



First 1000 Days

Introduction

In this portfolio the first 1000 days are described and analysed to show the importance they hold and how crucial they are to the development of children. I will talk about the environment a child needs, the importance of play, and how they affect the development of a child prenatal and post-natal in their 1000 days development stage.

The First 1000 days

The first 1000 days begins from the day of conception throughout prenatal development, birth and up to the second birthday. Pedro (2021) explains that the first 1000 days includes prenatal and post-natal steps of the infant's development. This period is the most significant in a child's development as they are at their most influential stage physically and mentally, of their childhood. The prenatal development is highly affected by the actions of the mother, such as the diet the mother attains too, as well as smoking, drinking and substance abuse. As stated by Ferrill Annis (1978) the importance of an adequate maternal diet has increased profusely. Gradovski (2020) explains that with children from birth to three, the significant and rapid changes that occur in this period of time such as their knowledge, the relationships they have built, skills and understanding set the foundation for the child's future developments.

Nutrition for an infant in their first 1000 days of their development, including prenatal development, has a large effect on the outcome of the child's physical outcomes and brain development. Stated by Cusick, and Georgieff, (2016) a nutrient deficit on the prenatal developing brain of the baby that is

simultaneous against critical time periods early in the infant's life results in long-term neuro-dysfunction. As well as brain development, the nutrition for infants can have a vital effect on their physical health. Woo Baidal, et al (2016) shares that the first 1,000 days are critical to prevention of childhood obesity.

In a nursery there are specialised rooms named 'baby room', where practitioners can pay full attention to the infants within their first 1000 days which need specific care. These nursery nurses are in the specific baby room to provide all the needs one infant shall need in their first 1000 days such as communication, professional love, specific nutrients in their diet, attention, safety, security and shelter. The baby room differentiates from other nursery rooms such as toddlers and pre-schoolers, as infants in their first 1000 days in their post-natal development have specific needs and require more attention than those past their second birthday. They also require specific nutrients there for a separate meal plan specific to their diet is needed from the 'baby room' staff.



Play

Importance of Play

Play is the most important part of development for a child in their first 1000 days. Play is how children learn and expand their knowledge of our world and it is important that as guardians and practitioners we prioritise play as their form of learning. Bottrill (2018) states that children need to be given the opportunity to indulge into play to be able to take the most information from the activity. Froebel Trust (no date) justifies that Froebel believed that play is the basic method of learning for children developing through their first 1000 days.

As well as helping with their development of their knowledge, play is also an excellent way to include physical activities in a child's life to ensure they are staying fit and healthy. Buckinghamshire (no date) states that physical education is an essential area of learning. It can become a fun and exciting source of learning. Children in their first 1000 days are learning movement. They use physical education to enable learning to sit, crawl, roll and walk. Brown (2014) explains the importance of physical education through play for a child's health and states how physical actions can progress a child's motor skills for the development. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (no date) explains how creating physical games and activities for children in the early years provides the foundation for healthy bodies through gross motor skills and develops hand-eye coordination with fine motor skills.

Bruce (2011) tells us that everyday tasks for the baby such as being changed, washed, fed, and clothed as well as following their carer for their everyday tasks such as shopping are all great opportunities to include play in their development. By dancing singing and messing around with the babies during these activities we can create an aspect of fun for the baby to enjoy and learn from, rather than them being frightened, or bored from silence and being un-mobile.

The Role of the Adult

When children are proceeding through their development in duration of their first 1000 days, they are completely dependent on their surrounding adults, prenatal and postnatal. All adults have an influence and impact on the child and each adult holds a responsibility towards the child and undertakes an important role in the child's upbringing. As stated by Rose and Rogers (2012) the role of the adult can be broken down into 'the seven selves'. They are known as the 'Facilitator, Communicator, Critical Reflector, Observer, Assessor, Carer and Creator.'

'The Facilitator' focuses on the reciprocated relationship between the child and the adult (Rose and Rogers, 2012). Between the practitioner and child in a setting a professional relationship should be built. Building this responsive relationship with infants in their first 1000 days will bring the child comfort and built trust.

The role of 'The Communicator' consists of how the adult communicates themselves (Rose and Rogers, 2012). Communication is a fundamental role early years practitioners perform to the children and to other adults with children present. It is important how the adult uses their communication in response to a child and in the presence of a child with their vocals, body language and actions. As children in their first 1000 days of development are unsure on how to communicate, they acknowledge what an adult says by repetition, tone of voice and actions. It is the adult role to use these forms of communication to ensure the development of the children.

'The Critical Reflector' Is the judgment created upon a child (Rose and Rogers, 2012). As a practitioner, we must face children from a professional intention. Leaving personal judgements at the door when entering the workplace. It is important to the children that practitioners treat all children with equal respect and equal professional relationships are built with the best intentions for the children.

Practitioners in an early year's setting undergo frequent observations on children to monitor their development. 'The Observer' as stated by Rose and Roger (2012), must ensure that observations are clear and valid to show an honest and fair result. This allows practitioners to reevaluate their test results to look for patterns and reoccurrences to assess the child's development.

The role of 'The Assessor' follows closely after 'The observer (Rose and Rogers. 2012). This role clarifies the assessment taken and evaluate. Practitioners must evaluate the results of the assessments to collect evidence on children's developments focusing on their needs, interests and achievements such as teething, physical movements and speech.

'The Carer' ensures the child's holistic care and needs are met. Practitioners provide the correct nurturing environment for children in their first 1000 days, to support their development and learning through play and exploration. Bronfenbrenner (1997) talks about 'The carer' acting through a 'nurturing relationship'. Children in an early year's setting build a relationship to their adults through their development and learning.

It is 'The Creator's' roll to ensure that children have an enabling environment supporting their development and learning (Rose and Rogers, 2012). Practitioners should emphasise heuristic play, pretend-play and outdoor play as key aspect of play. Each aspect of play is crucial to the development of children in their first 1000 days, each has a specific environment to enable the correct needs of the children. Practitioners must provide experiences in each key aspect of play.

Environment

Every day, children's surroundings have a sufficient impact on their development. The environment is the atmosphere a child is surrounded by throughout their development. This includes their home, nursery setting and but not limited to their outdoors. What the children have access to, how the environment is decorated including shapes and colours all have an impact on the children's development through their first 1000 days.

In a nursery setting practitioners need to provide the appropriate enabling environment to support children's development through their first 1000 days. In a nursery, children should feel welcomed into their environment and feel comfortable when being in the setting. According to Early Years Alliance (2019) practitioners should create a nurturing, welcoming environment. Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings (2022) explains that an environment for the development of a child within their first 1000 days should be effective, and to do so we should use indoor and outdoor settings and they should continuously be monitored and reviewed to adapt accordingly to the needs of the child.

The outdoors environment is an important factor in children's development through their first 1000 days. According to Maynard and Walters (2007) it is vital for children to gain the experience in the outdoors environment. The outdoor environment is beneficial to children's development in their first 1000 days to allow them to explore their surroundings developing their senses. Infants use their bodies to learn and develop by the feel of the grass under their feet, the sounds of the animals found outside, the taste of the objects they place in their mouths when exploring.

Theoretical Frameworks

Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows us what an infant in their postnatal development needs to survive. In his triangle diagram, it shows the basic needs that a carer needs to be met such as safety, security, nutrients. These needs must be met as it affects the brain development and physical development of the infant. These needs must be met by all carer givers of infants in their first 1000 days of development including nursery nurses, parents and other family and friends in the presents of the child. This is because if the child is deprived of their basic needs their brain shall prune in certain sections and cannot bloom to its fullest potential. The child could develop unhealthy attachments, as Bowlby explains. Where trust is not built between the child and its care givers.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

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