

The Importance of Effective Communication during Early Years Transitions



(Carly, 2020)

A Handbook for Practitioners

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Introduction

The reflective practitioner: a critical thinker

According to Dryden *et al.* (2005), a reflective practitioner will be professional and competent and continuously strive to improve his work. Early childhood practitioners who have developed the ability to **think critically and reflectively** will challenge established ideals and practises if they are no longer relevant or helpful to children. This interrogation and reflection are critical components of ensuring that children's actual needs are met. Moreover, smooth transitions are significant for children's health and development throughout the Early Years Foundation Phase. Then, practitioners must recognise the significance of transitions in children's lives and make accommodations to establish practical and stable foundations.

Given this, the current handbook is intended to assist practitioners in comprehending the theoretical components of transitions, determining the effect of a change on the well-being and development of children, and examining how successful transitions during the Early Years Foundation Phase may be achieved (Palaiologou, 2016). Throughout this handbook, the emphasis will be on children's transition from home to early learning and care settings but can be successfully applied in other transitions.

Transitions: A Theoretical Perspective

According to Palaiologou (2016), the transition is a complex notion that involves more than physical location changes. Children's experiences as they grow up are fraught with changes, including changes in their **physical bodies, familial situations, changing houses, transitioning from home to a playground or nursery, and then from nursery to school**. All these phases throughout a child's life might be considered **transitions**.

Numerous thinkers have investigated the topic of transitions and their influence on the lives of children. James (1980) considered transitions in terms of self and self-identity (interior transitions as psychological and developmental changes that occur in persons), while Erikson (1975) explored transitions in terms of physical movement from one location to another (external transition). Moreover, Piaget (1976) associated transitions with cognitive development, claiming that changes place children in a state of disequilibrium, which might influence their development. According to Vygotsky (1978), children attempt to create knowledge via interactions with their social surroundings and are impacted by the environment's culture, ideas, and values. Transitions, in this context, are processes where children attempt to interpret the world and the societies where they belong.

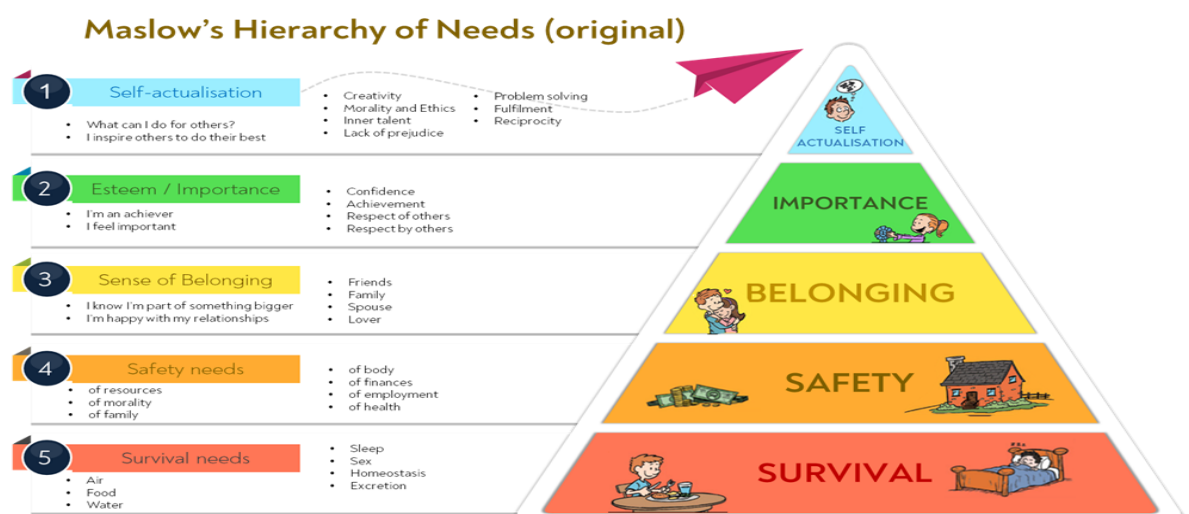
Need of the child

According to UNICEF (2004), every child, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities, or other situations, has needs and rights. The Convention must be seen holistically: all rights are connected, and none are more important than another. The right to relax and play (Article 31) and the right to free expression (Article 13) are just as vital as the right to be protected from violence (Article 19) and the right to an education (Article 28). Furthermore, the Curriculum for Wales: Foundation Phase Framework (2015) illustrates the significant nature of equal opportunity laws. That includes age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion and faith, and sexual orientation; this imposes a responsibility on settings in Wales to eliminate discrimination and harassment, create positive attitudes and same opportunities for all children, and promote their participation in every aspect of setting/school experience.

Lindon (2012) suggests that theories may assist practitioners in making sense of what children experience and provide valuable explanations for how children grow. Fundamental theoretical notions may lead to practical suggestions for learning and clarifying what they do not comprehend.

Abraham Maslow defined a hierarchy of universal human needs. The hierarchy below indicates that children must have their fundamental needs met before they can concentrate on learning. Maslow's theory can help practitioners ensure that children can learn by understanding and **meeting their many needs**.

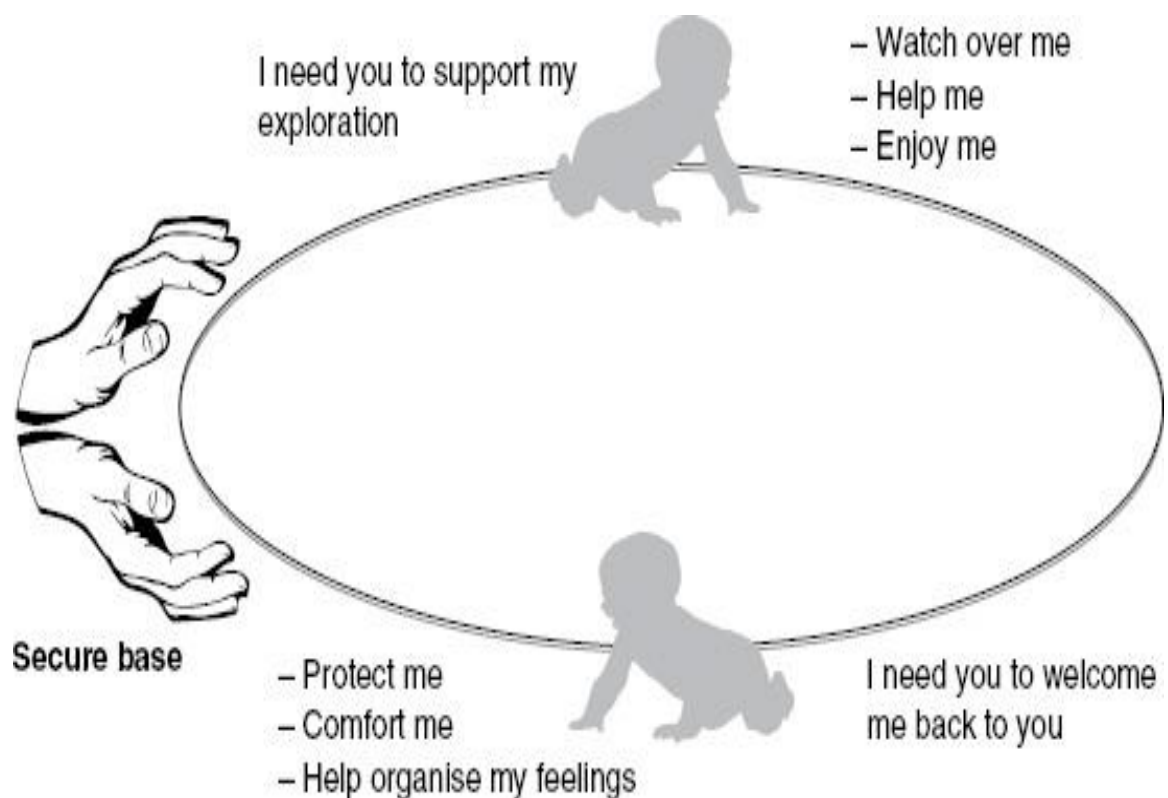
(Chennakeshav, 2020)



Mainly, **Marvin's circle of security** is based on Bowlby's 'secure base' idea. The approach simplifies complicated concepts around attachment and emotional development by

using a simple visual approach. Children need connections with their caretakers that are safe and secure. They may confidently explore the world from this comfortable foundation, knowing that their primary caregiver looks over them and participates in their happiness. Additionally, the children must believe that they may return to the haven of their caregiver connection in times of hardship and worry (Reed and Walker, 2015).

As Bowlby explains it, secondary attachments (individuals with whom children have a strong attachment bond and who are well-known to their primary attachment figure) can change in terms of identity and amount. They can reassure children when their primary attachment figure (usually their mother) is absent (Wilson-Ali, Barratt-Pugh, and Knaus, 2019).



(Parker-Rees and Leeson, 2014)

In performing these steps, Early Years Matters (2021) sustains that practitioners must keep in mind that infants and children grow uniquely and at varying speeds. Each growth stage is critical - physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social, and emotional. In that case,

Leicestershire County Council (2021) recommends that practitioners analyse each child's unique needs, preferences, and developmental stage and use this information to offer each child a challenging and happy experience in all areas of learning and development throughout Early Years transitions. Given this, Virginia Commonwealth University (2017) claims that practitioners may help children feel confident and safe during a transition phase through **positive, trustworthy interactions**.

According to Thronton and Brunton (2010), every child is seen as **strong, confident, and capable** in the Reggio Emilia approach. Strong youngsters have their thoughts, voice their views, make their own decisions, and play and work well with others.

Similarly, Australian Children's Education & Care (2018) claims that children have the freedom to participate actively in all phases of their development. Moreover, **Agency** is described as the capacity to make decisions and choices that impact experiences and influence reality. This compelling picture of the child necessitates people who listen to children and believe in their choices and decisions.

As a result, the Welsh Government (2015) recommends practitioners enable all children to maximise their potential to adequately prepare them for future education and life. Relevant settings/schools must plan and coordinate with specialised services and ensure that learning activities are meaningful and accessible. They should care for **children with disabilities**:

- ❖ increase student access to the curriculum
- ❖ create physical upgrades to boost educational involvement
- ❖ offer information in a way that is suitable

Overall, practitioners must understand child development and construct a curriculum that addresses children's developmental requirements and builds their confidence as learners. They should enable children to grow at their speed, and children's activity should be accepted, treasured, and supported for its uniqueness and worth. (Welsh Government, 2015)

Role of the adult

Evangelou *et al.* (2008) indicate that successful transitions may transform children's perceptions of themselves by increasing their confidence and self-esteem. In view of this, Goswami and Bryant (2007) affirm that families, friends, and educators all have a vital influence on the growth of a child.

Essex County Council (2021) evidences the **role of the adult** as follow:

Consider all children. Practitioners need to react to every child's developing needs and desires, encouraging their progress via warm, pleasant contact and assuring that the offering reflects and supports them. **Inclusion** is a critical component of respecting all children.

Assist each child. Practitioners must consider each child's unique requirements, interests, and developmental stage in their care to provide a variety of learning opportunities experience in all learning areas and growth for each kid.

Understanding of child development. Adults must have a clear understanding of the fundamentals of child development. Underpinning any successful, high-quality early years foundation phase work should understand the phases of development and how children learn.

Assistance and facilitation of learning. For children to transition smoothly from home to setting, practitioners should assist them with information from parents and other providers to match suitable learning techniques to their requirements.

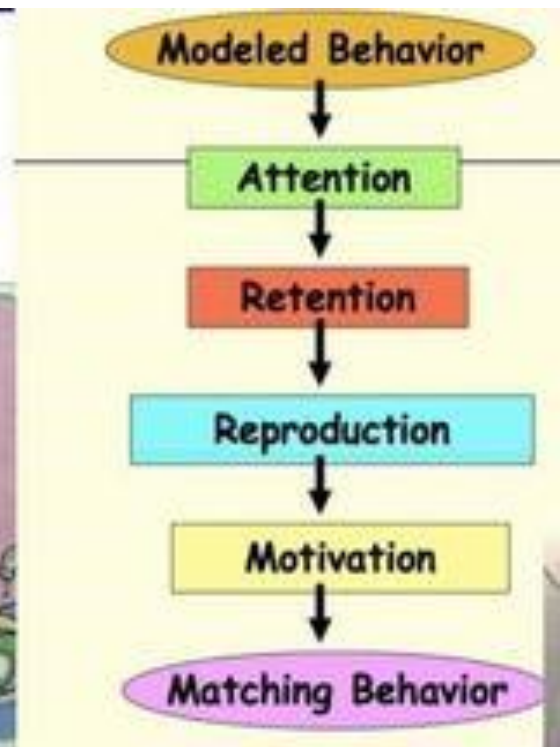
Key person

Pacey (2021) says that the **key person** is a **positive role model** whom the children may connect and trust. The key person monitors the children to ascertain how they learn via play, their next developmental stage, their preferences, and whether there is cause for concern or a necessity for more help. They will share this information with parents and collaborate with them to develop a support plan. The key person also assists with physical requirements, such as diaper change, toileting, and clothing. Moreover, Brooker (2008) specifies that an essential part of young children's transitions is the bond between the key worker and children. Because they know this person well and have begun to connect, the children may communicate their worries and concerns with their key person.

Notably, Albert Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning was founded on the idea that toddlers learn by **observing** and **imitating** others. The closeness and repeated nature of behaviours in the family home may imply that behaviour reinforced by acceptance from others is more likely to be mimicked.



(Peachy, 2020)



(Davis, 2021)

As a result, social learning by modelling desirable behaviour may be an effective method for parents or practitioners to use, either consciously or subconsciously. It is more likely to have a more significant influence if the behaviour is performed by someone the viewer admires. Therefore a strong connection between a parent and child is more likely to reinforce the behaviour. Practitioners in early years settings can identify emerging behavioural problems. By establishing positive and nurturing connections with parents based on mutual respect and a strengths-based approach, it is feasible to share ideas about improving behaviour patterns and resolving possible issues early. (Wilson, 2016).

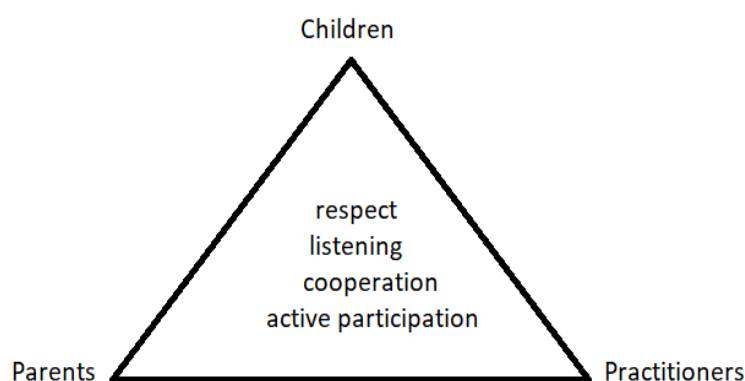
Building effective partnerships and communication

According to Oxfordshire County Council (2017), the transition should be seen as a process including parents/caregivers, the child, the setting, and the receiving setting. The transition of a child from home to setting may be stressful, particularly if the child has additional requirements in speech and language development, health and physical development, or general development. Periods of transition may be made less stressful if parents' and caregivers' perspectives are acknowledged. **Effective communication** with parents and caregivers is critical to making a gradual connection; children may express their worries at home. Positive connections between staff and parents are required to ensure that this information is communicated and provided with the right help.

Positive Relationships

- ❖ Transitions may be more accessible by rigorous, **proactive planning, information sharing**, and reciprocal **visits** between parents, caregivers, and professionals.
- ❖ **Pay attention** to and recognise the vital role of parents and caregivers throughout this process.
- ❖ **Collaborate.** Working together to build a clear understanding of each other's objectives, purpose, and philosophy is vital for a good transition.
- ❖ Provide a variety of chances for parents/caregivers to get information about the transition period.

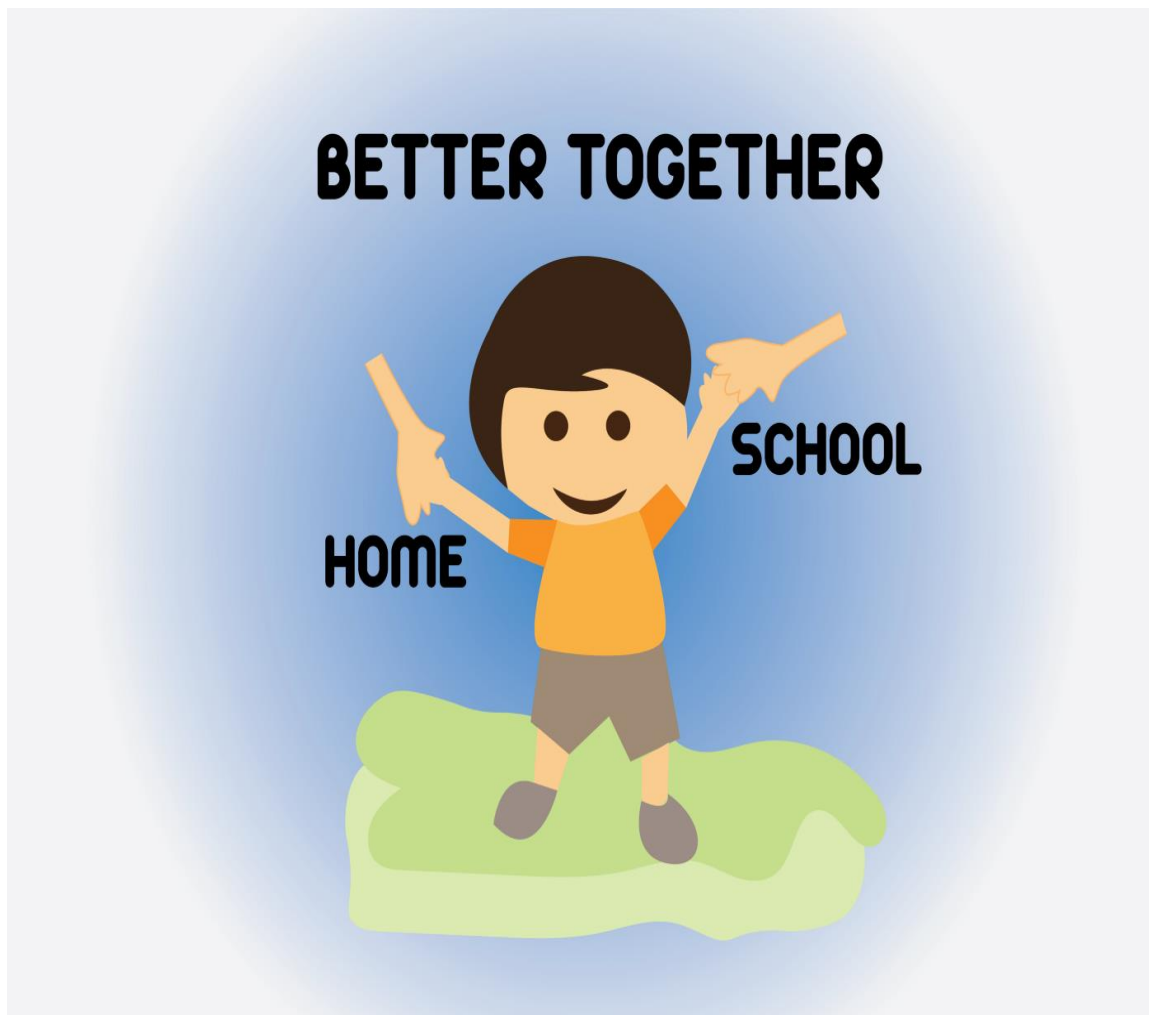
For example, One of the Reggio Emilia ideals is to foster relationships in which children, practitioners, and parents are all valued equally (Thronton and Brunton, 2010). As Thornton and Brunton (2007) highlight, the Reggio Emilia method emphasises the parent, practitioner, and child interaction as a three-way process:



(The connection triangle,
adapted from Thronton and
Brunton, 2007)

Furthermore, Thornton and Brunton (2007) evidence that the first face-to-face meeting with the parent is significant in establishing the foundation for a successful future connection. The practitioner's attitude should be compassionate, courteous, and professional. Moreover, McQueen and Hobbs (2014) suggest that initial talks should inquire about the family's values and the factors they believe are important in enriching their child's experience throughout the transition time.

Furthermore, Rouse (2012) outlines a paradigm of practise that is family centred. Practitioners should create opportunities for parents to participate in their activities and discuss their children's experiences. Correspondingly, Smidt (2007) highlights parental engagement in the day-to-day operations of the early childhood environment, which may include aiding during sessions, visits, baking assistance, or sharing tales; she believes that parents should be informed about their role.



(STEMpedia, 2018)

Interventions

According to Palaiologou (2016), an **action plan** is required to ensure a successful transition. Additionally, Brooker (2008) specifies three significant planning processes:

- Recognise workplace and home patterns, such as sleeping habits, feeding schedules, and children's preferences.
- Enjoying connections and positively interacting with other children.
- Establishing connections to the outside world: an image of the parents or a toy enables toddlers to put their surroundings into the setting.

Regularity, routine, and comfort

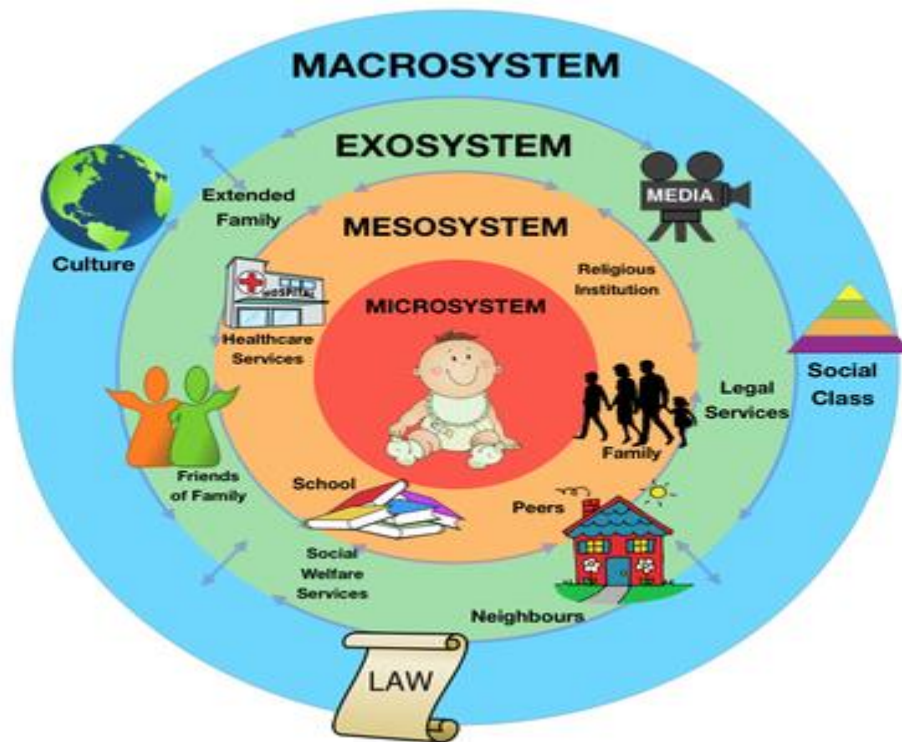
According to the Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (2020), familiar routines may help children cope with Early Years Foundation Phase transitions. Children feel more confident and comfortable when their routine is regular and known. A **regular plan** and **step-by-step routine** provide youngsters with a sense of security. Routines in setting and at home help children in the following ways:

- ❖ Have a feeling of control over their environment
- ❖ Feel comfortable, safe, and secure
- ❖ Appreciate what is occurring now and what will occur in the future
- ❖ Understand how to do an activity or job
- ❖ Participate in educational activities

Environment

Bronfenbrenner (1979) used an ecological approach to transitions and identified 'systems'-layers that individuals move into and out of throughout their lifetimes. He asserts that the microsystem of a child's existence (at home, on the playground, or with a childminder) is dense with transitions. In that regard, practitioners should recognise that to accommodate

young children adequately, they must create an environment that values both the internal and outward changes in children.



(Study of the Mind, 2015)

According to Schroeder (1991), the physical environment significantly impacts children's health and well-being. Because of this, Walsh (2008) suggests that a robust thinking environment is:

- ❖ stimulating - it contains a variety of materials that encourage exploration and investigation
- ❖ it is spacious and well-organized
- ❖ It is adaptable and not excessively organised to give children enough time to participate in the investigating process fully
- ❖ It is game based, providing for flexibility of choice
- ❖ it has access to **outdoor facilities**
- ❖ it contains children's work.

Additionally, Palaiologou (2016) highlights that practitioner should create environments in settings that evaluate the implications of transitions on children's learning and development and ensure that the environment facilitates smooth changes and the proper functioning of the multiple contexts, languages, religious faiths, and cultures in which children live, learn, and grow.

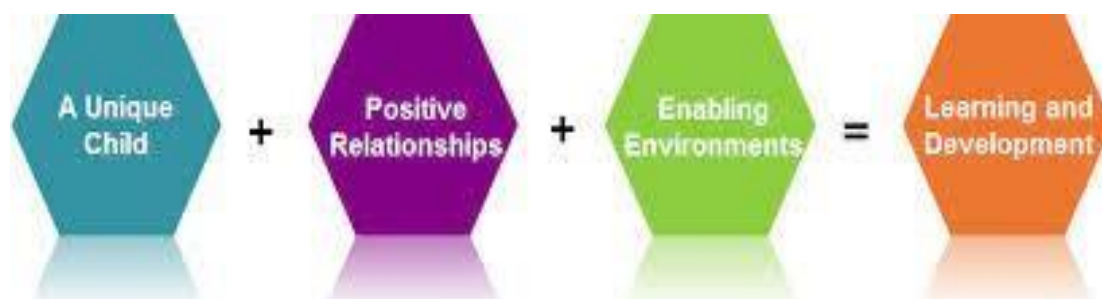
Play

Early Years Matters (2018) argues that learning in the early years is done through play. It follows that children perceive the world around them and how it works through touch, senses, exploration, and involvement. Through play, children acquire new skills and knowledge, learn to solve the problems they face. Brock *et al.* (2013) suggest that it is like children to play, and therefore, children's play should be used in educational activities to motivate learning and achieve the educational ideal. In the same way, Herrington and Brussoni (2015) sustain that play has a decisive role in childhood, being registered as a fundamental right of children in the United Nations Convention. Furthermore, Moyles (2010) claims that play has a crucial role in developing young children. Notably, Taylor *et al.* (1997) advise that toys may be used to help children grow cognitively, physically, motorically, linguistically, socially, and emotionally.

Children use all their senses when playing, and this, according to Piaget, permits children to integrate new knowledge (Palaiologou, 2016). Moreover, Tickell (2011) evidences that by scaffolding children's play experiences, practitioners may help them build the abilities necessary to become effective learners, such as increasing their confidence, mental flexibility, and perceiving obstacles from various perspectives.

Beyond the significance of the play, practitioners must recognise that **each child is unique** and must be known individually. Positive connections within the environment must also be cultivated and maintained to promote learning and growth through play.

This relationship is shown below:



(Isaacs, 2021)

Outcomes

The Curriculum for Wales Framework (2020) establishes four purposes with a vision of what children in Wales will be able to accomplish:

- ❖ ambitious, skilled learners who are eager to study for the rest of their life
- ❖ ambitious, creative contributors determined to participate fully in life and work
- ❖ citizens who are ethical and well-informed
- ❖ individuals who are healthy, confident, and eager to live successful lives as valued members of society

The curriculum's four goals establish a common vision and ambition for all young people in the community. To achieve these goals, the Welsh Government sets high standards for all citizens, promotes individual and national well-being, combats ignorance and disinformation, and encourages critical and civic participation. Using a nationwide approach that ensures uniformity for learners throughout the country, every school will be able to plan and implement its curriculum.

The statutory curriculum document encourages a play-based methodology to early childhood education and a combination of adult and child-directed activities. Educational settings should give children access to engaging, fascinating, stimulating, and safe indoor and outdoor environments that foster children's growth and inherent desire to explore and discover. (WAG, 2008a). Current Foundation Phase practice is inspired by and shares comparable concepts with various educational models and methods worldwide. Similarly, New Zealand's curriculum, Te Whariki, emphasises children's autonomy in selecting materials and activities and taking responsibility for their learning. Within Te Whariki, children are urged to develop into self-assured and competent learners and thinkers who are mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy, secure in their sense of belonging, and aware of their value to the world. (Te Whariki, 1996). Tyler (2002) evidences that this curriculum's foundation is centred on children's interests and goals. Moreover, Te Whariki, like Reggio Emilia, promotes children's voices.

Palaiologou (2012) emphasises that the Te Whariki early childhood team and Early Years Foundation Phase follow certain principles:

- ❖ **Empowerment**- it educates children to take ownership of their development and education.
- ❖ **Holistic development**- refers to the idea of the kid as a 'whole.'
- ❖ **Family and community** - this is a vital aspect of the early childhood curriculum.
- ❖ **Children's interactions** with classmates, adults, and **real-world items** all contribute to their learning.

In conclusion, transitions cannot be avoided, but they may be planned and organised well to minimise the negative social and emotional repercussions on children's well-being. There is a strong focus centred on including both the children and their parents in the process. Early childhood practitioners should function as facilitators in transitions, integrating all personnel into the setting and providing innovative and exciting activities for all children (Palaiologou, 2016).

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