

**DEMONSTRATE HOW
LEARNING THEORIES
CAN SUPPORT
EFFECTIVE
TEACHING AND
LEARNING.
ECES4010**

(ECES4010)

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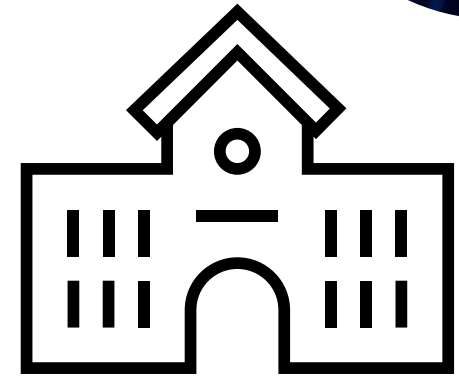


EARLY YEARS EDUCATION



Muij and Reynolds (2017, p.26) state that theorists who pioneered play-based learning have had a substantial influence on modern day pedagogy in early years settings.

Saracho and Evans (2022, p.47) discuss the holistic approach to childhood education that Froebel (1896) placed emphasis on. His ideology surrounding childhood development and the central importance of play whilst under guidance of a practitioner, whose role is to facilitate a nurturing learning environment, have been integrated into current early years education policy. Welsh government (2015) curriculum for Wales: Foundation phase Framework for practitioners.



Estyn (2020) state that the introduction of the new curriculum marked a profound alteration in modern day pedagogy in early years settings, which saw the previous model of adult led learning and extensive assessments removed in favour of a more informal and nurturing child led learning environment.



Tovey (2016, p.127) highlights the importance of outdoor play in early years development and the impact of Froebel (1896) who believed that children under the age of seven constructed their views and understanding of the world through play and emphasised the importance that *outdoor play* has in early years development and the significant role that learning in nature provides when developing a concept of unity.

THE FROEBEL APPROACH ADVOCATES HANDS ON LEARNING AND SEES THE CHILD AS AN AUTONOMOUS LEARNER AND ENCOURAGES THE ADULT TO OBSERVE THE CHILD AND SUPPORT THEIR LEARNING AS AN INDIVIDUAL.



A key part of Froebel's (1896) theory was that the most effective learning environment allows children to have the freedom to explore the world, whilst under the protection of an adult, who observes the child to gain a clear picture of them as an individual and tailor their teaching practices to facilitate that child's individual development.

Maciver (2015) highlights how the Froebelian approach to learning in the '*kindergarten*' has been adopted into early years practice in the UK.

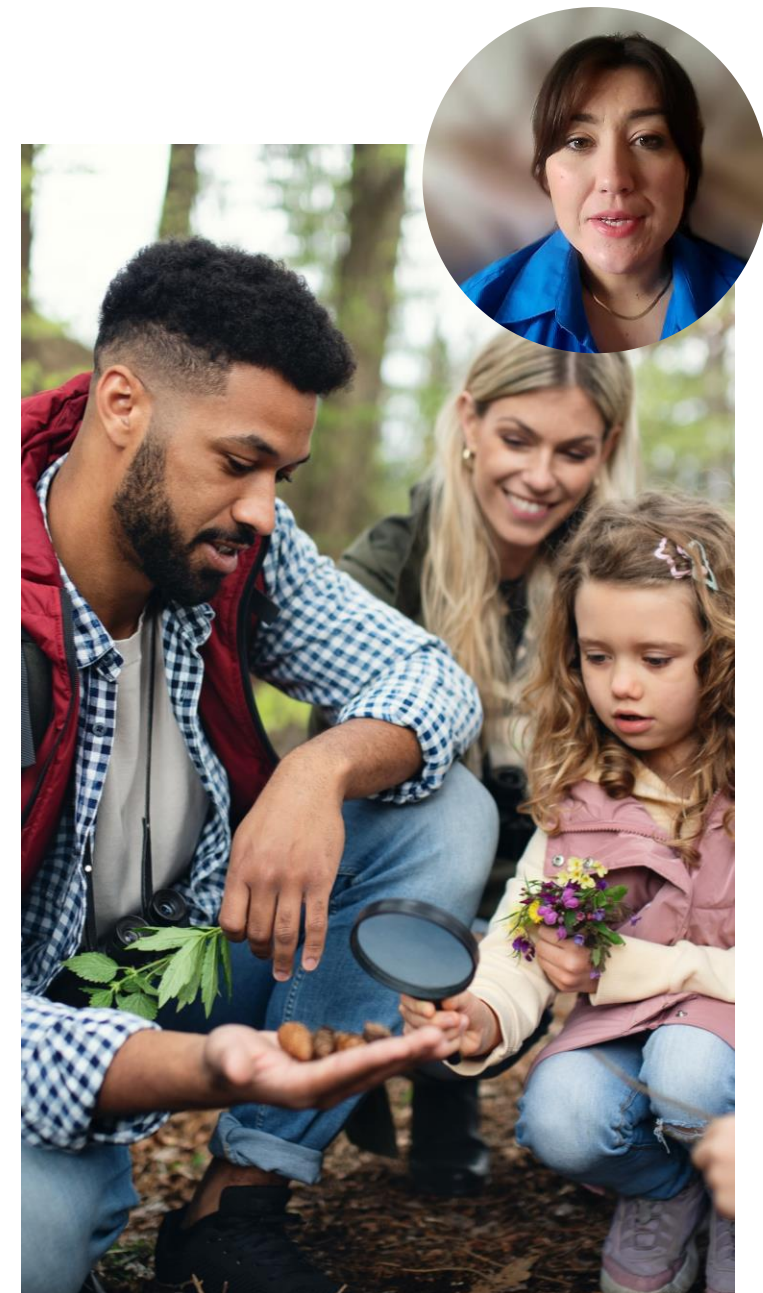


These principles of learning have been embedded within the Welsh government new curriculum for Wales (2022) which integrates outdoor learning within the educational guidance framework.

Waddington and Reed (2016) explores inclusion practices in mainstream schools and suggests that settings that adopt play-based learning and freedom to explore have been effective in the teaching and learning of children with additional learning needs, such as autism and attention deficit disorder. The model which treats the child as an individual, provides alternative educational approaches which help in developing self-regulation and can help modify behavioural issues which create barriers to learning in mainstream settings.

Estyn (2016) report of the effective learning environment created by a school in Wales who developed a forest school outdoor classroom within their grounds, which promoted pupil wellbeing and levels of attainment.

The use of an outdoor art shed which is used to deliver regular lessons linked to the curriculum with resources from the school grounds have become an integral part of the school's curriculum.





WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT (2015) FOUNDATION PHASE OUTDOOR LEARNING HANDBOOK

provides a comprehensive guide for practitioners on how to utilize an outdoor environment for effective learning. The guidance states that observing the child in both indoor and outdoor learning environments play a key role in everyday practice as it will allow practitioners to develop a greater understanding of the child's individual skills and the areas in which they need help to develop further.

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- *Peg words on trees and bushes*
- *Children go on a 'word hunt'*
- *Using the words found, create silly sentences.*



Image Source: Welsh Government (2015).



FROEBEL AND STEINER

- Nicol and Taplin (2012, p.111) draw comparisons from Froebel's views to the work of Steiner (1912) who also saw the adult acting as a mentor to the child, who were allowed to set their own agenda and to explore through their senses by embracing the elements. Steiners approach to effective learning saw great value in integrating creative skills with intellectual development.
- Isaacs (2018, p.67) discuss the similarities between Steiner (1912) and Froebel (1896) who both theorised the importance of the learning environment of the child. Both theorists' view children as active learners who should be treated as individuals and nurtured in a rich learning environment. Models that promoted cross curricular learning through creativity were based on hands on learning, such as painting, music, gardening and cooking where intellectual developmental skills such as numeracy and language could be incorporated.



McMahon and Dyer (2018, p.95) suggests that using cross curricular learning that links key areas of the curriculum with creative learning, will enable the practitioner to provide a more effective child centred teaching approach.

Welsh Government (2023) set out the updated Cymraeg 2050: Welsh Language strategy action plan 2023-2024 in a bid to facilitate and promote learning of the Welsh Language in Wales.

Welsh Assembly Government (2018) Welsh Language Development guidance provided an example of an early year's class who took their outdoor learning lesson to a local farm. The children were introduced to a range of new sensory stimulus and the visit created many cross curricular links including social development and building on the children's knowledge of the environment and living things.

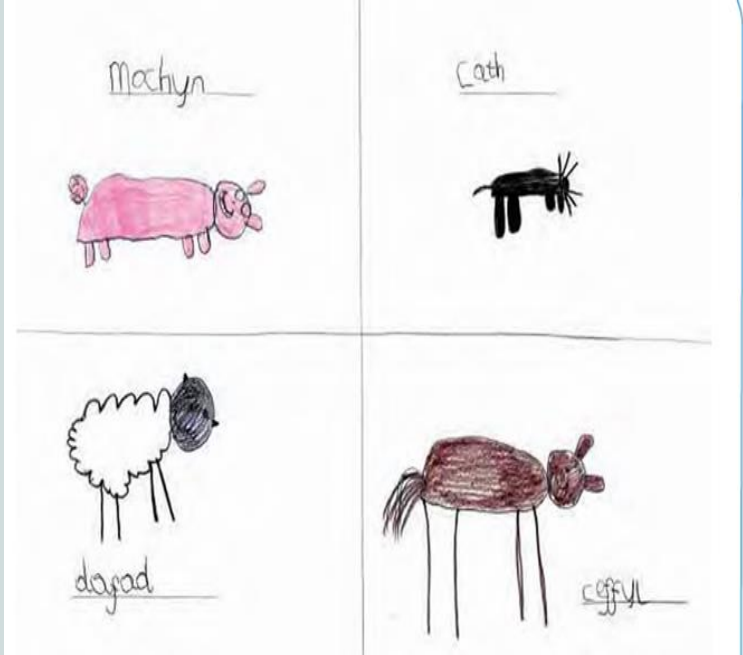
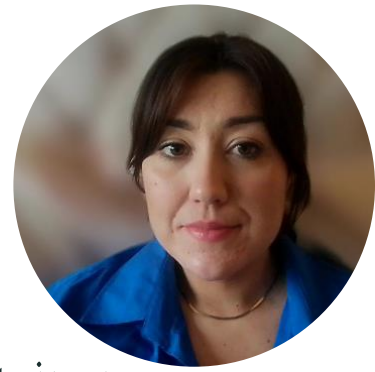




Image Source: PACEY (No Date).

The use of wooden planks provides children an opportunity to practice their coordination and balance skills



Nicol (2010) States that the collaboration of the Steiner Waldorf Education (1919) promoted creativity through freedom of play by providing an environment rich in sensory experiences, with simple natural toys which allows the child to develop their own spontaneous play. Foundation phase settings that integrate these methods within the curriculum, promote child led play through imagination and exploration which are enhanced through natural resources both indoor and outdoor.

These values underpin the key principles of early years foundation stage practices. Welsh Assembly Government DCELLS framework (2008)

PACEY (No date) provide practical examples of how to use natural resources within a foundation phase setting to create an effective learning environment.

FROEBEL'S GIFTS

Valkanova and Brehony (2006) explore the creation of Froebel's (1896) Gifts. Just as Steiner (1919) encouraged use of natural resources to support learning, Froebel (1896) use of educational materials were specifically designed for young children to encourage open ended play through exploration and creativity.

The practitioner plays an important role by observing the child as an individual and assists the child in their understanding by demonstrating connections, such as shapes, language or equations.

A key aspect of the Froebel (1896) approach is the importance of reflective practice amongst early year educators. This is demonstrated in the Welsh Government (2023) A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales, to ensure continued quality improvement.



Gift 1 : A set of coloured felt balls

These can also be held, spinning by string



Gifts 3 to 6 : Sets of cubes, rectangular blocks or wooden boxes.
Each set is contained within its own small box.

Improving Practice

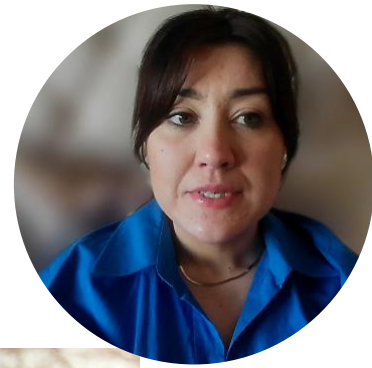
Tinney (2023, p.47) state that policy in Wales has been developed from underpinning philosophies by theorists that endorsed learning through play, but criticizes its lack of consistency in practice, claiming that there is a lack of understanding amongst practitioners as to what open ended play should entail.

Outdoor learning has become more structured.



This is also noted in the work of Arthur and Peterson (2012, p. 150.) who question the lack of consistency within policy documents as to what creativity is.

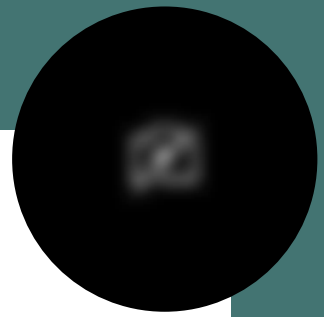
It is suggested that terminology for creativity in policy documents be altered to provide universally coherent guidance that enhances teaching and learning practices.



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