

Section 1

Gov (2023) states that in Wales, a new curriculum is being introduced that incorporates the best concepts from around the world, which has been developing since 2017 by teachers, practitioners and expert partners. These changes are being made as society is constantly changing. The curriculum needs to equip young people to achieve greater literacy and numeracy levels, to become more digitally and linguistically proficient, and to be self-assured, knowledgeable, and empathetic individuals of Wales. The purpose of the new curriculum is to give our children and young people in Wales the best chances and support possible so that they can all succeed for the benefit of Wales' future. (Kirsty Williams 2022). This assignment examines possible obstacles to the proposed curriculum reforms in Wales and discusses lessons that might be drawn from the failures of prior curriculum reforms.

The Welsh Government (2014) carried out a survey to evaluate how well the Foundation Phase 2008 was being implemented. The findings concluded that according to a high percentage of stakeholders that were surveyed, the Foundation Phase is positively affecting children's learning, particularly in schools and in terms of welfare, attitudes towards learning and their confidence. It was found that there was less agreement, but it was still generally good, on the Foundation Phase's effects on literacy, numeracy, and students who were considered advantaged. It was noted frequently that the children who benefited the most from the Foundation Phase appeared to be boys, children with special needs and children who spoke Welsh or English as a second language. The overall outcome of the survey concluded that parents were satisfied. The majority of parents did not believe that key stage one was superior to or inferior to the Foundation Phase, but those whose children were enrolled in classes that utilised the Foundation Phase more strongly were slightly less likely to believe that key stage one is superior to the Foundation Phase. However, with Wales' new curriculum key stages will no longer exist as the curriculum will become one curriculum for all children from the age of three to sixteen. The Welsh Governments Evaluating the Foundation Phase (2015) report reports the findings that schools that use the Foundation Phase pedagogies more frequently report higher levels of observed student engagement and wellbeing during instruction. Many of

the practitioners agree with each other that literacy and numeracy has been improved by the using the Foundation Phase. According to the evaluation, the Foundation Phase's introduction has resulted in general benefits in children's educational achievement, wellbeing and involvement. Additionally, these advancements may pave the way for even greater educational success when the children reach adulthood.

Opposed to the current national curriculum, there will not be any study plans outlining the precise content that must be taught. O'Prey et al. (2019) stated in The Curriculum for Wales will be based around six Areas of Learning and Experience in addition to the four purposes (AOLEs) There will be a difference in the way that children learn as the new curriculum will focus on skills, experience and knowledge. Practitioners will be allowed to teach in ways that they believe is best for the children, this will allow the practitioners to have more freedom. The tests at the end of key stages will no longer exist and will be replaced by assessments that will be carried out daily, looking at the child's progress. (Audit Wales, 2021)

Education Wales (2019) states how the new curriculum is a purpose-driven curriculum in opposed to the previous one that was more coverage-based. It is explained how assessments, over the last thirty years, have had a main purpose of achieving a verdict such as seeing if a child has reached a particular level. However, the new curriculum will be using assessments for what they believe they are best used for, which is to help a child progress to reach their full potential by working with the practitioner to create a path through their education journey. So it is believed that the heart of the new curriculum is assessments, the process of enhancing a child's education. The Curriculum for Wales Feedback Analysis (2022) received largely positive feedback from respondents. The majority of respondents said the guidance might be enhanced to aid their comprehension and practical application of the curriculum. The suggestions for how the advice could be improved by respondents ranged from highly specific wording to more broad views.

TKI (2019) explain how the New Zealand Curriculum's purpose of creating lifelong learners who are connected, self-assured, and confident can be realised in schools with

the use of play-based learning. The New Zealand Curriculum's values and core competencies can almost all be taught through play-based learning. It is possible to investigate a variety of subject areas and make connections between them, as well as to personal routines and the larger community. Play based learning also offers the chance to include the Te Whariki curriculum into early childhood education. Te Whariki's ideas and strands should be familiar to new teachers, and they should purposefully build on the foundations currently in place. PMK (2023) said how the Te Whariki curriculum aligns with Montessori's method in many ways, such as the respect towards the children's abilities to make their own decisions around their education. They encourage confidence within children to become lifelong learners. Montessori and Te Whariki share the same opinion on allowing the children to have freedom where they choose their own activities as their curriculum is based on the children's interests and needs. Montessori is also similar to Reggio Emilia, however their approach to the Foundation Phase is not the same. Montessori is based with the idea in mind that the atmosphere and surroundings is where children learn. Reggio Emilia is also a child-centric, believing the uniqueness of each child, it allows them to explore the environment and learn through play, interdependence and socio-cultural learning. Both Reggio Emilia and Montessori have their similarities however there is some differences in the methodology where both of their approaches are holistic but their paths to the goal is different. Montessori follows a curriculum that involves mathematics, languages and social science. Whereas on the other hand, Reggio Emilia has no preset curriculum as the lesson is developed based on the children's interests and responses and chosen to suit them. (Naccho, 2023).

Section 2

Every child is different, and their requirements will reflect this, this is what makes a unique child. The majority of what students learn in their early years, they frequently figure out on their own spontaneously, and they do it in their own time and method. Children's growth is greatly influenced by the physical and social environments in which they are raised. Therefore, interactions and care from main carers must be supportive and nurturing. (Children in Wales, 2021).

Play based learning is the core of the Foundation Phase. Play is essential for all children's educational development, according to research, and learning via play is a potent tool for fostering children's language and communication skills development. Young children learn about the world through play. The Foundation Phase curriculum is supported by a variety of play activities, such as role play, creative play, and imaginative play. Play that involves building and exploration.

The Foundation Phase Profile Handbook (2017) explains how practitioners use observations as a form of assessments where a holistic view of the children's development and capabilities are made clear. They are used to be able to view any difficulties or exceptional abilities amongst children in order to let them receive the support that they need. The observations need to be carried out both indoors and outdoors to be able to gain a better idea of a child's capabilities as some may excel more outdoors than indoors, as each child is unique. It is also important that the observations are a mix of child-led and adult-led activities as many children show more of their capabilities when they are by themselves, this could be down to lack of confidence when an adult is present resulting in the observation not showing a true reflection of the child.

Practitioners in Wales also use formative assessments where they monitor a child's progress regularly and providing feedback on what they are doing well and what they need to improve on. It allows practitioners to identify the gaps in children's learning so they are able to plan more effectively to target the gaps. Many settings use their observations against a checklist for their framework and this has various disadvantages,

as they are not inclusive, additional learning needs children may not be able to succeed what is expecting from them on the practitioners checklist, making the observation not supportive of unique children. They do not take in to account how the child may have family differences such as home life or their culture; this may affect their level of development. Children who are expected to demonstrate a specific skill may put pressure on them, causing them not to present a true reflection of their development. Respect, curiosity and empathy may not be listed on what the practitioner is looking for as they are not associated with milestones, although they are achievements for a child. The observations can be compared with other children's creating a deficit outlook of the child as they are not reaching the norms, but excelling in other areas not listed. (Rare, 2018) Even though there are many disadvantages to observing children, there are also advantages. When children are being observed, it allows practitioners to be able to see what they are struggling with, allowing them to plan accordingly to meet each child's needs, supporting the unique child to improve their learning and development.

Te Whariki assess children through learning stories, which was an idea by Margaret Carr. She believed that this is the most beneficial way to be able to track a child's progress. It is a progress where a child's development is documented as a story. Educational Leadership Project (2019) state how it is a philosophical approach. New Zealand were anxious of having a school based curriculum which they were also reluctant to have, however the government engaged Carr and Mae as the leaders where they evolved a bicultural and socio-cultural curriculum. They did not believe in old assessments such as checklists, running records and time sampling as they are based on work development psychology viewpoint. Resulting in their new curriculum to introduce learning stories that they believe to be the opposite to a form as it sees the child as capable and competent supporting the uniqueness of each individual. Pack (2015) identify some of the many benefits to children being assessed through learning stories. They are believed to be essential in a child finding their sense of identity. Children will feel that the practitioners are valuing their ideas and thoughts when they are being listened to and observed. It allows the children to have an opportunity to reflect on themselves and their learning when having their story read back to them. They aid practitioners in learning more about

the children in their care, finding their uniqueness and supporting them, allowing them to gain a better understanding on how to plan for the children. The learning stories will create a comprehensive profile for each child, which will become part of their portfolio. Not only does it benefit the child and practitioners, it helps practitioners to create relationships with the parents and families as it shows them how much the practitioners value the child. It will allow parents to find out information that they did not know about their child, for example strengths and interests in school. However Kelly (2016) highlights the argument of how learning stories are not always practical as they are time consuming especially if the practitioner has a large group of children. The stories may not be written up for a while resulting in change in the child's development as they have gotten older, not showing a true reflection of what stage the child is at now. A lot of the story could be written through imagination, not showing the child's true personality. The challenges of this approach are agreed by Murata (2014) who believes that Te Whiriki is interpreted by teachers in too many different ways, and each teacher has an own style when it comes to creating learning tales. Some teachers use Te Whiriki as a justification because it doesn't call for a particular outcome. Because the education system does not outline outcomes and procedures, it is reasonable to predict that services and instructor skill levels may vary greatly.

Although observations and learning stories are similar, they differ from each other as learning stories emphasis on what the child can achieve rather than what they are unable to do. Unlike observations, there is no need to concentrate on a particular skill and the process the child takes to achieve it, as each child is unique. These stories are then shared with the families of the child so they can see the activities and relationships that the child has engaged in throughout the assessment period. (Veazey, 2020)

Although the Foundation Phase and Te Whariki are different, they do have similarities. However according to the DCU (2020) in Nordic countries they disagree with these approaches as they believe in a more holistic view on the quality of the education provided, as they do not believe in measuring or testing children against set outcomes. Even though they do assess the children and their development, they do not monitor

children with learning aims in mind. This approach to education comes with many benefits which include school days are shorting, allowing the children to have more time for social and family time, this has a huge impact on their wellbeing resulting in better results. Schools encourage children to take risks and use their creativity and not to worry if they get unexpected results, this will help a child's confidence as they are not pressured in to getting the best results. The national curriculum in Nordic countries are only used as a guide within the class, they are not set expectations, this allows flexibility to learning where the unique child can be included from the start of planning. The emphasis on social learning within the approach is the most vital aspect on this model as it allows children to work alongside each other developing and enhancing their social and communication skills. (LAB, 2020). The Nordic approach to education is known to be one of the best approach's in the world, this is because they focus more on child centered rather than target driven system. Although children start school at a later age in these countries, they have less pressure by not having standardised testing as they are all tested individually based on a grading system created by their teacher. It is stated how many schools are in competition with increasing their marks in tests, allowing them to forget what is actually important to individuals, that is being happy and healthy within the learning environment. (Colagrossi, 2018).

In summary, the mentioned approaches all support the unique child but not all approaches are suitable for all children. Such as some children have no confidence and feel under pressure easily, whereas some children need to structure and support of an adult.

Section 3

Do we really understand the importance of outdoor learning?

Since working in the Early Years sector, I understand. Many associate learning with sitting in the classroom, not realising being in the outdoors is more beneficial for both practitioner and children. Even though times are changing where technology is enhancing, encouraging children to stay indoors to play video games and on their iPads, which may seem convenient to many parents, however children will always enjoy the outdoors. Lester and Maudsley (2007) mentions a classic study that was carried out by Hart (1979) and Moores (1986) where they asked children to recognise their favourite places using illustrations. The results showed that 96 percent of the children's drawings were the outdoors, although this study is dated, I believe that the results today would be very similar.

Children are too young to have to deal with stress but unfortunately many do which may be from various reasons such as trouble at home, bullying or even school work. Wells and Evans (2003) believe that being outdoors reduces stress as stress levels are lower in learning spaces with more plants, greener views and access to play outside. Having less stressed children, allows their brain to focus which will improve their learning and behaviour, benefiting themselves and the practitioners.

Wales' Foundation Phase (2008) is a play based curriculum for children ages between three to seven that places a strong emphasis on using the outdoors. Wales has developed outdoor learning to be the best in the UK, and the Foundation Phase (2008) will ensure that we continue to be at the forefront of experiential learning, of which outdoor learning is such a crucial component. WAG (2008) cites Waters (2016) state that children must have access to fun, exciting, stimulating, and safe indoor and outdoor environments in educational settings, and these environments must promote children's development and natural curiosity to explore and learn through first-hand experiences, with greater emphasis on using the outdoor environment as a resource for children's learning.

The Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning handbook (2009) highlights how the outdoors is the best setting for experiential learning because it presents uncommon chances for creativity, movement, noise, and risk-taking. Weather, noises, smells, and textures are just a few of the unique elements that can enrich and improve a child's learning environment that can be found outside.

Children develop more socially, physically, creatively, culturally, and personally when they are outside. Children who have these skills are better equipped to learn and retain what they have learned. Children gain by putting more of a focus on using the outdoors as a learning resource in a variety of ways, including: their health and wellbeing, being able to explore nature in the real world, problem solving and sustainability.

Each of the seven learning domains in the Foundation Phase includes outdoor learning, and this use of the outdoors as a learning environment is justified in part by the imprint of Scandinavia and the Forest Schools movement, as well as by the inspiration of educational theorists like Froebel. The "free-air life," also known as the Scandinavian outdoor oriented approach to learning and play, or "friluftsliv," emphasises the need to interact with nature and have experiences that are just not possible indoors. Nature teaches young children important life lessons that promote solid developmental foundations. Children can enhance their cognitive development through nature by exercising critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Children may connect the dots, generate fresh concepts, and refine their play techniques through outside exploration. (Day Nurseries, 2021)

Froebel (1995) insisted that outdoor play was essential for physical, intellectual, and moral development. Froebel stressed the importance of introducing children to all components of nature, as there is more to nature than wildlife and greenery. He asserted that allowing children play outside in the garden and other outdoor spaces is one of the finest methods for them to learn about nature. Children learn about the interdependence of all living things through practical experiences. This encourages people to consider the more important issues around the environment, sustainability, and climate change. (Froebel Trust 2023)

The Foundation Phase Evaluation Report (2015) states how the last crucial component of the Foundation Phase's implementation is the provision of resources for schools to create their outdoor learning environments, in addition to a stronger focus on using the outdoors for teaching and learning. The New Curriculum (2019) aim to provide better learning opportunities in the outdoors for children. However, outdoor learning is just as beneficial with or without resources as Forest Schools believe that the limited and basic supplies used in forest schools, things like mud and sticks, allow children to learn by hands on experiences and foster their imaginations. (Koru Kids, 2023)

It is believed that children enjoy outdoor learning more than the practitioners so they try to avoid it. However it is important to listen to children and respect the views of children, Article 12, UNCRC (1990) and try to involved more outdoor learning. More than eighty percent of British teachers stated that they would like to be outside with the children more frequently, and over forty five percent put this lack of outdoor time down to the demands of the curriculum. Just over half of teachers in the UK attribute the decline in outdoor learning due to the weather, despite the fact that sixty four percent of schools hold classes outside more than once every week. (Outdoor Classroom Day, 2018). Sanza (2015) highlight how being outdoors causes practitioners to be under more pressure for various reasons such as; they need to carry out risk assessments of the area which may be used by public meaning more hazards to be found. Being in a classroom is easier for a practitioner to have more control over the children as it is to supervise them in the outdoors. There are extra Health and Safety regulations that need to be followed for the safety of both child an practitioner. The weather may not always be appropriate but as stated by Alfred Wainwright (1973), there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing. Although the many downsides of outdoor learning to the teachers, it brings many benefits to the children, as well as the practitioners.

Creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, personal effectiveness, planning and organising are all skills that will be covered in Wales' New Curriculum 2019. Children can develop all of these skills in the outdoors. The outdoors may help

children to become moral adults by teaching them to be kind to other living things, care for the environment and understand sustainability. (GOV, 2022)

Parsons (2020) stated how many educators and healthcare professionals had become increasingly concerned about a decline in children's access to and usage of the outdoors prior to the COVID19 outbreak. But has the pandemic encouraged us to be outdoors more? At the start of the pandemic, schools were closed down and we was all told to stay inside. Some children would usually only see the outdoors whilst travelling to school, however with schools turning to online learning, children were encouraged even more to stay indoors. However, as restrictions started to ease, the government had actively encouraged us to go outside during COVID19 and be physically active because it is widely acknowledged that access to the outdoors has a positive influence on mental health and wellbeing. MG Timber (2022) agreed stating how COVID19 has changed the way in practitioners think about outdoor learning, believing its importance. He believe it is important proving with research conducted by Nation Resources Wales that showed children perform better in school, and are happier and healthier when learning outdoors.

The advantages of outdoor learning are felt by teachers, who report feeling happier and more fulfilled at work. Schools increase teacher retention rates, and parents get better-behaved children returned from school. Therefore, it is evident that outdoor learning benefits everyone involved: children, parents, instructors, and schools.

In summary, children thrive more when they are learning outdoors. Their happiness thrives, along with their confidence, communication, physical skills, knowledge and understanding of the world, and social skills. It allows them adventure in their natural environment, exploring the world that they live in. Children love to be messy, and there is no better place to be messy than outdoors, so why not encourage outdoor play more?

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