abilities, and become capable of independence and self-control.

Pikler



Pikler as a paediatrician who established a home for abandoned children after the second world war. Pikler developed baby and infant care methods that were associated with positive developmental outcomes for babies and infants by ensuring that each baby and infant had a specific bond with an adult and had exceptional touch and interactions. Pikler felt that encouraging and honouring babies' and infants' natural drive for development results in desired outcomes when they are given opportunity to learn, explore, and actively interact in the context of secure relationships. (Hargraves, 2020).

Professional Relationships and Being Inclusive

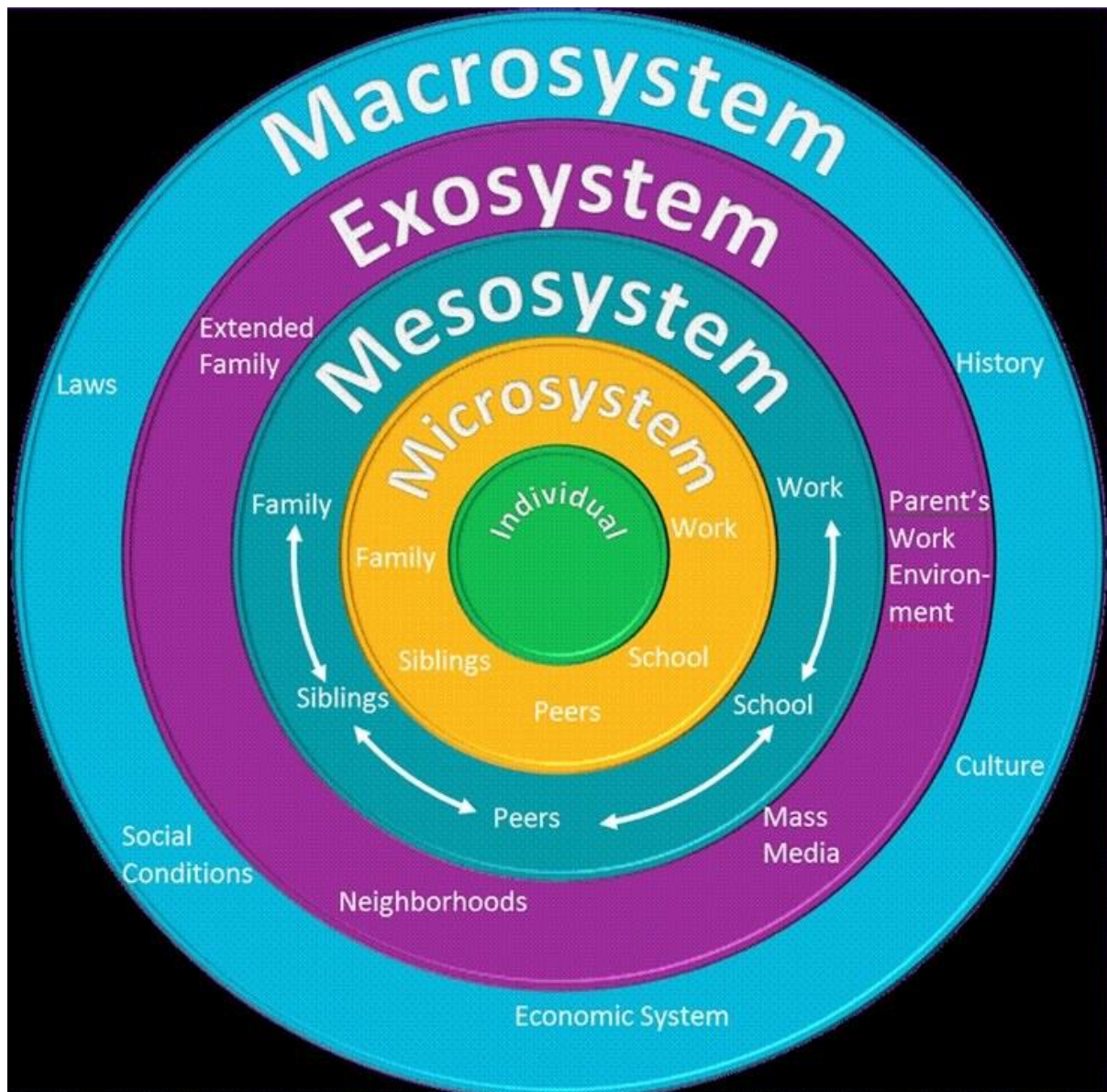


It is crucial to keep in mind that every member of staff has a valuable aspect to offer the setting. There would be a multitude of opportunities that would provide an excellent early childcare programme for the children in that setting if the staff members collaborated and entered the partnership with an understanding and respect for one another's experiences and abilities. One of the difficult components that can arise while working in any setting is developing relationships. Relationship complexity and difficulties are made worse by change, therefore, it is essential to maintain solid, respectful bonds with professional workers in order to deal effectively with it. One strategy for integrating early childhood professionals to perform collaboratively while putting an emphasis on healthy and respectful relationships (Gibson, 2013).

According to Jones (2004) most areas of educational practice are presently infused with the language of parent partnership. All SEN legislations and recommendations include parental responsibility, participation, and involvement in decision making and delivery of service. In other words, the phrase "partnership" can sometimes be ambiguous, deceptive, and subject to several theoretical and practical interpretations. Parents interactions with professionals, such as teachers and early years practitioners, is referred to as "partnerships" in this context. The idea of cooperation put an emphasis on the idea that practitioners must value parents' opinions in addition to listening the their enquires. Continuous involvement from parents from a young age promotes trust between parents and caregivers and the advantages of putting shared decisions made about the children in the family into action. Flexibility is a crucial part to professional relationships. Parents to require varied levels of support can be offered access into the setting. Communicating and asking parents what methods of support they may consider useful is a wonderful place to start. Parents must also be informed if any possible issues arise after the child starts in the early education centre. There may not be any ideal or universal approach to communicating concerns to parents about their children, however, if you notice a learning or behavioural issue reoccurring, you must carefully plan how and when to arise the problem with the parents or caregivers. It is crucial for a practitioner to have closely examined the child and are confident with the supporting documentation for their initial

worries. Practitioners should emphasize how crucial it is to collaborate in order to maximise each child's success.

Bronfenbrenner



Bronfenbrenner's theory looks at how a child grows in response to the web of connections that makes up their environment. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, a child's growth and development could be impacted by several environmental layers. The relationship between a child and their surrounding environment as well as the larger environment must be examined in order to research a child's development. Environmental quality and context are key components of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. According to Bronfenbrenner, these environmental interactions change as a child grows and develops. Complexity may appear when a child's physical and cognitive systems develop and mature. This theory's application to classroom teaching has serious implications. It now seems necessary for schools and practitioners to have consistent, long-lasting relationships. The most crucial relationship, according to Bronfenbrenner, should be with someone who can provide a sense of compassion that is meant to last a lifetime. Schools and

practitioners should work together to advance the primary connection and provide a warm and supportive atmosphere for families. (Paquette and Ryan, 2001).

International Approaches

It is a well-known fact that the significance of the first 1,001 crucial days is well understood, and many other nations are examining how they may better assist new parents. In France, multidisciplinary care is provided for mothers and young children at community centres and has a long history of doing so. Midwifery is an independent career for people in the Netherlands. The most low-risk pregnancies receive primary care from Dutch midwives. Children's Cabinets and Early Childhood Councils have been established in the United States of America. To coordinate services and produce shared results. These have been shown to be successful in fostering more collaborative working, which leads to better assessment of child outcomes as well as improved outcomes overall (HM Government, 2021)



6 - Forest school

Forest school is a motivating educational method used to give all children hands-on learning opportunities to succeed, gain confidence and boost their self-esteem through practical learning activities in a local forest or other naturally occurring settings with trees. In the larger framework of outdoor and woodland learning, forest school is a specialised strategy that integrates and enhances learning. It is recognised as forest school since forest school guidelines are followed, regardless of whether it is in a woodland area or another outdoor setting. Children can learn to respect the environment and wander around in it pleasantly while staying safe using forest schools. Forest schools focus an established process of comprehensive growth, which is challenging to do in a crowded classroom, whether indoors or outdoors. Risk taking is encouraged for the children and there are no limitations for time.

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