

What is it?

The Purposeful Pinny is one for all. It is a tool that consists of a child sized apron with pockets that wraps around children whilst they are out exploring, enhancing their independent learning.

How do you use it and why has this idea been created?

It can be used anywhere, both indoor and outdoor. Children simply wrap the pinafore around themselves and the practitioner or the child can place objects into the pockets and explore their surrounding area. This product was created to allow children the sense of discovery and be independent in their own learning. Once children are in the different areas of the learning environment, they can get out the tools they need from the pockets and enhance their own learning of a particular area.

Outdoor learning experiences

Adults can place objects or items, such as mini shovels, notebooks, magnifying glasses, gloves or a camera into the pockets then children, using the different areas in the outdoor learning environment, can go around with their Purposeful Pinny, and pick out what they need. This product enhances children's development, providing them with a range of play-based opportunities or materials and can also help with their independent learning. As the children make choices with their learning and what they want to discover, practitioners can model and scaffold this, however still allowing that child-initiated play (Early Years Careers, 2016).

The Purposeful Pinny



(Source: Ebay, no date)



(Source: The Health Site, 2017)

'Even our youngest of children are capable of considerable independence in their learning'

(Source: Whitebread et al, 2007)

Indoor learning experiences

The Purposeful Pinny can provide endless opportunities in the indoor learning environment.

Mathematical development can be enhanced with this item, where children can sort objects or materials into groups with the pockets. One of the requirements from the Foundation Phase is for children to sort objects to size, weight or capacity (Foundation Phase, 2016) and with this item, children can. Imagination and creativity can also be fostered in the indoor environment, where children can role play this item and act out various scenarios as with imagination comes many important functions. For example, through imaginary play, children start to understand the world around them and work through their feelings, therefore the Purposeful Pinny allows children the freedom to express themselves.

The Purposeful Pinny concept can also benefit the 'Read, Write and Ink' programme where 'Green Words' can be placed in the pockets of the Pinny and children take them out and read the cards, by themselves or with a peer. The opportunities are endless.

Benefits

Healthy development means that all children of all abilities, including those with additional needs, can grow up in an environment where their social, emotional and educational needs are met. This idea enhances children's social skills by providing them with opportunities to talk to their peers about what they have found in their discoveries. Using Vygotsky's scaffolding element, adults can demonstrate what to do with the Purposeful Pinny, building on the children's independence and then allowing child-led play. Once the child has learned the skill, support is lessened as abilities are developed (Smidt, 2009). Children can take the context provided by the adult and shape it into their own imagination or interests. The Purposeful Pinny stretches children's imagination which corroborates suggestions by Duffy (2006) that imagination and creativity is the indicator of quality in the Early Years: something I aim to achieve with this idea. One requirement of the Foundation Phase is that children should be creative, explore and investigate their surrounding area; with this item, that can be achieved. Children can use their pinny to explore the environment with the tools that they need, investigating natural objects and creatures. Locating and using various objects in their pockets also enhances the children's fine motor skills which can further help them with performing everyday tasks, as well as academic skills. When children are outside, the outdoors offers a variety of objects to explore, such as sticks, flowers, rocks and water etc., and these are explored through curiosity and a drive to learn. These open-ended materials respond to children's imagination and needs, and the fact they can just go in these pockets, pick out what they need to explore and use it independently will be fascinating alone.

The cotton material used to make the product also contributes to the curriculum, specifically, Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (EDSGC) as this framework seeks to understand the impact of our choices on the environment or economy (GOV, 2017). Rather than plastic, cotton with a wax coating will be used as an environmentally friendly option. The material was chosen to allow children or practitioners to easily wipe away any mess, for the material to be recycled and also in order to use the product for years to come.

Welsh cards for children, or even the practitioner, can be added to the pockets of the pinny for certain activities, which could encourage children to speak more Welsh in the setting. Little cards could be used, for example having a red card with the words 'coch' displayed, and the children could attempt to use the vocabulary independently or with a friend. This also

contributes to the Welsh Government strategy to create ‘one million welsh speakers by 2050’ (BBC, 2017).

This item can also be beneficial for parents at home as it can be used to develop role play ideas, for example washing up in a kitchen area or making it into a builder’s tool belt. There are strong links between the educational benefits for children and various forms of family engagement, such as encouragement and involvement in learning, that has shown parents do play a vital role in the developing the child (Mapp, 2003). By having this product in the home, parents will have opportunities to read to their child, place a story in the pockets of the pinny and take reading anywhere they go. They can also use it for enhanced play in the outdoors or even enhanced learning areas, just like schools or settings.

Barriers

There are perhaps a few barriers when it comes to creating this product. Schools or settings may not wish to invest in this as costing or timing to make the product could prevent them from wanting to pursue it. Due to the funding cuts that have evolved in the school system, which The Guardian (2017) states as a ‘crisis’, schools or settings may not be able to invest in this idea. In addition, there is also no specific evidence that the idea will work and, as this is a new, innovative item, there are limited reviews or studies to support it, therefore some practitioners or settings may feel anxious to go ahead with it.

Stakeholders

All children and practitioners could be impacted by the outcome of this project, especially those with additional learning needs. It is important to include all children in Early Years as suggested by Nutbrown et al (2013). Certain objects, for example sensory items, can be placed in the pockets to support those children who need it. Picture cards, such as those which illustrates aspects of a routine, can also be placed in the Purposeful Pinny for children who may need support in that area and can be easily accessed for the practitioner or the child. The Purposeful Pinny can also easily be attached to a child’s wheelchair, ensuring inclusion is maintained for all children, including those with specific needs.

This product could also be beneficial to parents at home. The Purposeful Pinny provides a wide range of learning opportunities at home, such as helping to establish and reinforce routines, role play and enhanced play outside.

My expertise

I felt that with my expertise and knowledge I had the right skillset to create this product. Having gained experience in working with children aged four to five in a reception class, I believe I have developed the skills to understand children's development and what is required for them to grow into the learners of today. In my everyday setting, my role is to motivate children and imaginatively use resources to help them learn. I believe I have good organisational skills as I plan and help the teacher to tailor activities to suit children's individual needs, therefore this background aided me in this process. In addition, creating this product has given me a chance to develop my career, developing skills such as entrepreneurial awareness that Obschonka et al (2016) states helps individuals to gain a highly relevant career path. Using reflective practice, I have looked back on situations and experiences in order to generate my idea. I used the 'Three Cs of the Early Childhood Curriculum' by Bruce (1987) to help me create the product and, as stated in the diagram below, the child is at the centre of the idea. I wanted to create an idea that is all about the first C, the unique 'Child' and what they can benefit from it. Based on my experience of working in a setting, children grow from independent learning, which is what the product aimed to foster. The next C was 'Context', which consists of outdoors, indoors, the environment, special educational needs, materials and so on, which I feel with the Purposeful Pinny, children can work alongside and be beneficial. Children can play and learn indoors or outdoors with this item, enhancing their development with various materials, whilst including all children. Lastly, was 'Content' which looks at what the child wants to know or what the child needs to know. I feel that all children will be excited to want to know about where they can go around by themselves or with a peer, which enhances their provision.



(Source: Bruce, 2011)

Critical analysis – Part 2

Having the passion to be successful in Early Years is not just an indicator of quality, it is also a drive and entrepreneurial awareness, which can be defined as persistence, innovation and success (Cardon et al, 2017). It is correspondingly the basis of the Purposeful Pinny; the passion for children to be successful in learning, to scaffold their learning for others and the innovation to create new ideas and connections to their development. This product can also be the underpinning that makes an Entrepreneur, which is someone who exercises initiative by taking an opportunity to develop something (Mas-Tur et al, 2015), and this is how Purposeful Pinny came about.

The main impact of the Purposeful Pinny is to enhance children's independent learning, which Whitebread et al (2007) suggests is becoming widespread for settings to foster. Reggio Emilia and Highscope have also adapted this concept. Both sources emphasise children's autonomy and ownership of their learning, together with the processes of learning explicit to the child. Children can take the Purposeful Pinny into their learning experience, take out what they need to explore and investigate it with their own purpose. However, it should be noted that in today's settings, there are problematic issues when it comes to independent learning. The need to maintain an orderly classroom, with the pressures of time, resources and perceptions from the leaders in the setting, including Headteachers, parents or governors, can often go against the support of children's independence (Whitebread et al, 2007). This is confirmed by Hendy and Whitebread (2000) who state that children are essentially underestimated by teachers and that they found children to be more teacher dependent, rather than less. With the purpose of this item, hopefully this can be changed, and settings can foster the concept of children being more independent. Children need to be independent and

enhance their own learning. The Guardian (2013) states that allowing children the space and time by themselves in the outdoors is more likely to engage them than a topic. The whole of the outdoors can inspire independent learning by itself.

Another impact that can come from Purposeful Pinny is the cotton-like material used to create this product, which can be closely linked to the underlying ethos of Education for Sustainable development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). Rather than using wasteful plastic, cotton with a wax coating can be a more sustainable alternative to disposal. Children or practitioners can easily wash down any spillages that are made on the material and benefit from using this item for years to come, where it can be recycled and be more sustainable for the environment rather than plastic. However, looking at a SWOT analysis with weaknesses, finances could be an issue, which is why some schools or settings may not wish to pursue it. Some settings may be fearful to invest as the school system does face future cuts. The BBC (2017) suggests that schools essentially need to stop spending, which is also corroborated by The Guardian (2017) that there is a crisis in current society as schools need to protect funding and avoid further spending. Schools or settings may then look to find an alternative approach to the Purposeful Pinny, and just use standard water or sand aprons instead of investing in this product. One challenge could be that settings or schools might be apprehensive as there are no studies or research for this new item at present. This could cause a barrier with regards to lack of investment. The source may not be reliable as there are currently no reviews made, therefore settings could hold back from further investing.

Returning to ESDGC, whilst out exploring their outdoor learning environment, children can use their objects to investigate creatures or mini beasts. Furthermore, Article 29 of the United Nations of Conventions of the Rights of the Child, highlights the importance of educational settings, encouraging children to respect others, human's rights, cultures and their own (UNCRC, no date). The Foundation Phase (2015) agrees with this and states that in Outcome 3, children should begin to understand that all living things need to be treated with respect, care and concern. Adults working with the Purposeful Pinny can scaffold, just like with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, the gap between what the children can do independently and what they may need help in (Blake and Pope, 2008) which is reminding them that all living things need to be respected. Broadhead (2004) explains that the resources the children find, do provide a crucial link between the child's internal development process

and the society or the community around them. It is then, through using the resources that are provided in the pockets for their own intent or purposes, that they begin to co-construct the curriculum through their play and the environment. Through use of this item, children can gain the sense of discovery, which can also make connections to the environment (Bento and Dias, 2017). Just like the Donaldson report, it is about allowing children to be capable, ambitious learners who enterprise their own creative contributors (Wales Online, 2015).

By providing children with the Purposeful Pinny, social skills could also be enhanced as it provides opportunities for children to talk to their peers or an adult about what they have learnt or discovered. At the heart of the Foundation Phase is children's personal and social development, where children can learn about themselves, their relationships with other children or adults which can have an impact on children's development (Foundation Phase, 2015). Adults using Vygotsky's scaffolding, can demonstrate what to do with the Purposeful Pinny, building on the children's independence and then allowing child-led play and interactions. Once the child has learned the skill, support is lessened as their abilities develop (Smidt, 2009). Social skills are used every day to interact and communicate with others, so it is vital to enhance a child's communication and maintain their skills. With regards to children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or other additional needs such as Asperger's, the pinny can provide opportunities to develop certain skills in those areas as some children can face difficulty with social interactions.

To conclude, future developments for the Purposeful Pinny should focus on where to expand this idea. As the idea is small scale, there could be further opportunities for implementation across the country and the Early Years market would be ideal as there is room in the field for this kind of product. Talks or meetings via schools or settings could be set up in the promotional stage of the item and leaflets could be given out to practitioners to view or even parents to see what they can invest in at home. Further research and reviews are also needed to make this item successful, so then buyers or settings know what they are purchasing, making this a reliable source to buy. There is also a need to research the financial implications and what could be the best price point to ensure that this item a success. Research could be made into similar objects online with the equivalent material to predict the possible outcome.

Furthermore, there could be further opportunities for children to try out the item beforehand which links with the ethos of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as Article 12 states that children have the right to express their feelings, views or wishes in all matters affecting them (UNCRC, no date). Giving children the prospect to see what they think of the Purposeful Pinny and what can be improved, gives the children a voice and a feeling of participation in the making of the product.

Finally, I believe that this item is a unique strategy to foster children's independent learning, whilst also encouraging them to engage in their own learning with resources that they have chosen independently. Not only does it afford a child freedom in the setting but it allows them to be ambitious, capable learners of today that can enhance their own development.

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