

Script**Part 1**

Why did I choose my grandma's garden?

John Muir?

Favourite thing about the garden?

Foxglove flowers? Bees?

Conserve using a compost bin. More veg.

At the setting?

Noticing the little things.

What would I like to know more about?

Part 2

Stacey (no date) states the significance of children being outdoors in order to understand the positive impact it has on them and to experience first hand experiences that allow children to build connections with nature. Play Wales (2020) highlights the importance of being outdoors enabling children to develop balance, creativity, social cooperation and concentration. Welsh Government (2022) promotes cynefin in the welsh curriculum which is the children have a sense of belonging in the world and this can be created through experimenting and exploring the outdoors first hand. Children need to grow up exploring the outdoors in order to understand it and protect it. Tracey (2023) states giving children the freedom to learn outdoors allows them to gain a greater knowledge of the world in their own unique way. Dewey (1998) and Froebel (2005) theories argue that children being outdoors will benefit children holistically therefore practitioners should be exploring the significance of play outdoors and facilitating an enabling environment that is safe for the children to explore and become at one with nature. This is similar to Davis (1998) stating that practitioners promoting creativity and exploration will be supporting the children's future health and well-being. He believes that sustainable development is crucial for children in order for them to appreciate the natural world, become problem solvers and contribute to sustainable living. Moreover Tinney and Hirst (2017) state that a significant part of sustainable development is recognising children and their education, which can play an important role and influence sustainability in the future. Tinney (2023) argues that the 21st century spent less time outdoors due to technology and other indoor advancements therefore it is crucial early years practitioners understand their importance of their role in the children's lives and implement the outdoors into their daily routine as much as possible.

John Muir Trust (no date) states that sustainability is looking after the people and planet environmentally, socially, economically and culturally to ensure long-term maintenance. The United Nations created the 'earth summit' as a concept of sustainable development. This is creating attainable goals for everyone around the world and recognises balancing economic, social and environmental concerns in meeting the needs for a sustainable life. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created 'learning for sustainability' to prioritise everyone's well being through meeting the needs of the environment to maintain and

keep safe all around the world (UNESCO, 2013). According to Wang *et al.* (2021) UNESCO realises the significance of culture in sustainable development and therefore ensures it is integrated. Furthermore they found a relationship between cultural values and achieving sustainable development goals. Samuelsson and Park (2017) early years settings and practitioners that implement sustainability curricula are not only providing high quality inclusive care but also introducing the children to lifelong learning experiences. This supports Unicef (2022) the united nations conventions on the rights of a child (UNCRC) article 29 that all children have a right for education including understanding the world and respecting nature. The United Nations (2015) created 17 sustainable development goals to achieve by 2030 in order to create a better world holistically for people, wildlife and the world we live in. One of these is 'zero hunger' which supports the UNCRC article 27 the right to food in order to meet their holistic needs (Unicef, 2022). In addition to this Maslow (1943) presents his theory of the hierarchy of needs. He states that food is a basic need in order for survival expanding on the significance of the sustainable development goals.

John Muir Trust (no date) states that the John Muir Award is in place to encourage and promote individuals to connect with wildlife through fun and caring ways. This award is for everyone of all backgrounds. John Muir Trust (no date) develops this revealing there are 4 stages to achieve the award. These consist of discovering a wild place and exploring the wildness of the area. Then finding a way to conserve it and sharing what has been done. The Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) aims to prepare individuals to engage with complex global challenges, for example climate change. Welsh Government (2012) expands on this stating it is structured around 7 themes that are designed to foster critical thinking, empathy and active participation in creating a more sustainable and equitable world. Likewise both the John Muir Award and ESDGC are created to create environmental awareness and action for individuals to develop a deep appreciation for nature and create first hand experiences to protect it (Welsh Government, 2012 and John Muir Trust, no date). Similarly Liebschner (1985) and Froebel Trust (2022) state Froebel's theory that children learn best through hand on learning to understand all living things. This insists that if children are carrying out their learning through actively doing, they are more likely to care for nature and

connect with the world. Furthermore, according to the Welsh Government (2012) and John Muir Trust (no date) the John Muir award and ESDGC aim to develop critical thinking and problem skills. The ESDGC does this by engaging learners with global issues and encouraging them to explore them (Welsh Government, 2012). This supports Froebel's theory that real life experiences will enable the children to think about bigger questions such as climate change (Froebels Trust, 2022). Similarly Shook (2000) and Williams (2017) both state Dewey's theory that emphasises social learning through hands-on experiences. John Muir Trust (no date) supports this when individuals are encouraged to identify environmental wildlife and problem solvers hope to conserve it. Both the Welsh government (2012) and John Muir Trust (no date) emphasise the significance of active citizenship encouraging learners to understand and engage with the world. Additionally this closely supports the curriculum for wales.

Although they have multiple similarities to develop sustainability ESDGC (Welsh Government, 2012) covers 7 themes including wealth and poverty which the John Muir award does not include (John Muir Trust, no date). John Muir Trust (no date) states that it is inclusive to connect everyone with nature no matter their background however the award itself looks at conserving wildlife and not the environmental issues as a whole. On the other hand Tinney and Merriman (2018) reveal it could be argued that ESDGC would not benefit young children because there are concerns that children would not engage in complex issues or potentially overburden them. In addition to this Tinney and Merriman (2018) and Siraj-Blatchford and Huggins (2015) imply that as a whole ESDGC requires a lot of time.

Welsh government's (2024) curriculum for Wales is reflected in both ESDGC and John Muir Award as global citizenship skills are encouraged throughout which are also promoted in the curriculum. The curriculum emphasises sustainability to create environmentally conscious and socially responsible individuals. Welsh Government (2024) states that the curriculum for Wales has 4 purposes and sustainability is embedded in each of these. Froebel's theory supports the curriculum as they both look at creating independent learners (Froebel Trust, 2020 and Welsh government, 2022). Additionally Hall *et al.* (2014) reveals Malaguzzi's theory that looks at children as competent learners which is one of the 4 purposes in the curriculum. He was an

advocate for respectful and nurturing learning environments that encourage children's natural curiosity and interests to reach their full potential. An example of this put into practice is Reggio Emilia that Malaguzzi was a co-founder of (Rinaldi, 2021). According to Sung, Siraj-Blatchford and Kucirkova (2020) Reggio Emilia celebrates and appreciates the outdoors with a focus around the children doing everything themselves hands on. Forest schools are becoming more populated, encouraging children to explore the outdoors and learn about the world, making it more likely for them to love and care for it as they grow up (Dean, 2019). However DCELLS (2008) argues that outdoor play following the curriculum can sometimes result in adult-led activities minimising the children's freedom to explore their curiosity.

Hands-on learning opportunities can be simple acts carried out daily in early years settings. For example, according to Robinson (2017) and Humes (2010) , providing children with simple equipment such as seeds to plant invites the children on a journey from seed to a vegetable they are then able to eat. This is a visual representation of sustainable learning and they are able to look and care for their plants gaining multiple new skills. Biss (2012) and Stone (2013) state that hand on learning with a wormery allows children to see the capability of worms and visually learn that their food waste can become compost. Coulter (2013) creating a wormery with children allows their critical thinking to develop as they watch the process and see a range of different foods become compost leading to many questions. Indeed nature walks have been proven to help with cognitive development (Stevenson *et al.* (2021). Floresca (2020) develops this further stating that nature walks are beneficial for children with an additional learning need for holistic development. Settings often recycle old materials to create new ones such as a bug hotel to encourage insects and bugs to live in the outdoors of the settings and allow the children to explore and learn all about them. Welsh Government (2022) implies that these experiences will encourage the children to care for the environment and develop empathy for the world around them. All of these simple hands-on activities could be carried out in the John Muir award, ESDGC and promoted in the curriculum for Wales. However there are barriers in early years settings to outdoor play limiting nature walks and planting. For example, Elton-Marshall *et al.* (2021) found that in some settings children are far more engaged with digital play than the outdoors. Brockman, Jago and Fox (2011)

state that many settings will not go outdoors during bad weather or winter in general. However, settings should overcome this because the outdoors is different in each weather, for example wet mud in the rain and dry mud in the sun. The children can explore and experiment with the different textures therefore it is important for the children to experience.

Ward (2013) emphasises the significance of early years settings working closely with children and their families in order to benefit the child holistically. Aksela *et al.* (2024) advocate for early years settings to work closely with parents about sustainability for consistency and to promote the importance of sustainability in different living environments. This could be through promoting recycling. Dohn (2012) suggests creating different events to celebrate sustainability in the setting including both the child and their family. Additionally Kumar *et al.* (2023) look at the significance of parents' perceptions of nature play to ensure they are encouraged to play outdoors at home as well as at their early years setting. Holden and Hicks (2007) highlight the importance of practitioners having understanding and knowledge on global issues before they are able to implement it at the setting and understand the impact they will make on the children. However Holden and Hicks (2007) and Summers *et al.* (2003) reveal concerns about adding global issues to an already full work load and lack of confidence in knowledge. Also practitioners would need to approach it carefully as it can be sensitive therefore confidence could be lacked here.

Welsh Government (2015) created The Well-being of Future Generations Act with 7 connected well-being goals for Wales. This holistic approach addresses a wide range of issues one of which being a more equal Wales. Wales has become more and more inclusive over the years however there is definitely still room for further diversity. Furthermore the Welsh Government (2015) explains the act is in place for long-term thinking which is critical for sustainability. This will encourage sustainable growth and development in order to ensure future generations have the quality of life. Additionally this approach is inclusive as diverse perspectives are considered, however measuring progress for each of the goals can be complex and therefore could raise questions on whether there is an impact or not.

Overall integration of sustainability in early years education is essential in order for children to understand, appreciate and care for the environment. The wide range of hands-on experiences such as the John Muir award support the philosophy of early years education for sustainability by encouraging children to connect with nature and raise questions about the world showing an interest. All the frameworks and policies mentioned are a positive step towards sustainability in Wales and the world.

Although there are some environmental issues not addressed in individual policy or framework , a wide range of environmental issues are discussed to make the world a better place for everyone.

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