

Introduction

I will be discussing research that I have observed during my 4 weeks in placement. I will be considering the whole school and what the relationship is between the learners, the school and the local community.

The school

- Large primary school in a town. 573 pupils. 17 classes.
- The school caters for pupils with a very wide range of abilities including those with learning difficulties as well as those considered More Able and Talented.
- 4.1% of the school pupils have a statement of Special Educational Needs and the school has a Specialist Teaching Facility that provides full time education to pupils who have moderate to severe learning difficulties.
- 10.1% of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is under the national average, however according to the schools ESTYN report a “significant part of the catchment area figures highly in the Welsh Index of Deprivation (26%)”
- 20% of pupils come from various ethnic groups and the remaining 80% speak English as their first language. There are no pupils that speak welsh as their first language at home.
- Bronfenbrenner theory has placed the child’s school in the microsystem. He believes that school life has equally the same impact on the development of that child as home life. Therefore, implying the importance of creating an environment that supports and nurtures the child, but also providing support and guidance for the parents. (Pound 2009)

Start at My Feet.

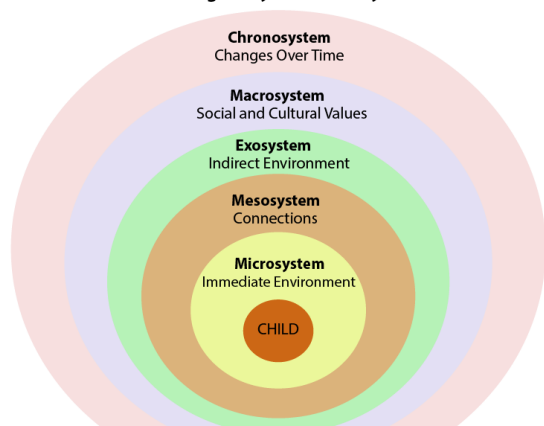
The Learner

- The school has a close relationship with its learners. Links with the local secondary school and on-site pre-school playgroup are well utilised to prepare the pupils for each stage of their school life, providing guidance and support to the pupils.
- A key feature in the school’s Teaching and Learning Policy is that children take an active part in the lessons and demonstrate their independence and sense of responsibility. This has been enforced through a scheme called Everyone Planning in Class (EPIC) whereby, the pupils have a say on what they want to know and learn about relating to their term topic. Gardner theory of multiple intelligences links with this scheme, as he believes that not all children learn the same way. Giving children the opportunity to express different ways of learning can help the teacher understand the different ways that the pupils learn most effectively.
- Trips to local heritage sites and visitors to the school contribute extensively to enriching and expanding the pupils learning experiences. The school emphasizes the pupils knowing about their local area and often organize visits to the local church, care-home and doctors surgery, allowing the pupils to have conversations and ask questions to the people involved. The pupils In the school hold fundraisers and donate the money to charity, recognizing the importance of giving to others. Malaguzzi theory supports this as he believes strongly about combining education and the environment. He also recognizes the benefits of having adults and parents involved in the learning environment, as one of his principles are ‘families as partners’ (Pound 2005)
- According to the schools ESTYN report, the school focuses ‘sensitively on its ethnically diverse school population to develop pupils’ understanding of global citizenship.’ Learning experiences such as trips and speeches from visitors help to promote pupils’ personal development well, including their moral, social, spiritual and cultural development. In the school there are regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and values, during time in class and assemblies. From reading the Successful Futures report, these procedures are valuable for the needs of the pupils. The heath and wellbeing sector of this document states concerns for “how the school environment supports children and young people’s social, emotional, spiritual and physical health and well-being” but through providing these opportunities for the pupils to reflect on their thoughts and beliefs show good steps towards enforcing this area of learning.

The Community

- From my observation in the school and discussions with some class teachers. It is clear that the school has very close links with the community and tries to integrate trips, talks and demonstrations as much as possible to the school life and curriculum. The school is active in encouraging parents to be involved in it’s life and work, and currently have a parent association who help run the school. The parents work closely with the staff in identifying ways to improve the school, and suggest ways to raise money to purchase new equipment and resources. The parent’s organise fundraisers, cake sales and also Christmas/summer fairs that are open to the wider community. In order to bring together the school and the community the parent’s and staff often ask local businesses if they would like to contribute to the fairs by selling their products or donating gifts for a raffle. This practice is an ideal way for local business to be recognised and gain profit from the local community. Epstein, an important figure In parent involvement research, introduced six types of parent involvement and suggested ways that schools can assist families to create home environments that will allow parents to support their children as students. (Epstein,1991, p144-145) Two types of involvement include ‘volunteering’ and ‘decision making’ which both suggest that schools should include families as participants in schools decisions and allow them opportunities to be involved in the school life. He believed that this contribution to their child’s education can improve the support they provide at home.
- My placement school recognises the benefits of contributing to the local community and tries to involve the pupils in this process. A Reception class visit a local nursing home monthly and preform to the residents, as well as singing songs. The pupils also have conversations with the elders and practice their reading. This monthly occurrence allows the pupils to become more confident in talking to adults as well as providing company for the local community.
- The school takes into consideration what activities will benefit the residents and businesses in the local area and so try to organise workshops for both parents and pupils. The school is trying to incorporate more health and wellbeing into their curriculum and so often have a local yoga instructor come in to inform and demonstrate good mindfulness. The school also offers the hall to companies such as Zumba who come in to do fitness classes with the parents and community. The school is also lucky enough to have regular visits from the police, fire and ambulance service who give talks about the law, safety and behaviour to the pupils. Judy Dunn agrees with school’s having regular visits from services such as the police as she ‘draws attention to aspects of young children’s behaviour through which they develop social understanding.’ (Pound 2009) believes that in order to improve the quality of children’s lives, teachers should ‘make personal, social and health education statutory’ and that ‘adults have to help children manage behaviour’. Through the school having these talks from the police and fire service, as well as providing opportunities for the pupils to learn mindfulness . This follows Dunn’s theory of helping children to manage their behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory



(Source: Bronfenbrenner 1979)

References

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