

## **1. The Importance of a Play-Based Pedagogical Approach (1562 Words)**

A play-based pedagogical approach to early years education recommends the use of play as a central contributor to the learning and development for young children. It is widely understood that play is a joyful approach, where children can engage in exploring the concepts of their world and naturally discover their own learning styles and adopt an intrinsic motivation and positive attitude towards their further education as they grow. (Danniels and Pyle, 2018, Lunga, 2022, Taylor, Rhys and Waldron, 2018, Wainright et al, 2019). Danniels and Pyle (2018) and Wainright et al (2019) believe Child initiated play can be anything that a child takes motivated interest in and finds joy in doing so. Taylor, Rhys and Waldron (2018) and Waters (2016) acknowledge since the UK central government's responsibility for education in Wales was devolved in 1999, The national assembly for Wales formulated independent policy that governed play and experiential learning as exemplary in supporting early years education. They recognised that a method of education that is too structured, adult-led, and rigid removes the intrinsic motivation, joy, and passion for learning in young children which they believe are necessary contributors to lifelong learning and success.

Lego Foundation (2017) and Waters (2016) state that a play-based method to education through first hand experiential activities promotes determination and resilience to strengthen their learning, problem solve and overcome challenges, and secures positive and healthy development for Children from all backgrounds. Chukwudi (2023) states play is an effective method of how creative strategies are explored to overcome challenges in learning throughout their childhood. Vygotsky values play as a contributor to learning and development and explores the correlation of imaginative play and creativity to the learning of language through resources offered, where children are observed self-narrating play (Whitebread, 2012).

Where creativity and divergent thinking are concerned, any activity that encourages self-directed play can encompass all areas of learning and experience in children,

such as expressive arts and learning about the world around them will in turn enhance their health and wellbeing, through the development of self-confidence, and allows practitioners to become creative when thinking about their settings community, culture and ethos when planning the environment and resources that enhances learning and tailoring their own curriculum (Alta J Van as Lorayne Excell, Chukwudi, 2023, Welsh Government, 2022). Cheung (2018) and Monkeviciene (2017) suggest although child-initiated play is of significance to learning, that a blend with practitioner directed activities that encourage problem solving develops children's creative thinking further due to the more controlled and focussed tasks at hand.

When the Welsh Government investigated the efficiency of the Foundation Phase with thorough analysis, there were favourable and unfavourable factors to be recognised. The Welsh Governments Evaluation of the Foundation Phase (2015) believe they gathered sufficient evidence that general practice in the foundation phase adhering to government policy and was making the necessary departures from a more formal to the play-based pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. This is challenged by Alta J Van as and Lorayne Excell (2018), who believe that Children are still being exposed to more formal methods of teaching and learning. This was demonstrated through evidence of higher levels of pupil attendance, their involvement, and the development of general wellbeing. However, the data collected from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (2015) suggested that Wales scored lower in literacy, numeracy and science than the average of the OECD level, when compared with other nations in the UK. This left the department of Education to investigate what factors are affecting these scores in academic achievements across Wales. Welsh Government (2014) explored the pressures that practitioners encounter to secure higher performance and reverse their ideals to ensure these outcomes and how Child-initiated play and learning and the reflection of neither continuous nor enhanced provision of outdoor learning was not observed in a high enough quantity. Welsh Governments Evaluation (2015) agreed that a challenge of the foundation phase was the motivation of practitioners to implement the foundation phase into practice for this reason. Chukwundi (2023) believes this is the result of an insufficient understanding amongst practitioners of what play based pedagogy is, and how this is implemented

into practice. An Independent Stocktake of the Foundation Phase (2015) recommended to ensure continuous professional development and training is made available to staff to achieve a better understanding of play based pedagogy and how this supports Children's learning of literacy, numeracy, and science. Waters (2016) and Donaldson (2016) Criticised the foundation phase's outdated, loaded, and complex curriculum that required an overhaul of change to create more direct and simpler purposes for practitioners to understand and implement into everyday planning and practice with more efficiency. Education Wales (2022) explain that a reformed curriculum to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy was required.

Donaldson (2016) and Waters (2016) The new areas of learning and experience in comparison with the previous areas of the foundation phase have created more umbrella approaches, where all aspects of play and learning can interlink and can be covered by multiple areas of learning and experience. The Curriculum for Non-maintained Settings, Wales (2022) have created direct and simpler guidance, where each area of learning is broken down and easier to understand. It contains a detailed section of how play-based pedagogy is demonstrated and how outdoor learning encompasses several cross-curricular areas of learning.

One can recognise that the new curriculum is heavily influenced by theorists such as Loris Malaguzzi and Friedrich Froebel. There is a compelling similarity between the developmental pathways that are encircled by adult, environment, and experiences as play-based pedagogy and Loris Malaguzzi's environment as the third teacher theory, suggesting that children's intrinsic motivation to learn is through exploration of their surroundings (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022) Chicken, 2022 and Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014). Robson (2016) believes using the natural environment enhances literacy and numeracy development through imaginative play and communicating creative ideas and resolving issues. Hall (2017) discusses the reflection of practitioners in how to design the environment in a setting and delivering rich experiences based on active engagement is central of the pedagogy of the curriculum for non-maintained settings, Wales (2022). Hoskins (2019) and Bruce (2020) agree that expressive arts, which are significant to enhance the wellbeing of the curriculum, are introduced through gifts and occupations, where wooden and natural resources are used to develop imagination, creativity and divergent thinking and encompass all areas of learning with fluidity. Early childhood education

philosophy within the UK curriculum has been influenced by Froebel's ideas, particularly his notion of a "kindergarten". In line with the Wales' dedication to play-based learning in the early years, the Froebelian method places a strong emphasis on play as a vital learning channel. Froebel's comprehensive approach to child development, which includes social, emotional, and physical dimensions, is consistent with the areas of learning of the Curriculum for Non maintained Settings (2022) (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022 and Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014)

Robinson (2022) Highlights a challenge that has been encountered, where settings in locales that are more disadvantaged find it challenging to demonstrate the purposes through their provision. The Curriculum for Wales (2022) and Roberts (2023) Believe an advantage of the new curriculum is its flexibility to allow settings to tailor a curriculum to reflect the culture of their community. Watkins (2022) suggests the collection and use of natural resources in the environment is universal and cost-effective and invites inclusive access to the curricular aims to play-based pedagogy. An Independent Stocktake for the Foundation Phase (2015) recommends shared information between settings across the nation in training on best, cost-effective practice can support all settings to improve the quality of access.

According to the PISA National Report for Wales (2022), the data concludes the average scores of Wales in reading, mathematics and science have not demonstrated any significant improvement since assessments that were carried out in 2018. However, they explain that due to the coronavirus pandemic's disruption and delays to education and assessment, it was difficult to establish a true reflection of how the new curriculum of the foundation phase has made improvements. However, Education Wales (2022) suggests a benefit of a slower roll-out of the new curriculum by 2026 will allow sufficient time for practitioners to undertake training and professional development to be able to implement best practice supporting literacy and numeracy to facilitate the change.

Gerritsen (2023) states that although coronavirus has impacted the PISA scores of New Zealand's early years assessments, they still rank extremely high in comparison with global nations. When comparing the Curriculum for Non-Maintained Settings, Wales (2022) and the Te Whariki Curriculum (2017), the similarity between the curricula is the ability for a setting to tailor their own curriculum to meet the needs

and culture of its students (Mclachlan, 2018). It encourages practitioners to reflect on current practice to influence positive change to support academic outcomes for children in their care. While many of the areas of learning are alike, one of the areas that vary is the physical development area of learning in the Curriculum for Non-maintained Settings Wales (2022) is viewed differently by Te Whariki (2017), where a child's physical health should encompass all areas of learning and has a contribution area of learning in its place. This area of learning values the contribution of learners in their play. They do however agree that through play, the areas of learning are all fluid and should interlink to support children's holistic development.

## **2. Assessment (1536 Words).**

According to Zhang (2014) and, Early Years Matters (2023) agree the statement of the unique child applies to all Children, and possess a different approach towards various aspects of learning which is demonstrated through their active role of play in the environment.

The Child Poverty Strategy's Progress Report (2022) Indicate although improvements have been made improve the circumstances of Children living in poverty in Wales, there is still almost a third of Children experiencing disadvantage. The microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is the direct interaction that a child encounters in daily life, such as parents and school (Bradbury and Swailes, 2022 and Guy-Evans, 2024). The stress that parents encounter living on the poverty line can influence limited engagement to their child's learning and can therefore experience delays in academic achievement. Jensen (2013) and Neuzil (2016) explore how poverty influence a limit in engagement to learning can damage wellbeing and self-esteem. The results from the PISA assessment (2015) indicate that students who experience deprivation in society have poorer academic achievement than their more affluent peers. This requires the quality of strong adult and peer interactions in early years education to enrich the quality of academic achievement. (Welsh Government (2018) and ECEC (no date) are striving to offer funding to ensure that children from low-income families are offered the same quality foundation phase provision to ensure equality in access is improved. An Independent Stocktake of the Foundation Phase (2015) declared a gap in training and

development for practitioners that raises awareness of the impact of child poverty on academic achievement and what could be done to improve circumstances.

Donaldson (2016) Declares the rigidity and unpopularity of key stages, when determining individual progression, which reduces progression and lowers self-esteem, The newly proposed progression steps for each area of learning and experience that correlates with the four purposes of the curriculum focusses more on the unique child's learning journey which raises self-esteem and intrinsic motivation to learn, which will secure better achievement (Welsh Government, 2022). According to Moore et al (2014), Walsh et al (2010) and Pyle and Daniels (2016), this cultural issue, along with many others allows practitioners to value play in supporting academic achievement in being more powerful than ever. Influence from theorists, such as Piaget and Vygotsky have transformed current curricula in to making a pedagogical shift from being age-appropriate practice to developmentally appropriate practice that focusses on the child's individual ability, and the role of the adult in the meaningful scaffolding and co-construction of learning (Aubrey and Riley, 2022 and Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014).

Alongside many benefits that child-initiated play possesses, it is also where practitioners gain a true reflection of what in the environment interests the child, how they conceptualise the world around them and achieve a better understanding of their abilities (Hedges and Cooper, 2018). Chukwudi (2023)'s research concluded that practitioners were carrying out more observations on adult-led focussed activities than on children's self-directed play, which did not provide an accurate understanding of children's interests and abilities and therefore, enhanced provision did not reflect these factors to enhance learning (Pyle and Daniels, 2016). Although free play without practitioner participation is beneficial to observe interests and to plan the environment to support interests and abilities, Danniels and Pyle (2018) argues that practice without practitioner participation and adult focussed activities will not enhance a child's academic achievement, thus indicating the significance of their role.

Hedges and Cooper (2018) and Danniels and Pyle (2018) agree that a blend of child-initiated and the practitioner's participation in the scaffolding of learning with

skills of open-ended questions and sustained, shared thinking to assess a child's ability and understanding of all cross curricular areas of learning. Practitioners with an ability to differentiate play that possesses opportunity for social interaction to facilitate learning from uninterrupted play which requires reflection strengthens observations and assessments and leads to meaningful planning and learning environments (Edwards, 2017, Fisher, 2016 and Waters, 2016). Wainright et al (2019) believe practitioners are to observe play cues and what interests individuals to enhance provision that is tailored to individual interests. It is widely acknowledged that articulating play cues in children is often a challenge in practitioners. Pyle and Daniels 2016 Mckinnes et al 2011 and Bottrill 2018, ECEC (no date) and (Stephen, 2010). Training and development should be offered practitioners can observe and search for different cues in individuals for what they perceive as play and to plan the environment through the lens of a child, observe and assess and plan arrangements through the lens of the individual Child.

The Foundation Phase Profile (2017) is a development progression tracker that assesses all areas of learning and various aspects of development. While it does provide a clear reflection of a child's abilities, it is too rigid in placing Children into ability groups, providing scores and does not consider socio-economic factors, such as child's circumstances living in poverty. Another challenge of this, due to its extensive detail and time constraints for completion, Child to adult ratios may not be allowing of carrying out thorough meaningful interactions and observations to achieve a true result. Welsh Government's Successful Futures (2015) aim to design simpler assessment procedures and clearer developmental progression aims for evidence to be collected on. OECD Early Years Structural Quality Review (2018) and ECEC (no date) highlights that having fewer children in adult to child ratios can improve the quality of relationships between practitioners and children, improves the quality of interactions, observation, assessment of children's ability to improve the quality of provision to enhance pupil achievement. An Independent Stocktake of the Foundation Phase (2015) recommended more on-going observations as assessment arrangements for younger Children.

The Assessment Arrangements for Funded Non-maintained Nursery Settings (2022) and the Te Whariki Curriculum of New Zealand (2017) presents a simpler, more

laidback approach to assessment with less of a time constraint and looks at academic progression as an individual, long term journey to success, with the Te Whariki Curriculum identifying assessment procedures as learning stories (Foromosingho and Peters, 2019). It creates a more child-centred reflection to set developmental targets that are suitable for the child and is inclusive for Children from all backgrounds and focus on progression steps instead of expected age-appropriate levels of development. Both curricula are highly influenced by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, where the ethos of the assessment arrangements in New Zealand are designed to facilitate social interactions with peers who have different strengths. This encourages a collaboration of learning to achieve success instead of a competition of who is better able than others in learning. The Curriculum for non-maintained settings Wales (2022) inhabits the zone of proximal development in its evaluation of children's strengths and focusses on areas where their learning is enhanced by adults who scaffold learning. This creates an informal approach to setting targets without declaring what they are unable to do which promotes more self-esteem, particularly for socio-culturally disadvantaged children, like those living in poverty.

It is recognised by Savitz et al (2023) that Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory that literacy and language is learnt most effectively in social contexts. Another similarity between Wales and New Zealand is they are both multicultural and multilingual societies and inhabit a sense of pride in celebrating these factors in their curricula, declaring Maori as the official language of New Zealand (Ritchie and Skerret (2020). Hickey and de Mejia (2017) indicate that Wales as a nation, like New Zealand are inclusive of Children from diverse language backgrounds. Learning multiple languages enforces a sense of identity and belonging, where a child establishes their position in the culture that surrounds them, which should be inclusive for the education of all children (Gataullina and Drozdikora, 2016 and Song, 2020). Davis et al (2019)'s viewpoint is the acquisition of an additional or more languages enhance pupil engagement to learning. Beard (2020) suggests that Wales' determination to strengthen the bilingualism is enforced through Welsh language being taught in English-medium schools alongside the Welsh-medium, to guarantee a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Hickey and de Mejia (2017) state that Welsh medium schools offer full immersion of the Welsh language, where English medium schools are more

session-based immersion. The Curriculum for Wales' Language and Communication area of learning (2022) state that the learning of diverse languages can allow a Child to interchange between them and expands creative methods to express themselves, how they communicate, and how they transfer the learning of language to explain new concepts, which is the dominant factor in the progression of language, literacy and communication in both areas. Both curricula strongly endorse the development of reading and writing in multiple languages. Vygotsky's influence here is the adult facilitation of learning through modelling the correct language in various languages to narrate children's play, and social interaction with others who are more experienced in speaking multiple languages and to learn from them in play contexts (Shareef, 2020).

A Challenge for this is not having enough practitioners who can deliver a high enough quality of the immersion technique that is required to support children's learning. However, Staff training and self teaching of Welsh online can strengthen their teaching of Welsh through their development of the language and advancing through progression levels. (Cardiff University, no date, Cwrs Camau, no date and Early Years Wales, 2020).

3 – Blog (1002 words).

Parent Guide: How to Cultivate the Curiosity Approach to the Living Room and the Great Outdoors.

### **Establish a Rich Environment**

A child's curiosity is greatly influenced by their surroundings. Give your family a range of exciting objects to help them explore and make their home a haven. Engage with your children to collect natural materials and objects around the house than can offer endless possibilities. With the help of these materials, kids can play freely and naturally find their interests. The provision of open-ended materials to freely manipulate, mix, and explore is known as "natural loose parts play." These elements, which are frequently discovered in nature, include shells, stones, leaves, branches, and more. Loose pieces, as opposed to structured toys, encourage children's imagination, creativity, and problem-solving abilities while letting them take charge of their playtime.

## Natural Loose Parts Play's Advantages

**Enhanced Creativity:** Children are encouraged to utilise their creativity to turn ordinary materials into elaborate creations through natural loose parts play. The choices are unlimited, whether you want to use leaves to make a crown or build a fairy palace out of twigs.

**Developing Fine Motor abilities:** Playing with loose pieces encourages children to handle and manipulate a variety of materials. This helps to develop fine motor abilities. These tasks, which range from stacking twigs to picking up tiny stones, help students improve dexterity and hand-eye coordination.

**Cognitive Growth:** By pushing kids to think critically and work through challenges on their own, loose parts play promotes cognitive growth in kids. They discover how to observe cause-and-effect links and experiment with various combinations.

**Social Skills:** Children develop important social skills like cooperation, negotiation, and communication when they play together with natural loose components. A sense of community and cooperation is fostered by exchanging resources and concepts.

Provide your child with a dedicated creative place where they can play with art, construction, or other practical activities. Having a room set aside for projects motivated by curiosity conveys a strong message that you value discovery in your house.

## **Embrace the Power of Open-Ended Questions and Sustained Shared thinking.**

Engage in active dialogue with your child to foster a culture of inquiring. Make sure your inquiries are open-ended and encourage critical thought rather than giving answers all the time. For instance, if your child asks why the sky is blue, help them discover the answer by doing a little experiment or doing some research together.

Demonstrate your own inquisitiveness by sharing your own sense of astonishment. Give intriguing anecdotes, talk about current affairs, or relate intriguing personal tales that capture your interest. By establishing curiosity as a common conversation topic, you show that learning is an ongoing process.

## **Encourage a Range of Interests**

Each child is different, and they all have different hobbies. Encourage your child's interest by

introducing them to a variety of pursuits and topics. Take part in community programmes, visit nature paths, go to museums, and attend cultural events. These encounters introduce kids to many viewpoints and develop a well-rounded sense of curiosity.

Recognise your child's new interests and allow them access to materials that support them. Offer books, documentaries, or even set up a visit to a dinosaur museum if they show an interest in dinosaurs, for example. By adjusting your approach to suit their interests, you're promoting inquiry and showing them the importance of following their passions.

### **Promote Your Own Research**

Allowing your child to take the lead in their educational journey can help them become more independent. Offer chances for independent learning, such as carrying out basic scientific experiments, going on a nature scavenger hunt, or working on a creative project.

Make a curiosity book where your kids can showcase their finds, like a handcrafted craft, a collection of rocks, or a journal full of observations. Give children the opportunity to explore and create on their terms by celebrating their autonomy and resisting the need to unduly regulate their time.

### **Cultivate a Growth Mindset**

A growth mindset is essential for fostering curiosity. Teach your child that challenges are opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. Praise their effort and perseverance, emphasizing the process of learning rather than focusing solely on outcomes.

Share stories of famous individuals who overcame setbacks through curiosity and determination. Illustrate that success often involves embracing challenges and learning from failures. By instilling a growth mindset, you empower your child to approach challenges with curiosity and resilience.

### **Mindfully Incorporate Technology**

Technology may be a potent instrument for fostering curiosity in the modern digital world. But it's important to use it sparingly and with awareness. Select interactive websites, age-appropriate educational apps, and films based on your child's interests.

Take part in joint digital exploration. Investigate interesting subjects, view instructional films, or engage in interactive games that encourage problem-solving abilities. Establish fair time constraints and make sure that technology enhances other learning and exploring opportunities rather than taking their place.

### **Include Practical Experiences**

Beyond textbooks and schools, curiosity exists. Experiences in the real world are very important in forming a child's worldview. Visit historical places, farms, factories, and local businesses on field trips. Curiousness can be stimulated in different ways by being involved in the community and exposing your kids to a variety of experiences.

Engage in daily activities by describing the "hows" and "whys" of different procedures. Whether it's gardening, cooking, or home repair, these pursuits provide useful lessons that pique interest and foster important life skills.

At-home cultivation of the curiosity approach is a continuous process that calls for tolerance, support, and flexibility. You may help your child develop into a lifelong learner by fostering an atmosphere that is stimulating, promoting autonomous inquiry, supporting a diversity of interests, fostering a growth mindset, thoughtfully integrating technology, and incorporating real-world experiences. Remember: being curious involves more than just learning; it also involves cultivating an attitude that drives one to comprehend, investigate, and value the world's wonders. As parents, you have the amazing chance to create a future full of imagination, curiosity, and a passion for education.

### **Reference list**

Aubrey, K. and Riley, A. (2022). *Understanding and Using Educational Theories*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.

Beard, A. (2020). The Suitability of Welsh Language Provision in English-medium Schools to Produce Speakers of the Language. *Wales Journal of Education*, [online] 22(2), pp.1–25. Available at: <https://journal.uwp.co.uk/wje/article/id/449/>.

Bonetti, S. and Brown, K. (2018). Structural Elements of Quality Early Years Provision: A Review of the Evidence. *Interlitteraria*, 23(2), pp.442–446. doi:<https://doi.org/10.12697/il.2018.23.2.17>.

Bradbury, A. and Swailes, R. (2022). *Early Childhood Theories Today*. London: Learning Matters.

Bruce, T. (2020). *Educating young children : a lifetime journey into a Froebelian approach : the selected works of Tina Bruce*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, Ny: Routledge.

Campbell-Barr, V., Evans, K., Georgeson, J. and Tregenza, S. (n.d.). *Insights Into a High-Quality Early Years Curriculum*. University of Plymouth: Montessori Global Education.

Cardiff University (n.d.). *National Sabbatical Scheme*. [online] Cardiff University. Available at: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/welsh/courses/professional-courses-and-welsh-for-adults/sabbatical-scheme#:~:text=The%20Sabbatical%20Scheme%20offers%20language> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2024].

Cheung, R.H.P. (2018). Play-based creativity-fostering practices: the Effects of Different Pedagogical Approaches on the Development of Children's Creative Thinking Behaviours in a Chinese Preschool Classroom. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 26(4), pp.1–17. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2018.1424725>.

Chicken, S. (2022). Doing Reggio? Exploring the Complexity of 'Curriculum' Migration through a Comparison of Reggio Emilia, Italy and the EYFS, England. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 13(4), p.204361062110680. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106211068041>.

Chukwudi Ekeh, M. (2023). Play-based Pedagogy and Creativity for Early Grade and Preschool Learners. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, 14(1), pp.50–62. doi:<https://doi.org/10.47750/jett.2023.14.01.005>.

Conkbayir, M. and Pascal, C. (2014). *Early Childhood Theories and Contemporary Issues : an Introduction*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Cwrs Camau (n.d.). *Camau*. [online] Dysgu Cymraeg. Available at: <https://dysgucymraeg.cymru/cymraeg-gwaith/camau/> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2024].

Daly, L. and Beloglovsky, M. (2020). *Loose Parts 4*. 4th ed. St Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Danniels, E. and Pyle, A. (2018). Defining Play-based Learning. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. [online] Available at: <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/play-based-learning/according-experts/defining-play-based-learning..>

Davis, N., Harris, L. and Cunningham, U. (2019). Professional Ecologies Shaping Technology Adoption in Early Childhood Education with Multilingual Children. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(3), pp.1320–1339.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12774>.

Donaldson, G. (2015a). *Successful Futures Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/successful-futures.pdf>.

Donaldson, G. (2015b). *Successful Futures: Looking at the Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*. pp.1–10.

Donaldson, G. (2016). A Systematic Approach to Curriculum Reform in Wales. *Cylchgrawn Addysg Cymru / Wales Journal of Education*, 18(1).  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.18.1.3>.

Early Years Matters (2021). *A Unique Child*. [online] Early Years Matters. Available at: <https://www.earlyyearsmatters.co.uk/eyfs/a-unique-child/>.

Early Years Wales (2020a). *Welsh Language Support*. [online] Early Years Wales. Available at: <https://www.earlyyears.wales/en/welsh-language-support>.

Early Years Wales (2020b). *Welsh language support*. [online] Early Years Wales. Available at: <https://www.earlyyears.wales/en/welsh-language-support>.

Edwards, S. (2017). Play-based Learning and Intentional Teaching: Forever Different? *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 42(2), pp.4–11.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.23965/ajec.42.2.01>.

Fisher, J. (2016). *Interacting or interfering? : Improving the Quality of Interactions in the Early Years*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Furlong, J. and Lunt, I. (2019). *Education in a Federal UK*. Routledge.

Gataullinaa, K.N. and Drozdikova–Zaripova, A.R. (2016). Welsh Experience in Supporting Regional Languages in Education. *IEJME— Mathematics Education*, [online] 11(6), pp.1857–1865. Available at: <https://www.iejme.com/download/welsh-experience-in-supporting-regional-languages-in-education.pdf>.

Gerritsen, J. (2023). *NZ Records Worst Ever PISA International Test results, amid Global Decline*. [online] RNZ. Available at:  
<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/504020/nz-records-worst-ever-pisa-international-test-results-amid-global-decline#:~:text=It%20is%20not%20just%20about> [Accessed 21 Jan. 2024].

Guy-Evans, O. (2023). *Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory*. [online] Simply Psychology. Available at: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Bronfenbrenner.html>.

Hall, T. (2017). Architecting the ‘Third Teacher’: Solid Foundations for the Participatory and Principled Design of Schools and (built) Learning Environments. *European Journal of Education*, 52(3), pp.318–326.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12224>.

Hedges, H. and Cooper, M. (2018). Relational play-based pedagogy: theorising a core practice in early childhood education. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(4), pp.369–383. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2018.1430564>.

Hellyn, L. and Bennett, S. (2017). *The A to Z of the Curiosity Approach*. 2nd ed. Great Britain: The Curiosity Approach.

Hellyn, L. and Bennett, S. (2019). *From Ordinary to Extraordinary : a Transformational Journey of Early Childhood Settings following the Curiosity Approach*. The Curiosity Approach.

Hickey, T. and Anne-Marie de Mejía (2017). *Immersion Education in the Early Years*. Routledge.

Hoskins, K. and Smedley, S. (2019). Protecting and Extending Froebelian Principles in practice: Exploring the Importance of Learning through Play. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, [online] 17(2), pp.73–87.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718x18809114>.

Ingram, J., Stiff, J., Cadwallader, S., Lee, G. and Heather (2023). *PISA 2022: National Report for Wales*. [online] Available at:  
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2023-12/pisa-2022-national-report-wales-059.pdf> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2024].

Jensen, E. (2013). How Poverty Affects Classroom Engagement. *Faces of Poverty*, [online] 70(8), pp.24–30. Available at: <https://www.haiti-now.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/How-Poverty-Affects-Classroom-Engagement.pdf>.

João Formosinho and J Peeters (2019). *Understanding pedagogic documentation in early childhood education : revealing and reflecting on high quality learning and teaching*. London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Lunga, P., Esterhuizen, S. and Koen, M. (2022). Play-based pedagogy: an Approach to Advance Young Children’s Holistic Development. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 12(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v12i1.1133>.

McInnes, K., Howard, J., Miles, G. and Crowley, K. (2011). Differences in practitioners’ understanding of play and how this influences pedagogy and children’s perceptions of play. *Early Years*, 31(2), pp.121–133.  
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2011.572870>.

McLachlan , C. (2018). Te Whāriki revisited: How Approaches to Assessment Can Make Valued Learning Visible. *He Kupu - the Word*, 5(3), pp.45–56.

Mills, C. (2021). *Implementing the Socio-economic Duty: A Review of Evidence on Socio-economic Disadvantage and Inequalities of Outcome*. Welsh Government Social Research: Analysis for Policy, pp.1–65.

Ministry of Education (2017). *Te Whāriki He Whāriki Mātauranga Mō Ngā Mokopuna O Aotearoa Early Childhood Curriculum*. [online] New Zealand. Available at:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf>.

Monkevičienė, O., Stankevičienė, K., Autukevičienė, B. and Jonilienė, M. (2017). Pedagogical Strategies That Improve Children's Play-Based Learning. *SOCIETY. INTEGRATION. EDUCATION. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 2, p.290. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17770/sie2017vol2.2254>.

Moore, D., Edwards, S., Cutter-Mackenzie, A. and Boyd, W. (2014). Play-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education. *SpringerBriefs in Education*, pp.9–24. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0_2).

Neuzil, A. (2016). Equitable Student Engagement: a Correlation Between Personalized Learning, Student Engagement, and Poverty Level. Michigan: ProQuest.

OECD (2018). *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Starting Strong*. Paris: OECD Publishing <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264085145-en>.

PISA 2015 United Kingdom. (2016). Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-United-Kingdom.pdf>.

Pyle, A. and Danniels, E. (2017). A Continuum of Play-Based Learning: The Role of the Teacher in Play-Based Pedagogy and the Fear of Hijacking Play. *Early Education and Development*, [online] 28(3), pp.274–289. Available at: <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/96410/1/A%20continuum%20of%20play-based%20learning%20-%20Revised.pdf>.

Roberts, A.L. (2023). Exploring the Discursive Construction of National Identity through the Building of the New Curriculum for Wales. *Wales Journal of Education*, 25(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.25.1.3>.

Robinson, S. (2022). Curriculum for Wales: Where are We Now? *Teaching Geography*, [online] 47(2), pp.61–63. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/006905486eede4061f53dd0b971b2028/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28686>.

Robson, K. and Mastrangelo, S. (2018). Children's Views of the Learning Environment: a Study Exploring the Reggio Emilia Principle of the Environment as the Third Teacher. *Journal of Childhood Studies*, [online] 42(4), pp.1–16. doi:<https://doi.org/10.18357/jcs.v42i4.18100>.

Savitz, R.S., Roberts, L.D. and DeHart, J. (2023). *Teaching Challenged and Challenging Topics in Diverse and Inclusive Literature*. Taylor & Francis.

Shareef, S. (2020). *How teachers support children's learning through culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy in two early childhood education centres*. [Thesis] Available at: <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/items/4544fc66-5561-4e79-b70e-98f51fdd3d53>.

Song, H. (2020). *The Challenges and Benefits of Maintaining Chinese ECE Children's Home Languages in New Zealand*. Thesis.

Stephen, C. (2010). Pedagogy: the silent partner in early years learning. *Early Years*, 30(1), pp.15–28. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140903402881>.

Tamsin Grimmer (2021). *Developing a Loving Pedagogy in the Early Years : How Love Fits with Professional Practice*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, Ny: Routledge.

van As, A.J. and Excell, L. (2018). Strengthening early childhood teacher education towards a play-based pedagogical approach. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 8(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v8i1.525>.

Wainwright, N., Goodway, J., Whitehead, M., Williams, A. and Kirk, D. (2019). Playful pedagogy for deeper learning: exploring the implementation of the play-based foundation phase in Wales. *Early Child Development and Care*, 190(1), pp.43–53. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1653551>.

Walsh, G., Sproule, L., McGuinness, C., Trew, K. and Ingram, G. (2010). Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Play-based Pedagogy in Early Years Education: a Literature Review of Research and Practice. *School of Psychology*. [online] Available at: <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Developmentally%20appropriate%20practice%20and%20play-based%20pedagogy%20in%20early%20years%20education%3A%20A%20literature%20review%20of%20research%20and%20practice.pdf>.

Waters, J. (2016). The Foundation Phase in Wales – time to grow up? *Cylchgrawn Addysg Cymru / Wales Journal of Education*, 18(1).

doi:<https://doi.org/10.16922/wje.18.1.11>.

Waters, J. (2022). *Introduction to Play*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Watkins, S. (2022). *Outdoor Play for Healthy Little Minds : Practical Ideas to Promote children's Wellbeing in the Early Years*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, Ny: Routledge.

Welsh Government. (2014a). *An Independent Stocktake of the Foundation Phase in Wales*. Institute of Education - University of London: Leading Education and Social Research, pp.1–10.

Welsh Government. (2014b). *Evaluating the Foundation Phase Key Findings on Pedagogy and Understanding*. [online] Available at:

<https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/88796/1/140506-evaluating-foundation-phase-pedagogy-understanding-en.pdf> [Accessed 20 Jan. 2024].

Welsh Government (2015). *Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Final Report*. Ymchwil Gymdeithasol y Llywodraeth, pp.1–9.

Welsh Government (2018). *Foundation Phase provision for three-and four-year-olds: Guidance for local authorities in Wales Guidance*. [online] Available at:

[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/foundation-phase-provision-for-three-and-four-year-olds-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-wales\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/foundation-phase-provision-for-three-and-four-year-olds-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-wales_0.pdf).

Welsh Government (2017). *Foundation Phase Profile Handbook*. [online] Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/storage/f9d85dba-85a4-4e87-bb58-a24730ad7e57/foundation-phase-profile-handbook-revised-september-2017.pdf>.

Welsh Government (2022a). *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. [online] Addysg Gymru. Available at:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/b1801d78-38c3-4320-9818-d9996c21aef8/220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf>.

Welsh Government (2022b). *Child Poverty strategy: 2022 Progress Report [HTML]*. [online] GOV.WALES. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/child-poverty-strategy-2022-progress-report-html>.

Welsh Government (2022c). *Curriculum for Wales - Hwb*. [online] hwb.gov.wales. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>.

Welsh Government (2022d). *Education Is Changing*. [online] GOV.WALES. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/education-changing>.

Whitebread, D., Basilio, M., Kuvalja, M. and Verma, M. (2012). *The Importance of Play*. Cambridge University.

Williams, H.J. (2022). *Playful Mathematics*. Sage Publications UK.

Zhang, Y. (2014a). *Philosophy | Child Development Labs*. [online] uconn. Available at: <https://childlabs.uconn.edu/philosophy/#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20theories%20of>.

Zhang, Y. (2014b). *Philosophy | Child Development Labs*. [online] uconn. Available at: <https://childlabs.uconn.edu/philosophy/#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20theories%20of>.

Zosh, J., Hopkins, E., Jensen, H., Liu, C., Neale, D., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Solis, S. and Whitebread, D. (2017). *Learning through play: a review of the evidence White paper*. [online] Available at: [https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/wmtlmbe0/learning-through-play\\_web.pdf](https://cms.learningthroughplay.com/media/wmtlmbe0/learning-through-play_web.pdf).