

- **Good teaching and learning means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching.**
- **Good teaching and learning sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest.**
- **Good teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and experience.**

(Donaldson 2015:68)

Consider the 3 pedagogic principles outlined above. Discuss these principles in relation to practices in education, showing secure understanding, identifying strengths and areas for development for each principle.

The Curriculum for Wales began to come together in March 2014, after Wales were shown as performing poorly in recent PISA tests and Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education and Skills at the time, asked Donaldson to collect evidence from schools and write a report on his findings. On the 25th February 2015, Donaldson's report, *Successful Futures*, was published. His results were concluded from the feedback of over 700 respondents, and showed to many that the old curriculum, having not been updated since the late 1980's, was outdated, irrelevant and in desperate need of an update (Lewis, 2015). Donaldson's report completely radicalised education across Wales, and in 2020, his ideas from the report became embedded into the new Curriculum for Wales. The new curriculum focuses on the Twelve Pedagogical Principles, three of which I will be focussing on in this essay, specifically the approaches that good teaching and learning means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching, good teaching and learning sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest and that good teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and experience. The new curriculum also focuses on The Four Purposes (ambitious, capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors, ethical, informed citizens, healthy, confident individuals) and the Six Areas of Learning and Experience (Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Humanities, Languages, Literacy and Communication, Mathematics and Numeracy, and Science and Technology).

The new curriculum also helped change the way many think about 'expected progress', and where children 'should be' at certain ages and year groups. Instead of Key Stage 1, the curriculum looks at the Foundation Phase Framework. This allows for a much more child centred, holistic approach in education within Wales, with a focus on the child's developmental needs. Rather than looking at pupil progress through age, it puts a much larger focus on the individual child and their development, allowing their progress to be monitored in stages rather than in comparison to other children in their corresponding year group or age. This approach however, is considered by some to create a bigger challenge for teachers, as depending on the class, teachers could be expected to adapt their lessons to a significantly wider level of abilities. However, with the Foundation Phase framework radically changing the way we view the education of Nursery to Year 2 students in such a positive way, due to the new focus being almost entirely focussed on all their developmental needs, rather than pure academic ability, the majority argue that the new curriculum has drastically improved the education of all students across Wales, and with adaptations, will continue to do so.

The third pedagogical principle out of Donaldson's twelve looks at the approach that 'good teaching and learning means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching' (Donaldson, 2015, pg. 65). This principle states that a blend of approaches to teaching, including traditional approaches, should be used in order to ensure successful learning. Blended learning looks specifically at the ways we teach, and what types of methods excite and engage the children in our classes. An example of this could be a class trip to a farm in order to build contextual knowledge, and then using resources and recounts in order to build off of the knowledge gained from this different learning experience.

The two main types of teaching approaches are direct learning and blended learning. Direct learning is the more traditional, stereotypical method of teaching, where the teacher addresses the whole class in order to teach. This method of teaching contains a large number of advantages and disadvantages, as on one hand, the whole class is addressed at once, the focus for most children is directed into one place and the teacher is able to use one resource for the whole class. However, the disadvantages of this method include not being able to cater specifically, or at all, to different abilities or any additional learning needs within the class without adapting resources and teaching significantly or singling out specific children. This presents a major problem when teaching, which is why the new curriculum encourages a mix of teaching approaches, including blended learning, as it addresses the needs of individuals within a class much more directly, and allows teaching to be adapted to different abilities within the class. Although blended learning can at first be considered the more successful, revised option of teaching, due to it involving the use of modern technology and resources, as well as published studies to suggest that groups who are taught using blended learning "perceive a significantly greater understanding" (O'Connor, Mortimer & Bond, 2011, pg. 67) in comparison to those taught without blended learning, which put forth an argument that it is in fact a more successful teaching method. However, blended learning is not without fault, as some suggest that due to the added use of modern day technology, it eliminates the social aspect of learning. Although, by employing a range of new and traditional teaching methods, this prevents the issue of the social aspect being lost and therefore makes blended using a very effective teaching method so long as it is used alongside other methods of learning.

The fifth pedagogical principle out of the twelve is that 'good teaching and learning sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest' (Donaldson, 2015, pg. 67). This principle, according to Donaldson, refers to the fact that 'a one-size-fits-all approach to learning will not meet [the] wide range of needs' (Donaldson, 2015, pg. 67) of the individual children within a classroom.

This links to the importance of children's authentic context, and when teaching, ensuring to take into account that not all children will have had the same life experiences. These factors are considered by many to be of vital importance as "without the ability and willingness to apply information to the contexts in which the information is relevant, knowledge is wasted" (Petraglia, 2009).

The importance of authentic context can be further highlighted through a number of examples. For example, in a class of 30 pupils, whilst all of the pupils may come from the same area close to a beach, some of these children may never have visited a beach or even seen one. This can present a number of difficulties for these children in particular, especially if a related topic, such as coasts and rivers, is being taught. This is because whilst the majority of pupils will be able to relate to the content being taught and expand their knowledge, the pupils who have never seen a beach are unable to do this, and therefore get

'left behind' as they don't have any authentic context to build off on and as a result, are learning everything from scratch, putting them at a significant disadvantage in comparison to their other classmates.

This means that for teachers, ensuring that the responsibility of enriching all children's learning is fulfilled and ensuring that their interests are engaged can present a variety of challenges. However, there are a number of ways in which this can be done in order to benefit the learning of all children. For example, recapping previous work can prove extremely beneficial for a wide number of reasons, with many arguing that "repetition is one of our most essential learning tools" (Saville, 2011, pg. 69) as well as "brain research reveal[ing] that repetition strengthens neural connections" (Saville, 2011, pg. 69)

Repeating and recapping previously taught information, especially when introducing new ideas, allows children to be reminded of what they already know, and how they are able to link their previous knowledge to new information, as well as give any pupils who were unable to fully grasp previous concepts another opportunity in order to do so. By recapping information, it allows pupils of all abilities to become enriched within the tasks in addition to solidifying information, ensuring that all pupils are given a much higher chance of fully understanding what it is they are being taught.

Another effective way of helping to boost the chance of children's full understanding is to ensure the use of cross curricular skills within lessons, ensuring that "teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and experience" (Donaldson, 2015, pg. 68). This principle was put into place by Donaldson due to many believing that cross curricular skills will be "one of the defining features of twenty-first century education" (OECD, cited in Donaldson, 2015, pg. 68). Cross curricular skills are important in education for a wide number of reasons, although some may argue that the most important reason is it gives teachers the ability to use a holistic approach with students. An example of this could be a child finding a Vikings topic in humanities extremely challenging. A way of using cross curricular skills in order to support this child could be to integrate outdoor education to explore the environments Vikings would have lived in, the resources they had and the tools they would have used. Not only would this allow the child to fully immerse themselves in the activity, it would allow them to become engaged in an activity they would otherwise have found very difficult were it not for the introduction of cross curricular skills, due to the opportunity and challenge of trying new things in a different environment. The benefits of teaching ranging across all areas of learning, especially the introduction of lots more outdoor education, have been proven by a number of different studies. A meta analysis published in 1998 concluded that "65% of those who participate in adventure programs are better off than those who do not participate" (Neill & Richards, pg. 4). As well as this, children are better able to consolidate their learning and apply their knowledge and skills to different subjects, strengthening their ability across all areas of the curriculum.

In conclusion, the new Curriculum for Wales has drastically improved the education of thousands of children across Wales by developing a new holistic approach which encompasses the development of children rather than assess them on academic ability alone. This is in addition to providing opportunity for a blend of teaching approaches to be used within the classroom, enabling teachers to better cater their teaching to individual learners and more effectively direct children's attention when using a blend of approaches. The curriculum has also put an added focus on children's authentic context, which has already benefited a huge number of children who would otherwise be at a significant

disadvantage to their peers, as well as using cross curricular skills to enable children who flourish in certain subjects to transfer their skills to other areas and subjects in the curriculum, encouraging the use of new skills and knowledge.

Whilst the new curriculum, according to the majority, has definitely brought an extremely positive change to education in Wales, we cannot accept it as absolute. Education is constantly changing, and with the new curriculum only being in place from 2020, and three of these years being based in the coronavirus lockdown, this means that there are potentially still issues within the new curriculum that haven't been picked up on yet or had improvements suggested. However, in the present moment, the majority consider the new curriculum, and Donaldson's pedagogical principles to be a huge success.

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