

Introduction.

Save the Children (2021) explains that The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement of children's rights, of which 196 countries have signed since it was acknowledged by the United Nations in 1989. Save the Children (2021) further states it is statutory that the governments of these countries work to protect children from all walks of life and of all abilities, to meet their needs and support them in reaching their full potential. The UNCRC was adopted by the United Kingdom in 1992 (UNICEF, 2021), with Wales becoming the first country to incorporate the convention and the articles as a foundation to all policies and decision-making involving children in 2004 (Welsh Government, 2019a).

Article 2: Non-discrimination.

UNICEF (2019) states that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child does not discriminate, and the rights set out in their articles apply to all children. This is regardless of their background, their ethnicity or race, their religion, the language they speak or even their abilities. Diverse Cymru (2020) supports UNICEF's (2019) summary of article 2, by explaining the Equality Act which came into effect in 2010. This act protects children and adults from discrimination against different characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Therefore, this suggests that practitioners within settings must comply to this law and that they have a duty to make sure every child is given equal and inclusive opportunities to support their progress and holistic development.

Welsh Government (2014) explains that in relation to schools, staff, multi-agencies and local authorities, they must make sure they do their utmost to give all children equal opportunities. Therefore, they must continue to improve their knowledge on the matter and when possible, update their training in non-discrimination.

Donaldson's new curriculum 'Successful Futures' (proposed for 2022), says that it aims for all children to be "ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world, and healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society" (Welsh Government, 2018). This suggests that it is a curriculum to include every child, but also suggests that practitioners in educational settings will need to take a more directed approach to ensuring children are educated on open-mindedness, non-discrimination, and inclusivity.

Article 3: The best interests of the child.

Children's Rights and Business Principles (2013) suggests that Article 3 is in place to ensure all decisions involving children are carried out with the child's best interests as the core focus, with the aim being the best possible outcome for the child's circumstances. It is further stated that governments must safeguard children's care and well-being if persons with parental authority for the child cannot maintain these responsibilities. In early years settings, the safety and protection of children is an important part of a practitioner's job role, with anything they may deem as concerning or worrying needing to be brought to the attention of appropriate others. For example, Children's Rights and Business Principles (2013) states children who need specialist attention such as access to speech and language therapy or a behavioural therapist should be referred by the setting with the consent of the child's parents.

Law Wales (2016) talks about the Children Act 1989 which makes it necessary for local authorities to investigate any situation where it may be believed a child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed. HM Government (2018) states that sharing information is essential to the effective safeguarding of children, however consent to share information must be received from parents in most cases. On the other hand, HM Government (2018) explains that due to General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018, if it is believed a child could come to serious harm by informing parents, then this is the only time practitioners may share information to multi-agencies such as Social Services without requiring consent.

Article 12: Respect for the views of the child.

Article 12 states that all children have the right to a voice and adults must listen to a child's feelings, interests, and wishes. UNICEF (2019) summarises the articles and explains that children must always be taken seriously, whether that is inside the classroom, during decision making situations, or in home life.

According to Pringle (2019), respect for the views of the child is supported by the fact that most schools implement internal school councils. They became the law in 2005, where the Welsh Government aimed to embed article 12 deeper into their education systems. Pringle (2019) further explains that only registered pupils of the schools are allowed to be on the council, where they can express their ideas and views on their school environment. By allowing children to be a part of these councils, they must be listened to, and their opinions must be considered by their peers. As a result, Pringle (2019) suggests that article 12 is being fulfilled within schools in Wales, and as a result schools can strive to improve efficiently to meet the needs of their children.

In addition, the Commissioner for Wales – Sally Holland – is instated to protect children and ensure they have access to the 42 rights under the UNCRC (Child Commissioner Wales, 2021). It is further stated that in 2011, Wales became the first UK country to underpin children's rights from the UNCRC articles into their law. Citizens Advice (2021) says that the Commissioner works for children under 18 years of age, or 25 years old if they have grown up in care. Their work includes listening to children and their opinions of issues that directly affect them and giving advice to children who contact the commissioners support team.

Article 28: Every child has the right to an education.

According to the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2021), Article 28 of the UNCRC states that all children must have access to an education. This includes making sure primary education is mandatory and available to all children at no cost. The Foundation Phase in Wales is a curriculum which complies with Article 28, and it aims to promote learning through enjoyment and play for children aged 3 to 7 (Early Years Wales, 2020).

Early Years Wales (2020) goes on to say there are 7 areas of learning within the Foundation Phase. These aim to promote the learning of all children by exploring new concepts and providing them with stimulating and educationally rich experiences. It is a practitioner's responsibility to make sure they provide this encouraging and stable environment for children to develop and learn successfully. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development supports the idea that practitioners need to aid children's learning, as this shows that children need adult encouragement and guidance to be able to develop their understanding of knowledge and to be able to learn within education (McLeod, 2019).

Welsh Government (2019b) explains that a new support system has been put in place for children and young adults with additional learning needs, effective from September 2020. Previously to this, the support system was in place for people up until the age of 18, whereas now the new law protects the right of people up to the age of 25. This supports the idea that the new system is more inclusive of children of different abilities, especially young adults who will now receive support in further education. Therefore, the new ALN programme can also be viewed to upkeep the rights of Article 2 as mentioned previously, Article 6 (life, survival, and development) and Article 29 (goals of education).

The Reggio Emilia Approach also supports Article 28 in practice, and according to Arseven (2013, p. 166), is a child centred approach presently undertaken by many countries around the world. It is an approach for pre-school children where the environment and the curriculum are entirely developed based on the needs of the child, their personal levels of development and abilities.

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