



# Exceptional Care

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## The First 1000 days





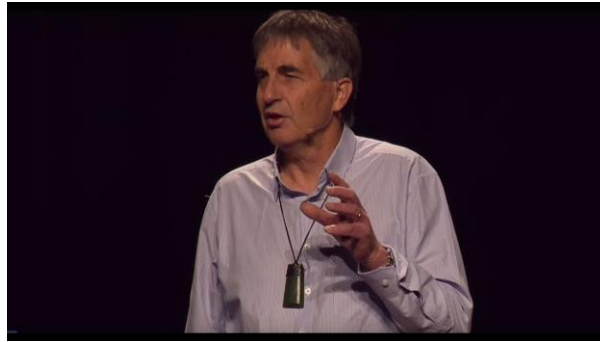
### **The First 1000 Day**

The journey of a child's development from the day of conception to the child's second birthday, where all significant developments of the child's brain, immune system and body grows. The timespan in which a child's future development can be determined and where the foundations for their future lives are built (UK Government, 2021).

This critical period is where a child's future destiny is shaped. Setting the foundations for the child's future educational achievements, job prospects, their own future parenting skills and how their health is affected in old age (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022). It is here the outcomes for children, their parents and families can be significantly impacted by individual or genetic influential factors, such as social, economic and differences in environmental factors (NHS Wales. 2012).

### **Why are the first 1000 days important?**





*1 - The First 1000 Days*

*Johan Morreau (2016)*

These first 1000 days are essential in paving the way for a child to start forming positive attachments with their caregivers, providing opportunities for a child to discover, explore and trust the world around them, to start communicating, but most of all to lay the foundations for a healthy and happy future (Welsh Government, 2022).



Maslow (1943) believed that the hierarchy of needs, was inborn in all people and that to gain personal growth and development, humans must satisfy their lower basic needs such as food, drink, and a safe shelter (Malim & Birch, 1998). Following onto Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, Erikson (1950) discusses these needs further, explaining that when an infant's needs are inconsistently or badly met, that the child will develop a mistrust for both the caregiver and their

environment, which can continue throughout the child's life and into adulthood (Malim & Birch, 1998).

When a child, parent or family are exposed to inequalities and deprivation, or where a child's basic needs in life are neglected or the child has a poor start, it can result in the poor health of the child. This can be caused by the mother delivering the baby preterm, the baby may have a lower birth weight, or the child may need Neonatal Unit admissions. This deprivation can result in child poverty and poor social economic standing, which can cause a negative impact on the child's educational outcomes, health, and wellbeing (NHS Wales, 2012).

Causing a detrimental and devastating long-term effect on the life chances of the child, continuity of the deprivation cycle, teenage pregnancy, long term relationships, and furthermore, a shorter life expectancy due to long term health conditions such as obesity and diabetes (NHS Wales, 2012).



## Exceptional care and its importance





To provide exceptional care for the child's future development, it is essential that the parents and family members are provided with non judgmental support. Enabling future parents access to health care, well-being and support provisions (UK Parliament, 2019).

When provided with exceptional care from conception, it provides a child with the foundations that are needed to develop in a healthy, happy, and effective way, and also preventing future developmental and health issues (UK Government, 2021).

It is paramount that from conception to birth, a mother has :-

- Access to a safe stress-free home environment, where she feels safe and secure.
- Adequate cooking facilities to prepare healthy meals.
- Adequate bathroom, toilet, and laundry facilities.
- Access to health provision services, such as midwifery, GP's, dentists and if needed, mental health care.
- Access to parenting classes, cookery classes and any additional training support required, such as stress management.
- A support network of family and friends.
- Access to Government Financial Support if required.
- A positive pregnancy experience.
- Access to Flying Start provisions.

(UK Government, 2021) & (NHS Wales, 2012).



From birth to 2 years, it is essential that for a child to reach self-actualisation, a child must be provided with:-

- Love and affection, enables the child to develop physically and emotionally. It allows positive attachments to be formed and provides the opportunities for the child to build trust with its primary caregiver (Maslow, 1943).
- A safe home environment where all the child's basic needs are met, including access to medical care and infantile vaccinations (Maslow, 1943)
- A caregivers undivided attention, this can be by reading, singing, reciting nursery rhyme or simple talking to the child. This can be carried out during one-to-one time, at feeding or changing time (Pikler, 1930)
- Sensory stimulation. This can be achieved through play, story time, nursery rhymes, singing and mealtimes. By providing a child with access to different sensory stimuli, it provides opportunities for the child to explore their environment (Piaget, 1926).
- Opportunities to build their vocabulary, language, and imagination skills, through story time (Vygotsky, 1978).

- Opportunities to develop their muscles, coordination, and balance, by providing a safe environment for the child to crawl and explore (Piaget, 1926).
- Age or developmental appropriate toys and activities. Providing opportunities for a child to problem solve without frustrating the child (Froebel, 1826).
- Appropriate childcare that promotes the child's development in a safe, caring, and engaging environment (Montessori, 1907).

(UK Government, 2021) & (NHS Wales, 2012).



## Professional Partnerships & Relationships



There are numerous challenges faced in society that can have a detrimental impact on a pregnancy and the development of a child.

These can include: -

- v Poverty
- v Domestic violence
- v Substance and alcohol abuse
- v Parental separation
- v Incarceration
- v Mental health issues
- v Language barriers
- v Cultural differences
- v Lack of Education

As a nursery staff member, they have a duty of care for the children within the setting. Staff must have an understanding, that for a child to develop in an environment, they need access to fresh air, healthy meals, exercise, to have independence and respect to grow in a safe and happy environment and where their well-being is paramount (UK Parliament, 2019).

But as a professional, duty of care of the parent or caregiver is also essential in the child's future development. Close relationships built with the parents, provide staff with an honest insight to the

family's situation and where assistance or support may be needed. Nursery staff members may be the only contact that individuals have outside the family, so it is essential that individuals feel safe and respected (Jenkin, 2020).

Settings should provide a less-intrusive information hub, whether a notice board or a table, where leaflets or posters with essential contact information for domestic, substance or alcohol abuse or for issues such as mental health or housing, can be placed by health visitors or support groups for parents' access. Parents should also have opportunities if needed to talk to staff in a private room in regard to any concerns that they may have for their or their child's welfare or well-being. This area can provide a safe haven for the individual, if there is need to access additional support (Jenkin, 2020).

Staff should also be trained in providing up to date information about services and initiative, that are available in the local area, such as

Flying Start. This information should be available, enabling families to access healthcare, support and any additional information (UK Parliament, 2019).

This professional relationship is reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. This theory discusses that to create a positive environment in which a child can reach their full potential, it is essential that parents and professional caregivers build effective communication enriched relationship and that these relationships shape a child's Microsystem (Trudge, et al. 2022).

## Respectful Care and Meaningful Learning



Developed by Emmi Pikler in 1946, the Respectful Care theory discusses the importance of treating children with consideration.

By providing the child with an unhurried and calm environment, where the care giver understands that nappy changes and other interactions are learning opportunities. Providing the child with uninterrupted self-directed opportunities and respect for the child's need for their independence whilst playing and exploring.

Encouraging the child's freedom of movement and development, by avoiding the urge to interfere or putting a child in a situation or position in which a child is unable to get out of. Encouraging a child's natural movement development, as putting a child in a difficult position can cause detrimental physical development issues (Church, 2023).

Caregivers must respect and show confidence in the child's capabilities and competence to make their own decision. Adults should be available to provide support, not interference.

A child should be shown the same respect as any adult, this includes the way they are spoken to and when actions such as changing nappies, wiping a child's face or when picking a child up. We must consider 'how would we feel, if someone was to put a cold flannel on our face without our prior knowledge?', so with this in mind, it is essential that we either ask or explain what we are doing to the child first (Church, 2023).

As professional practitioners, there are a number of challenges that can arise when a new baby or child starts the setting, these can include the initial transition from home to setting, settling into new routines such as feeding and nap time, and delays to social, emotional, and physical development due to Covid 19 and the two years of lockdown (UK Government, 2021).

Taking the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1958), it is essential that the child has the opportunity to develop a secure attachment with their caregivers, to enable to the child to have a successful positive transition. With a child-centred approach, the child should be provided with opportunities to develop at their own pace within a safe environment without the intervention of adults (Page, 2016, p. 80-90).





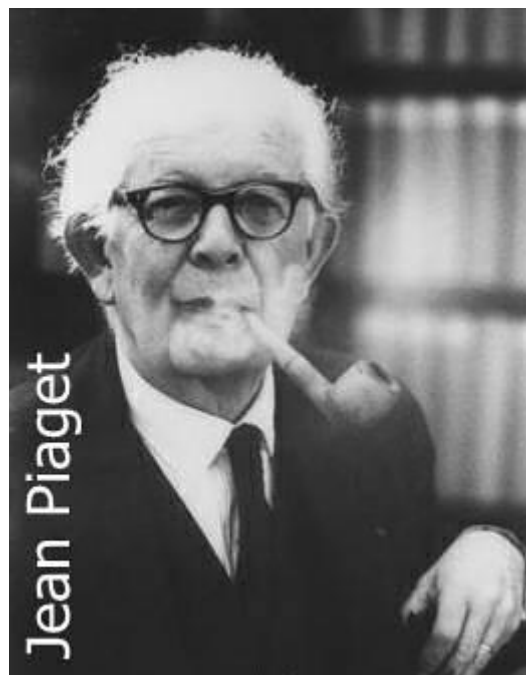
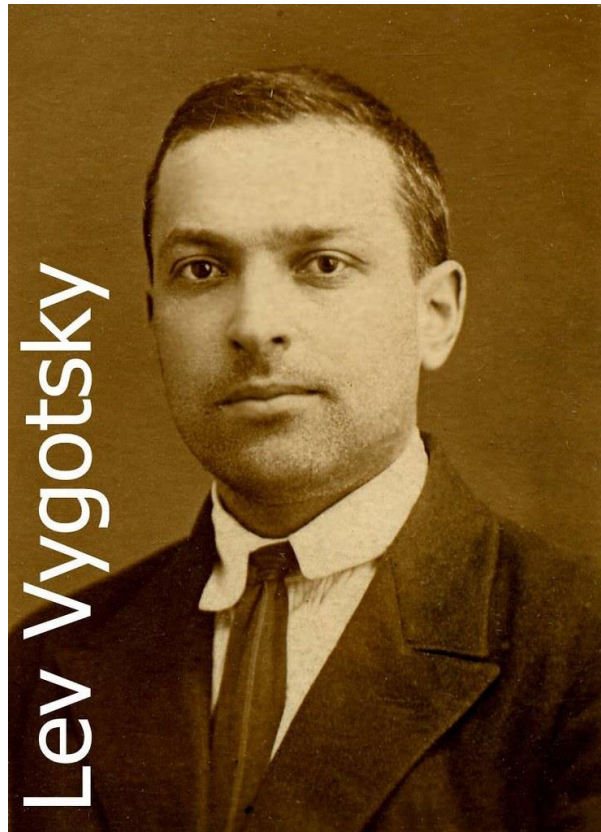
## Play and Child Development



Every individual is born with a biological drive to play, and a unique nature in which types of play are preferred. These preferences or play types can include social, object or movement play and can be expanded upon or suppressed as the child grows and develops further (Brown, 2022).

Play is an essential part of a child's cognitive and emotional development, and by providing opportunities for a child to use their unique natural inherent play, it enables reinforcement and new connections of other neural circuits within the child's brain to be built and developed. When a child is in an environment where these neurons can be activated, the neurons provide the child with the motivation and stimulus to engage with the surrounding environments. With the development of these neurological connections, it enables a child's brain to improve and allows the child to succeed in all aspects of their wellbeing and life achievements (Brown, 2022).

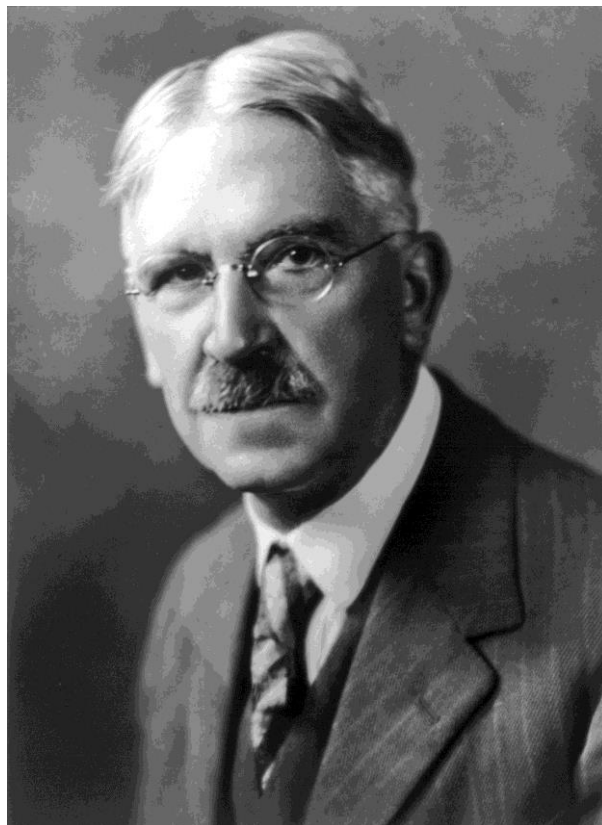
During play, children develop and draw upon past influences and experiences, whether positive or negative. These experiences can influence how a child interacts with other individuals or the interaction within an environment and materials. Providing opportunities for a child to freely explore their environment, can expose the child to new skills, language and can develop their knowledge of their surrounding world (Pound, 2014).



Froebel (1826), Dewey (1897), Vygotsky (1978), and Piaget (1926), all discussed the importance of play and the affects that it has on a child's development.

Froebel (1826) and Dewey (1897) both believed that play in early childhood, is principal for a child's cognitive, physical, and social development. They believe that when a child is exposed to an environment where they can learn directly through their own experiences, it enables them to develop their knowledge of the world around them further (Reifel, 2014).

Piaget (1926) and Vygotsky (1978) go on further to discuss the importance of play and the child's language development. Piaget and Vygotsky believed that providing a child with opportunities that encourage and promote their cognitive, emotional, and social development enables the child to develop their language and intelligence (Nicolopoulou, 1993).



*2 - John Dewey*

Although, Montessori (1907) and Pikler (1930), theories and approaches have a lot in common, the biggest difference between them both is the age of the child targeted by each approach. Montessori focuses on children between the ages of 3-6 years old, whereas Pikler turns her focus to the 0-3-year-old child (Etta Tete, 2021).

Pikler believed that a child should develop at their own speed, and at a natural pace. Observing, that parents would direct their child's pace of development, due to the influence of society's

expectations of a child development and milestone achievements and having the inability to trust their own child's natural ability to develop at their own pace (Etta Tete, 2021).

Focusing on the child intuitively taking control of exploring the world around them, Pikler, believed that an essential element in a child's early stages of development, should be achieved through freedom of movement. Allowing the child to grow in a natural way, by providing opportunities for the child to independently overcome any difficulties, without the intervention of adults (Etta Tete, 2021).

Pikler, created an approach, which enabled the child to gain confidence, self-satisfaction, and joy through independent learning, where the parent provides safe, effective opportunities in which physical development can be achieved, and where a parent provides support in a nonintrusive way (Etta Tete, 2021).



3 - Maria Montessori

## Enabling Environment





Children need a rich, nurturing, warm and welcoming space, where they feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging. With a need to explore their environment freely, children must be provided with engaging activities which peak their curiosity and interest's (Berg, 2021).

This curiosity approach, requires an environment which allows a child to explore themselves without the influence of adults, providing the child with with the freedom for them to explore their imagination. This approach provides opportunities for children to absorb new information, learn problem solving skills and also allows children freedom of choice which enables the child to develop their own learning (Berg, 2021).

An enabling environment is essential in providing children with opportunities to develop their communication and independence thinking skills, laying the foundations for the child to become lifelong learners.



## Being Inclusive



The teacher's task is to help your child be motivated. Credit: [www.shutterstock.com](http://www.shutterstock.com)

Inclusive practice recognises the difference and the benefits of the diversity of the children within their care. By understanding, recognising, and respecting each child's individuality, ensures that all individuals receive equal respect, opportunities, and treatment (Collier, 2019).

Adopting this practice, ensures that despite a child's background, everyone is provided with equal opportunities to participate in learning experiences that accommodate for their individual needs and interests (Collier, 2019).



## Activity ideas



## Treasure baskets

Created in the 1980's by Elinor Goldschmeid, treasure baskets provide a child the opportunity to develop their sensory motor and emotional skills.

Providing the child with a basket of natural real-world items for 30-60 minutes a day, provides an effective learning opportunity where a child can explore and play. Enabling children from the age of 16-18 months the opportunity to use their hands and mouths, to discover the physical characteristics of the items such as, texture and taste, in a safe and relaxed environment. Adults present are there just to observe, allowing the child to explore the items at their own pace. Providing experiences such as this, helps the child develop their concentration, confidence, and self-esteem.

Treasure baskets can contain a plethora of everyday items, such as

- Toilet rolls
- Wooden curtain rings
- Textiles
- Metal spoons
- Pinecones
- Scent bags
- Small mirror.

This activity is reinforced by the Natural Development Theory (Pikler, 1930), Education by Development Theory (Froebel, 1899) and Constructivism Theory (Dewey, 1897) and used within learning approaches such as, Froebel and Montessori.

(Trovey, 2013) & (Isaacs, 2015)



**Tummy time and crawling**

Tummy time enables new-born's to develop muscle and neck control, which are needed when the child starts to roll over, sit unaided, crawl, and to then eventually walk.

Like tummy time, crawling is extremely important for the development of a child's motor control. It benefits a child in numerous way such as :-

- Enabling the child to strengthen their trunk muscles in their backs and necks.
- During the adjustments of the child's body whilst crawling, it enables the child to development a dynamic form of balancing.
- Bilateral motor coordination and motor sequencing skills are developed, as both legs and arms are moved simultaneously.
- Strength in the child's hands, wrists and finger are developed, which are essential for further fine motor skills development.
- Providing an efficient and safe means of getting around. (Mays. J, 2014) These benefits are reinforced by the Natural Development Theory (Pikler, 1930), Infancy and Childhood – Cognitive Development Theory (Bernstein, et al, 2006) and the Building Blocks of Development Theory (Piaget, 1936) and focuses upon developmental approaches such as the Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Pikler Approach.





## Outdoor Play

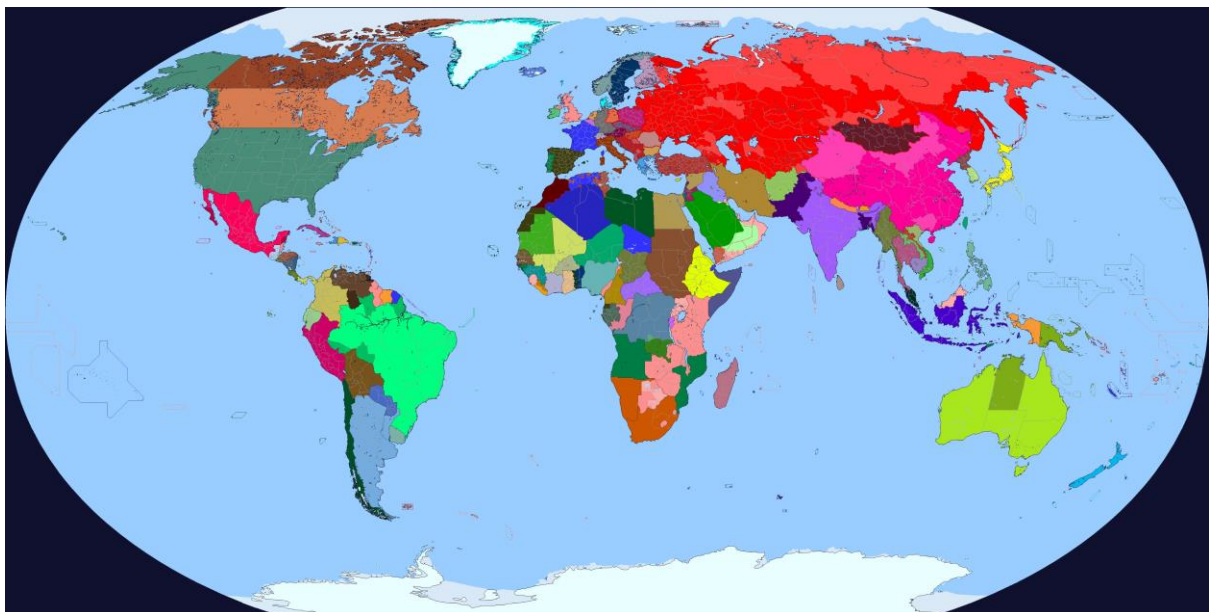
Playing outdoors provides children with essential opportunities to develop their emotional, social, and physical skills, and by providing a sense of wellbeing and opportunities for their senses to be alerted. Additional benefits can include: -

- Stimulation of the child's immune system, helping to form protection from colds.
- Enabling babies to form and build stable sleep patterns.
- Stimulating the development of the brain through provoking the child's senses through smells, textures, sounds, and sights.
- Provoking a child's environmental curiosity, problem solving and creative thinking skills.
- Development of a child's gross motor movement skills.

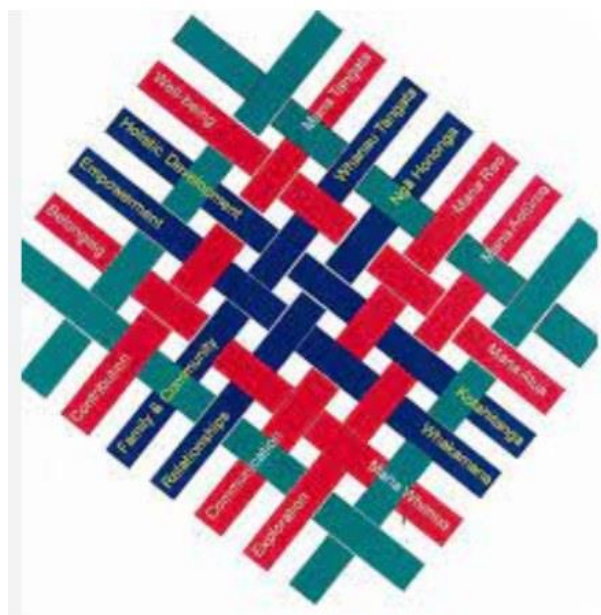
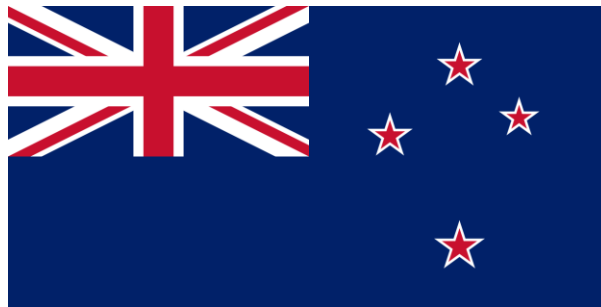
The importance of outdoor activities and play to a child's development are all reinforced by theorists such as Froebel (1826), Dewey (1897), Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1926) and Pikler (1930). Throughout International Approaches such as Te Whāriki, Forest Schools, Montessori and Regio Emilia, the outdoors, plays and essential part to a child's holistic development, which is centre to the child's physical, emotional, social development, and wellbeing (Parsons, 2011).



## International Approaches



Although it is essential that an International broader perspective is taken on evaluating patterns of successful approaches, it is important that we are mindful of cultural differences, international government guidelines and have the understanding that there is 'no blueprint' laid out to be followed (Tornberg & Lindholm, 2009).



4 - (McCartney. B, 2011)

Established in 1996 for children between 0-5 years old, the Te Whariki early years curriculum in New Zealand believes that children should be provided experiences to learn within their natural environment. Learning through experimenting with materials in an innovative way, socialising with others and learning through doing (New Zealand Government, 1996).

Emphasising the importance of parental involvement and build positive relationships with families is central to the practitioners role, this curriculum understands the importance of quality play and the influence of parent involvement can improve and enhance the child's outcomes (Sayeed & Guerin, 2000).

Founded in 1963 the Reggio Emilia Approach provides provisions for children from birth to 6 years (Abbott & Nutbrown, 2001). Following the main principles set by John Dewey, Malaguzzi, focused highly on the holistic development of the child where all learning experiences are worthwhile and

where the child became an active participant in their own learning. An approach which is predominantly socio-cultural based (Solar & Miller, 2003).



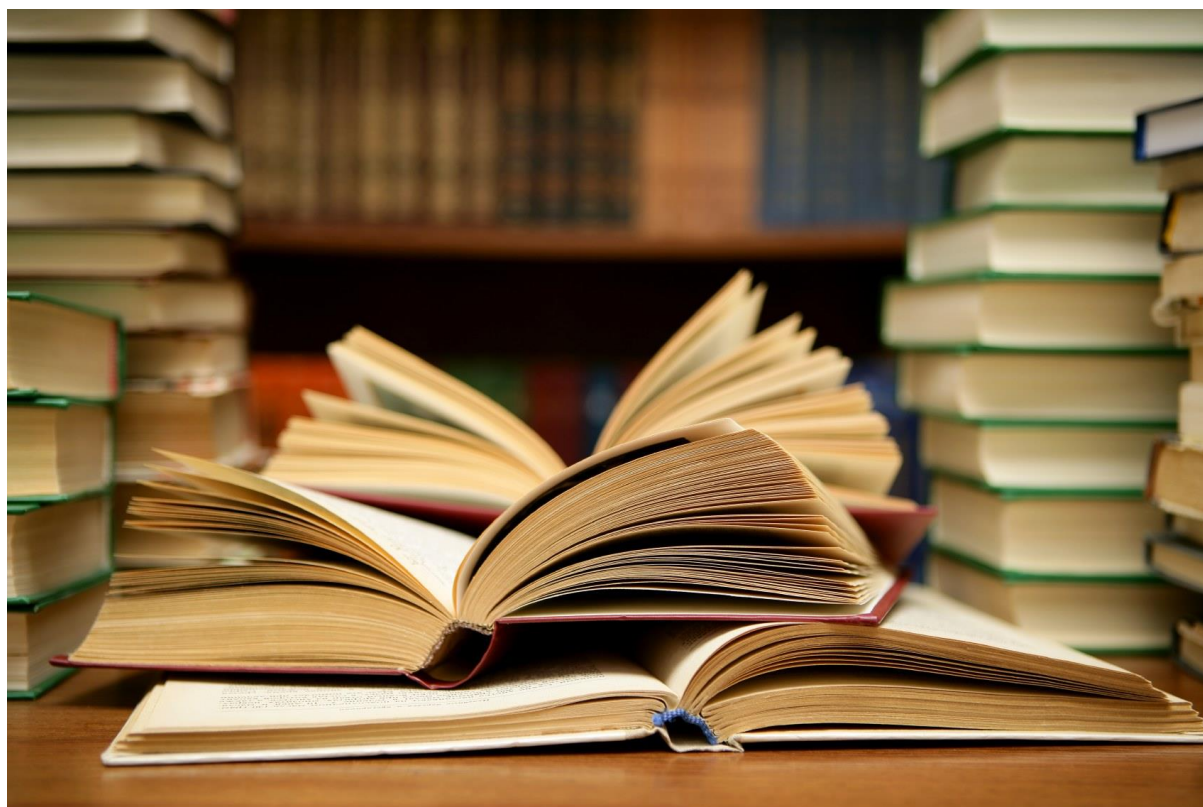
The USA 'High/Scope' approach focuses on encouraging the child to make their own choices by planning their own activities, carrying out that activity and then reflecting with other on their outcomes (Bennett et Al., 1997).



Although the Welsh Governments approach, features many aspects from Reggio Emilia, Te Whāriki and High/Scope approach techniques, it is very much like New Zealand and USA (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2005).

Like New Zealand's Māori and Pakeha child centred approach, Wales's curriculum is both bicultural and bilingual, where children are provided with opportunities to gain an understanding of their Welsh heritage and also a sense of belonging. Although government target led, both Te Whāriki and Early Years focus on the importance of play. Although play is recognised in Wales as essential, USA and UK practitioners manipulate a young child's play by engaging with the child. Unlike European mainland countries, who provide opportunities for the child to be spontaneous (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2005).

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