

Early Years Curriculum Portfolio

Section 1

According to Imagination station (No date) A play-based curriculum allows children to explore and play freely as well as choosing activities related to current interests and authentic experiences. Play allows children to develop their social, physical, and emotional skills. Adults also play an important part in facilitating children's play. Play allows children to learn from all different areas of learning, for example creativity, literacy, numeracy, science, social skills, reading, building, imaginative and outdoors.

Imagination station (No date) suggest that a Play has a major impact on cognitive development, as it allows children to explore, be creative, allows them to risk assess, supporting them in gaining a real insight into the world around. A play-based curriculum should also support children from different cultural backgrounds.

(Reed and canning, 2012, pg. 10-11) states that is it essential practitioners are the people who implement changes in curriculum. When government set about changes it falls to practitioners to work to ensure that the change improves quality experiences for children and their families as well as ensuring that their training is up to date to ensure quality practice. Practitioners are in charge of being initiative and tackle challenges and strategies to support and implement changes. This place demands on practitioners as not only would they need to implement change they also need to reflect and review practice.

The Welsh government (2014) states that foundation phase was gradually introduced over a number of years, to support the implementation it was evidence based and supported pedagogies. Statistics show that only one fifth of schools and non-maintained settings were successful implementing the foundation phase. Due to these recommendations were put into place to support the implementation of the foundation phase. One of the recommendations is training and support with the idea of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, with the expected outcome to be increases in children's achievement. Training should be relevant and linked to the target audiences and learners. Training should also be underpinned by theory and research so that education and learning is effective. In supporting the implementation of the foundation phase there were areas that needed to be strengthened for example reflective practice, leadership skills and understanding the

ways in which children learn and develop, also in supporting transitions into settings from home.

Welsh government (2022) suggests that when the new curriculum for Wales was rolled out there was an implementation plan to support the transitions. It set out a guidance framework, so all settings and parts of the education system had the same goals to work towards. Since the foundation phase the new curriculum had set out expectations and challenges that would be faced when setting about implementation as well as signposting people to where the support can be found. This worked well as it offered more support during implementation.

Welsh government (2022) suggests that the heart for the new curriculum was to focus on learners and their well-being and progression, as well as practitioners who enable experiences and environments for learners. The four purposes play a main role in the new curriculum being the base ground for the learning and experiences, and it's a base for all settings to follow so there is a shared vision and aspirations in Wales for children. Similarly, the Ministry of education (2017) states that There are 4 main principles of the curriculum which is empowerment, holistic development, relationships and family and community. From this there are strands wellbeing, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration. The principles and strands give a vision for children. It is all woven together with educators, children, parents, and the community to support creating the curriculum.

Ministry of education (2017) states that Te Whariki is the early years curriculum for New Zealand, it adopts a woven mat approach, where the man is the underside and it builds, the green represents new life, growth, and potential. The upside represents the weaver's artistry. The mat conceals of different colours each representing a culture concept which highlights important principles of the curriculum that is weaved into the mat. The underpinnings of Te Whariki are that children are "*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 (2017) Each child embarks on a unique path where teachers and families work in partnership to support child's hopes and the curriculum will support children on their journey.

Ministry of education (2017) states that the curriculum supports educators in teaching about the past present and future. the world is constantly changing so children need to be adaptive, creative, and resilient learners, which allows them to grow, take opportunities and challenge themselves. Te Whariki adopts that children gain different attributes that supports a lifelong journey of learning.

Murata (2014) suggests that the early years foundation phase was brought out in 2008 where as Te Whariki was founded in 1996, there are differences between the curriculum. The early years foundation phase shows practitioners a clearer framework of what is expected of them and to follow. Practitioners are also given lots of support such as books or online to support their practice, however educators following Te Whariki are told to develop their own initiative in regards to their practice.

However, Veazey (2020) states the Early years foundation phase adopted many lessons and strategies from the Te Whariki curriculum. They focus on the individual child and how interactions affect a child. The pedagogies for Early years foundation phase and Te Whariki are somewhat similar. Te Whariki focuses on age appropriate content. It also focuses planning based on learning through the child's eyes.

Te Whariki and similarly the Curriculum both adopt teaching principles of learning, such as with the Te Whariki supporting learning outdoors, emotional environment, loose parts play, independent and interactive play, messy play, music, and drama. (Veazey 2020). Similarly, where the Curriculum supporting learning aspects such as, language and communication, social and emotional development, literacy, physical development, mathematics, expressive arts and outdoors understanding the world. Gov.uk (no date)

Murata (2014) suggest that Te Whariki uses learning stories as a way of assessing and documenting children's development. It captures children as they are and is a description, it also uses photos to capture the moment. Learning stories are an important tool and a way for educators and parent to understand the development of the child. It is seen as a time consuming tool but most effective. However, within this there are some challenges as it varies across teachers, learning stories differ between teachers. As the Te Whariki curriculum does not specify the objectives or outcomes so it becomes difficult to see teacher's abilities or see what children are learning.

whereas in the early years foundation phase has set out expectations of teachers and guidance, and assessments of evidence. A child's progress is assessed by a health visitor or early years practitioner under 5 often by using observations against the early years learning goals, they aren't tested. 5 year olds will be assessed by the class teacher.

UK parliament (2023) Challenges within the early years is often budgets and ratios resulting in less time, as a reduction in budgets means less staffing and less time to complete essential work. Early years settings are having to close due to rising costs. Children from disadvantaged families are often seen to benefit more from an early years setting. The government is now applying intervention into early years to support it going forward. Staff in settings play an important role in nurturing, educating, and keeping children safe. There was a new proposed ratio of 1:5 instead of 1:4 in 2-year-olds was deemed concerning as there was a worry of a decrease in the quality of care. Also, there is a question in practitioners' access to training and keeping practitioners knowledge up to date. Since covid there has been a rise in more support needed with Additional learning needs and speech and language. Children need support and intervention early on.

(Grenier and Vollans, 2023, pg. 6) High pupil to teacher ratio and lack of training support will cause barriers in education and implementing a curriculum as there will be less support available to train staff on curriculum changes and the higher ratio will provide less support and staff to support the children on a higher quality level. Child centred learning is at the heart of the learning and education. Practitioners need time to observe children to assess their development and plan for next steps based on their likes and interests.

Section 2

The Cambridge dictionary (2024) describes unique as being the only one of its kind or special in a way.

Alsubaie (2015) states that Classrooms are becoming more multicultural, this leads to an important relationship between culture and education. Culture is what makes a group distinctive from another such as language, values, food, religions, clothes, views, beliefs, holidays, and behaviours. Teachers play an important role in navigating multicultural classroom as children are having to learn in unfamiliar

environments due to language and culture. Teachers who link learning activities inside and outside the classroom are more likely to boost children's achievement. Multicultural education should support children in having equal opportunities and chances of achievement. Teachers should be supported in their professional development to allow them to learn and teach to support multicultural. Teachers should be supported with communication styles and learning approaches to allow them to support the child. This allows all children to be treated fairly and have equal opportunities.

Cherry (2022) suggest that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory links the contributions of society to the development of individuals. It can also be linked into education settings in play and socialization. Vygotsky believed that culture and support a brain function and our human development depends on social interaction which can differ amongst cultures.

Cherry (2022) suggest that the sociocultural theory suggests that social interaction is a key aspect of psychological development and interactions can support cognitive function. Development and growth is supported by people in a child's life that take on a mentor role, for example parents and teachers and interactions can support developing values and taking part in cultural events. When children are born they have the basic biological constraints, however each culture equips children with the tools of intellectual adaptation this supports children to adapt in the way their culture lives.

Cherry (2022) suggest that the zone of proximal development is the space between the actual development of a child e.g. their personal problem solving and the level of potential development through which problem solving is guided by an adult. Its what a child can learn through guidance which allows them to expand their skills and knowledge. Teachers can scaffold a child's learning allowing them opportunities to of different types of play to support their growth.

Welsh government (no date) states that the curriculum for Wales supports schools in developing its own curriculum, in the aim of supporting learning to progress towards the four purposes. The four purposes are there to be a shared vision and aspiration for all children. The curriculum offers guidance and requirements on how schools should develop their curriculum and the purposes and principles of the assessments.

Progression is an important aspect of the curriculum; the 27 statements of what matters should be the baseline of a child's progress. It's the role of the teacher to plan learning to support the statements of what matters. Progression should be supported through the teaching and learning to support children to progress in the individual areas that links toward the four purposes. A child's progression is supported through the descriptions of learning, it supports children and adults in seeing how children should progress within the statements of what matters as they go through the continuous journey of learning. They are tracked through 5 progression steps it sets the pace for continuous learner and each one builds on another so the learning could be built on over a number of years.

In the curriculum for Wales assessment plays an important part in supporting children's progression. It should be used to support and challenge children within reason. It should support children and practitioners in understanding the next steps needing to support progress in children learning. Assessment is integrated within day to day practice to support the child. The teacher plays a role in recording the progress made by children to understand their learning progress over different periods of time. This includes the teacher gaining an understanding on how a child learns, what a child has learnt and how they can demonstrate what they have learnt. By reflecting on the child's learning a progress teachers are able to plan next steps to support the child's progress. By assessing a child's learning and progress it also supports parents and carers in communicating with teachers about how their child is developing.

Ministry of education (2020) states that learning stories provide an analysis of a child's learning. It can provide practitioners with guidance and information in planning next steps. Learning stories are a holistic approach to assessments. Learning stories are originally from new Zealand's curriculum Te Whariki. Learning stories support teachers in recognising children progress and it allows others to view children's progress. Learning stories can be used to capture individuals, groups, or the class in their learning. Learning stories support the relationship between home and school as parents can see what is happening at school through their child's learning story. Learning stories capture in depth and in the moment learning. It usually involves a picture and a comment of what is happening and what the child is developing. Learning stories can also incorporate many aspects of learning cross referencing

different aspects of the curriculum. However, the education hub (no date) suggests that learning stories have a lack of validity, suggesting that the learning stories are focused on one teachers view of the learning rather than combining a range of views from practitioners within the setting. Another challenge with learning stories is that they are done infrequently this results in there not being enough evidence to show progress and continuity in a child's learning. These challenges in learning stories can often be a result of lack of funding and ratio and time within settings. Learning stories are beneficial in many ways as they are so in depth however it can be difficult to regularly complete as it is a time-consuming method of assessment, which within settings and ratios numbers it can sometime become difficult to complete them.

Berg (2024) states that the Reggio Emilia approach is about placing children in the heart of what practitioners do and seeing them as curious as they have the potential to develop and learn from their environments. The approach is that children should be given all opportunities allowing them to be able to reach their full potential.

Children are driven and influenced by their surrounding and learning should be led by the child. This supports children in being expressive, problem solving and involved in teamwork. This supports practitioners in building a picture of the child and their interests which supports them in providing the best possible opportunities for children.

Birth to 5 matters () states that the observation, assessment, and planning cycle is used in everyday practice in the early years. Observing is an important aspect in understanding a child's development and progression. The observation, assessment and planning cycle is used to observe the child to see what they do and take notes, then assessment is reflecting on what works well for the child or what doesn't and then planning is the next steps needed in order to support the child. Observing the child allows practitioners to see the unique child as a whole, such as their family and culture and also their learning and development and how to support their opportunities. To be able to understand the child more clearly the cycle expresses the importance of home-school relationships, which also supports the ease of transitions. The cycle also recognised the unique child to have the right to be able to express their views. The cycle has been adopted from Bronfenbrenner's ecological system. Similarly New Zealand also adopted Bronfenbrenner's ecological system in their curriculum Te Whariki.

Lindon (2012) suggests that in early years setting play materials, books, food where appropriate, pictures, activities and other resources should be provided for children to allow children from an early age to understand and learn about cultures and cultural identities. Shared culture is embedding in everyday life through food, clothes, music, and art. Children develop their cultural backgrounds and identities first hand from home, but they should have the opportunities to develop their cultural identity within an education setting as well as it can further support their understanding and support their development. Pictures and visuals within a setting can also support children from all cultural backgrounds in understanding that all people who look different are still a part of our community and setting, also reading books can support children's understanding.

Section 3

Do settings utilize play and learning in the outdoors?

Tovey, H (No date) suggest that Froebel believed that children are curious, creative, and active in their learning. Children learn from real authentic experiences, problem solving and communication this can all be done through play. Outdoor experiences offer children real authentic experiences, a chance for exploration and wonder. It allows them freedom to risk take, challenge themselves and opportunity to adventure and use their imagination, this supports their brain development. The curriculum can provide opportunities for all aspects of learning to be done inside and outside. Learning and playing outdoor can give children the opportunity of space and freedom to explore, investigate, experiment, and understand the world around them.

Learning through landscapes (no date) states that having all the outdoor space is one thing, but often enough settings and practitioners are unsure on how to utilize the spaces they have. Many teachers express their barrier towards outdoor learning, such as their lack of confidence, curriculum pressures, health and safety risks, weather limits. However, with the right training and support it can help practitioners to overcome these barriers. Often outdoor learning and play is seen as an extra part of the timetable that needs to be incorporated into the school day however the curriculum for Wales now allows learning to be accessible more outdoors. The outdoors is spoken a lot about supporting children's health and well-being but what also goes missed is the benefits the outdoors can actually have on adults' health and

wellbeing. Equipping teachers and practitioners with the right tools to support their lessons is essential for example rain and bad weather doesn't need to stop learning and play from happening, such as having wet weather gear and wellies on hand and having waterproof resources where appropriate. Teachers and practitioners can also support each other in gaining confidence and experience in teaching and learning outdoor. This can be by sharing ideas and observing others.

According to Tovey, H (No date) Froebel suggests that a lot of children learn in isolation, so it is vital that the outdoor environments allow children to engage in meaningful and supports their imagination, creativity, and curiosity. The quality, potential of the outdoor is important to maximise the learning and play, as well as the interactions within the environment. Learning outdoors can support children in enquiry, they develop questions out of curiosity, and it allows open ended learning and development. Children can also develop empathy and emotional development, towards living creature. Outdoor environments can support challenging children.

Welsh government (2023) suggests that the use of the 5 developmental pathways can support practitioners in providing meaning experiences that support children development and interests. The 5 developmental pathways are belonging, communication, exploration, physical development, and well-being. These can ensure that children are given the opportunity to progress at the own pace and in the environment of their preference.

Outdoor classroom day (2018) states that When children are given a choice in the early years the majority of children choose to be outside. Outdoor play can provide children with a whole range of educational experiences. Being outdoors boosts children mental health and well-being as well as supporting their development and social skills this supports children in being happier. A study showed that nearly 45% of teachers said they felt they can't go outside as much as they would like to due to pressures from the curriculum. 58% of teachers admitted to not being able to go outside due to the bad weather. Welsh Government (2023) states that the curriculum for Wales can support outdoor learning which supports children with their confidence and engagement. It also allows opportunities for cross curricular learning. The enabling adults should provide meaningful learning opportunities for children to support interlinks between the areas of the curriculum. The enabling adult should

also ensure the environment is emotionally safe for children and to support learning based on children's interests.

EYR (2022) suggests that loose parts play is playing with resources that have no set purpose, items that can be used to moved, carried, and can used to be constructed, it can be large or small items such as twigs, sticks, crates, guttering, leaves, wood or buckets. It opens door for children to be creative and use their imagination. Providing children with space and resources can also be a cost-effective way of providing play opportunities for children. Loose parts play can support children in their independence and problem solving, it also gives children freedom to explore and be creative as well as supporting their gross motor skills. Loose parts linking whining many parts of the curriculum as supporting their learning and development. For example, loose parts allow children to understand the world around them as well as being ethically informed citizens. Learning through landscapes (no date) suggests the curriculum for Wales notices the importance and values of outdoor learning and the curriculum supports taking education outside as it can support reaching the 4 purposes of the curriculum. Risk taking is an important aspect of children's developments, however children are not given many opportunities to do this. Being outdoors can support children ability to risk assess. Many practitioners lack confidence in allowing children the freedom to explore outdoor which then creates a barrier. Being outdoors should be beyond timetabled session and break times, children should have unplanned access to the outdoors through the day. Subject based lessons can also be incorporated into the outdoors.

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