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Module: Human Development	Module code: ECEY4001/C

Objective

A comprehensive guide for early years practitioners aimed to help through the transitions of children in early years and factors affecting it.



(Source: Shutterstock, 2021)

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Introduction

From birth onwards, a child needs to feel welcomed in this world, he is dependent on adults around him to full fill his physical and emotional developmental needs. They need a space where they feel safe and can express themselves. (Duffy et al. 2006, p 197-201)

According to The Early Childhood Curriculum of New Zealand, Te Whāriki (a Maori word for a woven mat)

‘Competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.’ (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2017)

Early years practitioners play a significant role in a child’s life and support him through different transitional stages. This handbook aims to describe the importance of transitions in children’s lives, the role of an adult, the needs of a child, the importance of partnership and communication. This handbook’s main objective is to provide knowledge and support to an early year practitioner for a smooth transitional development from a child to an adult.

Transitions

It is a process of significant change from one form to another form. (Cambridge dictionary, 2021)

What is Transition?

At the point from birth, a child undergoes numerous transitions on daily basis before the age of 5 which includes transition within different educational settings including childminders, day care settings, nurseries and then full-time school. Every child responds differently to each of these transitional stages. The transition from one phase to another depends on the previous experience of the child. The main aim of any transition is to support a child and make him feel included in the environment and working in partnership with the families. (Kirklees Council, 2019)

The effectiveness and quality of program depends largely on communication and collaboration between all people involved in the process’ (Margetts, K 2004)

Why is Transition Important?

The ‘transitions’ is used to refer to changes between services, such as moving from one setting to another. It can also be referred to as changes in personal life. These could include the death of a close relative, divorce, disabilities, health issues. A child understands the effect of transitions in his everyday life and has a lifelong impact of these transitions in their

development. Therefore, it is important to appreciate the role of parents and early years practitioners working in partnership to support the transition of a child. (CWDC, 2010)

Every child is unique in their learning and developmental abilities some children are better at adapting to the changes while others may have an unsettling experience with transitions. (Drake, 2006)

What is quality transition?

Transitions are an important course of change in life, researchers suggest that there are two types of transition named Horizontal Transition and Vertical Transition. Horizontal transition refers to the small changes in everyday life such as moving between formal to informal situations like playing outside with friends. However, vertical transition refers to a major change such as starting a school for the first time. Both these transitions could have a positive or negative impact on the well-being of a child. A child is expected to through these transitions and certain rules are set in place to support the settling in process. If a child is unsure about the rules or if he doesn't feel included, it may affect the learning and development of a child. (Flying Start, 2017)

People who work with young children like early years practitioners should have effective communication skills which enable them to communicate efficiently with children, their parents, care providers, other agencies and support workers. It helps to build trust, confidence and understanding. Communication is not always about using words, but it is also about showing empathy, respect, using appropriate body language and making a child and their family feel included and understood without being judgmental. (Children Workforce Development Council, 2010)

Nowadays, children are developing in a digital era, which has a major impact on shaping society. This use of technology has a different impact on the learning and development of a child. An ecological theorist Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) presented a theory known as Bioecological Model. It emphasizes the wider aspect of the social, economic, political, and cultural factors on the learning and development of a child. His theory shows a unique relationship between a child's biology and the environment in which they are grown up.

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(Source: Parenta, 2021)

Bronfenbrenner theory provides much information too early years practitioners and focuses on the impact of vast environmental influences that impact directly and indirectly a child's development. According to his theory when the environment is more encouraging and nurturing the child would have a better chance to develop. Furthermore, the child would have a smooth transition to different phases of life. (Parenta, 2018)

Needs of a Child

According to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

‘Every child has a right of survival, protection and education regardless of their race, religion and culture.’ (Save the Children, 2021)



(Source: Every Child Matters, 2003)

In 2004, an act was enforced by the UK government known as Every Child Matters. It aims to achieve five outcomes for children and young people.

- Being healthy
- Staying safe- being protected from neglect and harm
- Enjoying and achieving through learning and playing
- Making positive contributions to society
- Not being prevented from achieving their full potential

It also emphasizes supporting families and guardians, early intervention and prevention, workforce reform training and national occupational standards. (Duffy, 2006, p. 214)

Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist presented his theory on self-actualization known as the Hierarchy of Needs. According to his theory, there are three layers of needs depicted in the form of a pyramid. Each layer represents some basic human needs that should be met before reaching the next level. If a person's needs are met at a psychological level only then can he move to the next level to reach the level of self-actualization and achieve his maximum potential. (Brave heart education, 2021)



(Source: Professional academy, 2021)

Effective learning requires a relevant curriculum and knowledgeable practitioners that have a vital role in the development of a child. They should focus on observation, understanding and providing appropriate opportunities for every child through the medium of play. The foundation phase of Wales is aimed at children aged between three to seven years old. It is based on the principle of learning through play. Learning through play based on UNCRC principles encourages a child to be creative, imaginative and independent. It develops their thinking skills, promotes language development and builds confidence. Learning through play allows them to take risks and support the seven areas of learning such as role-play, creative play and construction. Learning through play is one of the basic rights of a child, it promotes the seven areas of development. (Welsh Government, 2018)



(Source: Welsh Government, 2018)

Learning through Play

Children and young people should have the opportunity to play and explore, it has an important role in the Holistic and Cognitive development of a child. According to the UN Convention, every child has a right to play and should be encouraged to do so. Free play means children should follow their imagination, being creative, using their mental and physical abilities to explore the material world around them. Play also a significant role in building relationships, making friends, communicating and building confidence. Encouraging indoor and outdoor play to explore different materials, learning about different weather, taking risks and facing challenges contributes to an essential part of a child's development. The aim of a practitioner is to supervise and support and the children, minimize the risk and evaluate the benefits. (Education Scotland, 2021)

Reggio Emilia Approach

Reggio Emilia is a child-centered approach based on the principle of respect, responsibility and community in which the environment acts as the third teacher. A child is a protagonist of his learning and supports their opinion. In this approach parents and families play a great part in nursery operations, they often eat with the children and are encouraged to volunteer at the nursery in maintaining and repairing. A practitioner acts as a facilitator and companion to a child to support the learning through play and building relationships. (Duffy et al. 2006, p 205-206)

Froebelian Approach

Froebel was a nineteenth-century German educator has the most significant role in early years education. He created kindergarten a place where children can develop at their own pace based on their personalities, believed in the principle of free play with guidance. He appreciated the uniqueness of every child and encouraged the idea that adults should guide the child in making choices, providing opportunities and helping themselves. The Froebelian approach requires time, exploration and learning through play. The role of a practitioner includes observing, supporting through play, reflecting practice based on observation and working in parenthood with parents and communities. (Froebel, 2017)

Maria Montessori System

The Montessori system today was established by Dr Maria Montessori in the early 1900s (Aubrey and Riley, 2019, p. 24 – 28). According to her, a child is a unique individual referred to as 'Spiritual Embryo' who has a free spirit. The Montessori system is based on individualized learning, respect, independence, making choices and child-led activities based on observation and development through play. She suggested three developmental stages of a child's mind.

0 to 6 years - absorbent mind

6 - 12 years a conscious mind

12-18 years - abstract thinker

18 - 24 years adulthood

The Role of Adult

According to Bandura's Social learning theory, children learn by observing and modelling behaviours. He believed that humans have Superior Cognitive Capacity, they observe other's

behaviour, absorb them and later take decisions based on that information. (Aurbery and Riley, 2019, p. 133)

Adults can structure child development through praise and support. A child's personality is structured by external influences such as the people surrounding them. It is observed that children who respected and dealt with courtesy and kindness are allowed to make choices and take decisions, listen and respond to contribute as a better individual to society.

Parents

According to Bronfenbrenner, parents have a major influence on the personality development of a child and act as role models for them. A child is dependent on his parents or guardians for his basic needs to be fulfilled. Parents can support a child by showing them love and respect. A child learns to trust and build a relationship with a person closely related to him. (Duffy et al. 2006, p 205-206)

Early Years Practitioner

Early years practitioners are the professionals who provide care and support for a child. They help in the educational, social, physical and emotional development of a child and have a direct influence on the health and wellbeing of a child. Safeguarding children is paramount of our childcare legislation practitioners are trained to understand, interpret and communicate any signs of physical, emotional abuse and neglect. According to the Government of Wales, it is the responsibility of a practitioner to safeguard the child. Adults working in the early years setting should always be considerate about the health and safety of children with any additional learning needs or disability. (Belfast Education, 2011)

A practitioner should always respond to the child's needs and interests, showing warm and positive interaction and making them feel included regardless of their race and ethnicity. A practitioner always supports and facilitates the individual needs of a child and plans accordingly guiding his learning through play, interaction and effective communication. (Essex County Council, 2021)

Working in Partnership

All the early Years Practitioners are required to work in parentship with parents and engage them in the learning and development of a child. Parents should be involved in the transition process from the beginning which includes home visits, inductions, access to resources. Daily active communication is essential for building trust and relationships with parents through daily chat, sending notes in the diary, making calls to the parent when required and asking parental consent on social events. (Pacey, 2021)

The Welsh Government is committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child and has structured a basic framework to protect the basic rights of a child and support

him through the transitional phases of life. The UN convention also identifies the significance of the role of a parent and support should be provided to them. Communication is the essential part of working with children and their families, it builds trust and relationships. Communication involves listening, responding, showing respect and understanding. Communication is not only about words, but it is also about body language, understanding and respecting different cultures, making them feel heard and included. Effective communication involves building relationships with children, their parents and other service providers who work with children. When working with children it is important to communicate effectively and efficiently with parents, other agencies and work as a part of a team for the best interests of a child. Effective communication depends on being open and honest about the purpose of the conversation, making informed decisions, inviting and engaging parents and guardians to participate and celebrate every achievement.

Communication and socialization are an essential part of the transition process this could have both a positive and negative impact on a child's development for example if a child family has difficulty in understanding English it is essential to arrange an interpreter for them, meet and greet with a smile and show respect, show acceptance towards their culture and make them feel included. Inability to do this would create a lack of understanding and mistrust which could affect the confidence of a child.

Recording and reporting information is also an integral part of effective communication. It includes observation, assessment, reviews, concerns about a child's wellbeing. It is also essential for observation planning and assessment cycle. Nowadays, a multiagency partnership is practised widely. Different health care professionals, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, childcare workers and families work together as a team to meet the developmental needs of a child. Effective communication and partnership also involve sharing information appropriately and efficiently within partnered organizations, keeping records for future reference, informing parents and taking their consent and considering their opinion in the decision-making process. (Children workforce development council, 2010)

Interventions

Every child deserves the best start in life. Some children due to family issues, mental and physical disabilities and from deprived communities are disadvantaged. Early intervention is a process of identifying risk, providing support before it gets worse and preventing it from occurring. These early interventions have different forms including home visits, school and nursery based support, speech and language therapist, free school meals, healthy start vouchers. These interventions have a significant impact on a child's life, they can improve the quality of life for a child and his family. It reduces the risk and increases the protective factors that could affect the development of a child. It mainly focuses on the social and emotional,

physical, cognitive and behavioural development of a child. It also targets three main threats to a child such as substance misuse, maltreatment and risky sexual behaviour. (Early Intervention Foundation, 2021)

Every child has a right to receive quality education and support for physical and emotional development. Flying Start is an early year's provision in Wales for families and children in deprived communities. The main aim of this provision is to provide quality educational and developmental opportunities for 2 to 3 years old children. It has enhanced health visiting services including community nurses, speech and language therapists, breastfeeding support specialists, access to parenting programmes and home visits from early years practitioners. This is a form of early intervention for children between 2-3 years old. (Flying Start Cardiff, 2021)

Proposed Outcomes

The desired outcome is to support a child's cognitive, social and emotional, and physical development. The Children's Workforce and development council aim that all children and young people across England and Wales should be respected for their individuality, valued by their peers and families and contribute to society as a better individual. (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2021)

All children are unique in their skills and abilities, background, experiences and have different abilities to adapt to a transition. A good transition depends on effective communication and cooperation between parents and early years practitioners to achieve the desired outcomes. An essential part of child development is through play and social interaction. A child should experience all parts of nature including material, colours, weather, substance and energy, this would allow him to learn and develop accordingly.

'[The] child is free to determine his own actions according to the laws and demands of the play he is involved in. Through and in his play, he can feel himself to be independent and autonomous. (Froebel, 1992)

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