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Leadership Skills in Entrepreneurship

I acknowledge the use of Copilot on 31.01.26 for creative purposes to generate images. Copilot created a weather station logo seen in part 2 (a) of this assignment and a simple poster as an image for the ten-minute business pitch, part 1, as seen on the presentation power point slide.

I used the prompts:

1. Can you make a logo for a weather station suitable for early years.
2. Can you make a simple poster including a step-by-step guide for early years practitioners of how to make an outdoor weather station out of a recycled wooden pallet, measuring beaker, thermometer, ribbons to show the wind, velcro, sand paper and an area that has been chalk painted for children to draw, mark make or write the weather. Can you include these pictures (my own pictures copied in) to decorate the weather station. Can you include a section for materials and instructions section. The instructions must start with sand down the wooden pallet, then paint an area with chalk paint, attach the materials and ribbons to show the wind and its direction.

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Outdoor Weather Station/ Gorsaf Dywydd – Allan a ni!



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Business Idea

The outdoor weather station aims to support children's holistic development in the outdoor environment, targeted at children aged 3-7 years. However, it has the potential to support older children depending on their abilities and stage of development. This is supported by the curriculum for Wales (n.d) emphasising that children need to be learning outdoors which naturally supports holistic development. This idea encourages children to experience the weather in a hands-on way where their learning becomes meaningful. Key components of the weather station include –

- A mark making area to encourage creativity and imagination to record the weather.
- A thermometer to measure temperature and develop an understanding of ºC.
- A measuring cylinder to measure rainfall and develop an understanding of ml.
- Ribbons to indicate wind and its direction.

The key components coincide with the curriculum for Wales through their descriptions of learning outlining what children need to be able to achieve as they progress (Welsh Government, 2019).
This idea will demonstrate how useful learning resources can be created and constructed from recycled materials which are readily available within the environment and community. This idea is also part of a wider plan to support practitioners in providing sustainable, meaningful outdoor resources by providing guidance through step-by-step posters/videos on constructing the resource. The intention is to inspire practitioners to create their own resources and share good practice. This could progress to a potential catalogue of ideas for practitioners to promote hands on, outdoor learning.

My Experience and Background

I am a level 3 teaching assistant working in a primary school with over 15 years' experience of working with children ranging from 3-11 years. For the majority of this time, I have worked in the foundation classes. I have seen how meaningful outdoor experiences spark children's curiosity which encourages them to explore and investigate the world around them. As stated by the curriculum for Wales my role is to provide a meaningful, enabling environment with rich learning opportunities and to observe carefully the development within each individual's learning journey (Welsh Government, 2023).
However, rich, meaningful, hands-on opportunities are sometimes missed. On occasions children's exposure to real life learning experiences are limited, where weather discussions continue to be an indoor, carpet activity. This can result in children missing opportunities to connect the relationship between units of measure and everyday experiences, along with recognising patterns in nature and the weather.
Current financial struggles are also restricting school budgets to provide additional resources.
This has given me the inspiration to become proactive and create this idea and potentially inspire fellow practitioners to implement similar ideas.

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Social Enterprise

This idea is a social enterprise aiming to provide pupils with a purposeful resource supporting their outdoor learning and development. In addition to this it provides an opportunity to advocate for more recycling, sustainable projects becoming a part of school life. Gerlach (2021) defines a social enterprise as a non-profitable organisation that directly helps communities and society by having a positive effect on the wellbeing of people and the environment. The aim of this enterprise will be to support children's holistic development through hands on learning in the outdoor environment as well as support practitioners in constructing recycled, sustainable outdoor learning resources.

Why is this idea innovative?

The outdoor weather station links to child development by promoting children's holistic development by providing meaningful, real-life experiences which help them make connections, apply knowledge and embed learning (Welsh Government, n.d).

This idea is innovative as it targets the current challenges and barriers currently facing practitioners within early years practice. The idea focuses on using recycled readily available materials from the environment and community to produce practical low-cost solutions. The outdoor weather station already exists on the market ranging from £610 (Educational Equipment Supplies, 2024). However, I plan to expand on this idea and create posters/videos with guidance of how to potentially create an outdoor weather station for £0 cost and include various other ideas for outdoor learning resources as part of a wider plan to create a ready-made catalogue of ideas.

This project could progress to become a whole school approach/project involving the school council and eco council within the school allowing children to experience first-hand real-life problem solving. Estyn (2024) reported that working as part of a school's council ensures that pupils voice is heard regarding things that matter to them, which drives the curriculum forward, whilst taking a child centred holistic approach to learning across all areas.

This idea will also include community links as well as ideas for community grants to overcome challenges to support practitioners in creating meaningful outdoor learning experiences for young children at low cost which could also benefit the community (Kidwelly Town Council, 2020).

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Benefits linked to early years development -

Holistic Development

The outdoor weather station supports children's holistic development. Holistic is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2019) as the complete of something as appose to section, highlighting the whole approach to addressing child development. The key components of the outdoor weather station align with all areas of learning and child development within the curriculum for Wales.

The health and wellbeing are of learning within the curriculum is supported through outdoor learning where large and fine motor skills are exercised naturally through grasping and being active in the outdoor environment through play and observing the weather. Science and technology can be targeted through observing changes in the environments providing opportunities for discussion based on atmospheric changes. Mathematical and numeracy skills can be practised through familiarising and reading scales. The humanities can be explored through observations and discussions of local weather patterns, seasons and its effect on of the environment. Children will also have opportunities to exercise their language, communication and literacy skills through mark making, writing, observing and communicating their thoughts and ideas, potentially expanding their vocabulary with adult support. Children's creativity can be seen through using chalk and natural lose parts to create individual creations of the weather sparking creativity and imagination (Welsh Government, 2022).

Sustainability

This idea will be constructed from recycled, readily available materials, ensuring sustainability. A study conducted by Lopez-Alcarria *et al*., (2021) identifies the benefits of using recycled material within early years settings as promoting environmental awareness, reducing waste and embedding sustainability through everyday activities within settings. Children need to understand the importance of sustainability and how to care for the environment from a young age as highlighted by the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings (Welsh Government, 2024).

Practical learning

The outdoor weather station is also supported by Piaget's theory of cognitive development stating that children learn from relevant hands-on experiences within the environment, constructing meaning from their experiences (Smidt, 2015). Through being outdoors, the weather station provides better opportunities for children to potentially connect their simple findings to broader scientific and mathematical concepts by familiarising with the measuring apparatus aimed at creating deeper discussion points and expanding prior knowledge.

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Barriers and Challenges

Social enterprises will occasionally need funding if the equipment needed to construct a product may not be readily available. Martha, (2024) states how social enterprises can face challenges in securing funding as many grants and donations are restricted to registered charities. These barriers may also restrict practitioners in different settings to construct these ideas as they do not have the necessary equipment spare within their settings to make the resources and lack confidence and experience in applying for grants.

Sustaining innovation, marketing, effort and additional time could also become a barrier in ensuring the progression of this enterprise, as highlighted by Martha (2024). The challenges of everyday life may impact these points.

Marketing

According to the Princess Trust (2015) market research includes investigating the current availability and success of the potential idea and considering what the desired audience needs.

For the market research 3 competitors were researched. These competitors had the closest features to what the product has to offer, with the cheapest starting at £610.00 (Educational Equipment Supplies, 2024).

Field research was also conducted within the surrounding area through contacting fifteen schools and teachers via email with a survey regarding their current situation for providing outdoor learning resources for the pupils in their settings. Eleven schools replied, the findings were as follows. –

- Teachers reported that outdoor resources were expensive, and don't always last.
- That there is no money available to buy additional resources.
- They find it difficult to make additional resources due to time and workload.
- On occasions lack the confidence and skill level to create new ideas.

This idea acknowledges these points and provides practitioners with a step-by-step guide to overcome the current barriers which restrict them from making useful outdoor resources to enhance children's learning opportunities.

The Princess Trust (2015) explains how this enterprise can be advertised free on social media, however through contacting relevant educational groups on social media there will be a higher likelihood of reaching the desired targeted audience of practitioners in early years settings.

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Part 2 (b) – Research

The outdoor weather station supports holistic development and has the potential to enrich the outdoor learning environment. Channawar, (2023) explains that holistic learning encompasses the development of the whole child, this includes social, physical, emotional, intellectual and mental growth. This is supported by the curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings which states that the learning environment should incorporate a varied and wide range of experiences where children can freely express their creativity, imagination and physical skills. Additionally, the outdoor learning environment needs to promote critical thinking, exploration and problem-solving skills in a safe and healthy way (Welsh Government, 2024). Moreover, the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, UNCRC (article 29) suggests that education should nurture the whole child and enable them to reach their highest potential (UNICEF, n.d.). Furthermore, the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 states that settings and schools have a duty to ensure the delivery of a curriculum that supports all aspects of child development embedded through the four purposes (Welsh Government, n.d.). Therefore, this highlights the need for an environment and resources rich in leaning opportunities which supports children's holistic development.

Cognitive ability involves the mental capacity to problem solve, reason, plan, comprehend, experiment and think abstractly (Johri, 2024). The weather station has a clear link to cognitive development through scale reading and prediction.
Additionally social skills weave through all areas of learning, incorporating language and communication, for example turn taking and discussion regarding the weather. Niu *et al*., (2025) explain how children learn social skills through play-based activities which are considered essential within education and highly impact holistic growth. Moreover, this idea also promotes children's emotional wellbeing through learning outdoors. This is supported by Welsh Government's curriculum for funded, non-maintained nursery settings (2022) which emphasises the significance of young

children learning in the outdoor environment as it supports their social, emotional, spiritual and physical development. This allows children to connect with nature in comparison to an indoor class activity, where children typically discuss the weather whilst sitting on the carpet.

Building on this, Veiga *et al.* (2021) explain how being outdoors exposes children to sunlight which results in increased levels of vitamin D and serotonin, both of which has a positive effect on children's mental health and bone development. This is supported by Clanfield, (2024) stating that 87% of children feel happier learning through nature, positively impacting their wellbeing, reporting with lower blood pressure, lower levels of cortisol, heart rate and an improvement in mood. Therefore, clear links can be identified between the weather station and children's holistic development, as it fosters progression from basic observations to the linking of scientific knowledge and mathematical concepts.

Rodiah *et al.,* (2024) suggests that supporting young children to learn holistically is important through education as it better prepares them for ongoing development and progression. They emphasise the importance of children not only being cognitively able but also emotionally and socially balanced. This holistic development is supported by the Welsh Government's curriculum highlighting the importance of children learning through meaningful, repeated experiences that build understanding across all areas of learning from an early age (Welsh Government, 2020). This demonstrates the importance of the weather station's purpose within the outdoor environment in providing opportunities for repeated, meaningful experiences. In addition to this it offers consistent opportunities which promote exploration and holistic growth.

Moreover, a study conducted on the development of children's measurement skills, by Gomez-Escobar Camino *et al.,* (2023) reinforces the significance of repeating experiences within early development. Their findings found that young children need to repeat scale reading skills as part of their ongoing development to grasp the true meaning and concept of scale reading and units of measure. They emphasise that these skills develop over time from hands-on, real-life engagement as scale reading

skills are firstly associated with number alone. Children need repeated experiences of connecting scales to everyday life experiences to make sense of their meaning (Gomez-Escobar Camino *et al.,* 2023).

Furthermore, by the end of year 2 children undergo national tests which can potentially include 5 varying units of measure to track pupils' skills and progression, this suggests the expectation of what children need to be familiar with by a certain age (Welsh Government, n.d.). In addition to this, Lewis (2023) reports how Wales recorded the lowest ever scores in the 2022 maths and science Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests. This highlights the need for children to build and make strong connections through hands-on, real-life experiences to embed learning from an early age. Therefore, the outdoor weather station has the potential to add value to the outdoor environment providing opportunities for children to revisit, familiarise and develop their scientific and mathematical scale reading skills, adding more meaning to their learning as they progress and develop.

Froebel's theory on outdoor learning supports the idea of how outdoor learning encourages exploration enhancing children's understanding and knowledge through inquire and investigation. His theory highlights how children learn through real life experiences, viewing nature as an educator (Froebel Trust, 2022). However, according to Kelly, Sharpe and Fotou, (2022) opportunities for children to play and learn outdoors have decreased. Zeynep Ceren Simsek, (2023) suggest that teacher's desk-based learning methods, where children concentrate, listen and sit quietly may still be used to measure a child's readiness to engage and learn. They argue that this method of teaching young children limits experiences of purposeful learning and holistic growth. This highlights the importance of outdoor learning through nature.

VUCA, (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) is a model designed to help leaders identify challenges within an organisation, to problem solve, plan and take risks to promote positive outcomes (Mohd and Omar, 2021). Sathiabalan Murugan *et al*., (2021) describe how the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated a VUCA environment, with rapid changes, uncertainty in control, complex systems and evolving scientific

knowledge. This highlights the importance of flexible and adaptable leadership to navigate unpredictable challenges during the early stages of building a social enterprise.

Woltes *et al.,* (2023) define volatility as an unstable environment characterised by rapid change, where current information may be insufficient to support effective decision making. Kaz (2017) supports this, noting that changes from the local authority or government can lead to strategic changes in direction that potentially affect social enterprises. This volatility can prove to be a current challenge for this enterprise, as employment status could change due to the financial pressure on education. This could potentially compromise the ability to further advocate this enterprise as responsibilities change with new roles, which may arise in different sectors (Welsh Government, 2025). This is supported by UNISON who conducted a UK wide survey of approximately 3000 school support staff and found that 59% noted that there are now fewer colleagues than one year ago, with the current situation failing to meet pupils needs due to financial strain. This highlights how volatility and uncertainty in education could impact this enterprise' development (Ashley, 2025).

Uncertainty is the inability to fully understand a situation or accurately predict the impact of changes (Woltes *et al.,* 2023). Uncertainty could also challenge the success of this enterprise due to practitioners' varying interest and skill levels in constructing the idea/s, due to materials not being readily available, funding constraints and limited time and workload. This is supported by the National Education Union (2023) survey, which reported that 85% of teachers fail to provide sufficient resources and equipment for children's learning due to funding limitations. This suggests that settings are restricted in their ability to provide outdoor resources which support real-life, hands-on learning. Practitioners and teachers may feel demotivated when materials are not readily available and funding is uncertain, potentially limiting the success of the enterprise. Moreover, Ofsted (2020) stated that financial cuts to budgets and staffing are influencing teacher morale, retention and support staff, who are working harder to face the current challenges. Ofsted also reported that this is not sustainable.

However, local authorities have recycled materials available at their recycled centres at low cost (Welsh Government, 2025). The school/eco council could contact these centres for materials for various projects as a sustainable ecofriendly alternative to relying on grants or limited budgets. Estyn (2024) highlights the value of pupils participating in decision making through school councils, ensuring their voices are heard regarding matters which are important to them, helping them steer the curriculum promoting a child centred and holistic approach to their learning. This is supported by the Welsh Government stating that the curriculum for Wales emphasises the importance of a child centred approach that supports holistic development (Welsh Government, 2020).

Further opportunities to expand this enterprise could involve contacting education departments within local authorities to share the outdoor weather station idea, along with other innovative initiatives. These could form a catalogue of sustainable, recycled resources to inspire practitioners and support schools in implementing projects that promote children's development. This catalogue could also be incorporated into outdoor training courses for practitioners, highlighting how the benefits address current barriers. Supporting this approach Armstrong (2015) notes how a department of education report found that schools partnering and sharing ideas improved the exchange of good practice, fostered innovation, reduced headteachers' workload and enhanced financial sustainability and effectiveness.

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