

Early Years Curricula Module Assignment

Section 1

This section critically analyses the implementation of play-based curricula in the early years, particularly focusing on the implementation of the Foundation Phase, identifying the benefits, what complexities arise in training and how to possibly overcome them.

The Welsh Government (2018) recognised through evidence from assessment that play-based learning is a powerful method of learning that enables pupils to develop in all Areas of Learning, holistically. Similarly, through many forms of play-based learning allows pupils to become investigators, encounter experimentation, and estimation (Family Lives, no date). Additionally, experiential environments and exploration with materials in place, pupils learning through play are able to flourish in their language, literacy, and communication skills (Lubrano, 2019). Furthermore, Play Wales (2022c) suggests there is growing indications of learning through play making a positive impact on pupils' physical activity and wellbeing, relieving pupils from feeling anxious. Through this, pupils are able to strengthen their large gross motor skills, balance, and coordination.

In Wales, the Welsh Government (2014b) identifies the Foundation Phase Framework as the national curriculum for children ages 3 to 7 years. A UNICEF document published in 2018 states a central element of the Early Years Curricula in Wales is learning through play, supporting the child-centred approach, and following relevant pedagogy and educational guidelines. In agreement to this, Department of Education (no date) add that play-based learning must be at the heart of all pupils' Areas of Learning allowing additional gains to key knowledge and life skills. Similarly, Freud Museum London (2017) suggests that Donald Winnicott believed active learning supports children's understanding of their feelings, social rules, and surrounding environments, in indoor and outdoor learning (Welsh Government, 2015a). Additionally, it is recognised within the Foundation Phase Framework published in 2015c by the Welsh Government, that all children should have opportunities and access to outdoor environments as much as the indoors, as it is an essential Area of Learning. Wainwright *et al.* (2019) share that play-based learning should be well

planned, whilst considering accessibility to the outdoors and the materials available for the children to explore and to move around freely and independently, implementing a well processed and quality play-based environment (UNICEF, 2018).

McInnes *et al.* (2011) suggest that all professionals involved in the training process must understand the concept of play-based and adult-led, their relationship with learning and recognising when to confidently adapt between the two, to provide successful implementation (Aiono, 2017). Moreover, Macdonald (no date) states that practitioners are able to have more awareness of the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the FPh by appreciating how the curriculum ought to be implemented in practice.

However, Hunter's (2019) research from schools in New Zealand highlights the challenge of the adults understanding their role in play-based learning environments and acknowledges further barriers. Similarly, Waters (2015) states how the terminology of 'play' is interpreted is also an additional problematic barrier which causes tension to implementation. Moreover, through studying the Evaluation of the Foundation Phase play-based Early Years curricula published in 2015a by the Welsh Government, research strongly shows training all staff involved in pupils' education is the foundation to creating successful implementation in the FPh. Although this has been concluded, furthermore within the same document, the statistics on staff's views show differently. Staff within the school sector highly believe training methods are not specified in an in-depth and effective way, to support them with implementation and facilitate play-based learning pedagogy from the FPh. However, Estyn's (2010) document suggests the FPh training programmes focus is to ensure the appropriate pedagogical skills are delivered to the practitioners for successful implementation. Staff expressed that the guidance documents they are provided with for implementation are too extensive and are inundated with curricula guidance booklets, yet do not have enough time to process and revise the depth information to use and implement in practice. Although extensive, staff expressed how they were also very vague on what is expected for implementing an effective practice. In conclusion, practitioners state that although training periods are distributed, they feel additional time in between is necessary to consolidate and strengthen new information for implementation in practice (Estyn, 2010). Additionally, it was notified within the

evaluation, to enable further development, the staff felt the training materials needed to be renewed and up to date with a more in-depth description for implementing successful pedagogical environments (Welsh Government, 2015a).

Similarly, in line with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, supporting the structure for implementing the FPh in layers, Macdonald's (no date) professional opinion states on multiple occasions insufficient implementation of the FPh curricula may have taken place within the school sectors due to poor and unclear policies, failing the macrosystem level which represents the Welsh Government policy, affecting the remaining layers during implementation. This results in lack of understanding from the staff on the definition and the importance of play-based learning, causing confusion in varied implementation of pedagogical methods from practitioners in all settings (Danniels, 2018). However, play-based is the rationale and the underpinning of the FPh curriculum. Therefore, although dated, to ensure play-based learning is implemented effectively, the Welsh Assembly Government (2008) instruct practitioners to carry out effective planning prior to active learning taking place. This is to promote the pupils' curiosity and understanding of the world around them.

However, to support Welsh Assembly Government's (2008) requirement, over a period of two years a more recent source, the Welsh Government's final report published in 2014a states many of the stakeholders' opinions were moderately positive relating to the implementation of the FPh. Professionals and the community believed this would be evident through the educational opportunities provided for the pupils' play-based learning, improving the child-initiated environment and experiences. They suggested this would become visible through the practitioners' effective organisation skills and teamwork and management skills. However, Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2005) cited in Welsh Government (2014a) further observed changes in the way play-based learning was implemented in the second year. The source recognised sudden barriers in communication and interaction between the pupils and staff, failing to reach developmental outcomes during observations and pupils' individual needs. Similarly, Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* (2005) continues to document how this provides proof of practitioners' lack of understanding on the play-based and experiential pedagogy.

A more recent source evaluating play-based curriculum, Te Whāriki in New Zealand concludes that the actions of the practitioners' and how they implement pedagogy

influences pupils' engagement and the effectiveness of the play-based learning environment (Hunter, 2019). In agreement, Maynard *et al.* (2013) evaluating the FPh with the Welsh Government, links similar elements with Te Whāriki. Additionally, recognising as good practice, it is further identified during the pedagogy evaluation close links to additional approaches internationally such as Early Years Practice in Scandinavia and Reggio Emilia in Italy, all of which are underpinnings of sociocultural theories.

Furthermore, according to Waters (2015) it is said that following the implementation of the FPh, it was expected of the staff to review their professional behaviour to encourage child-led, play-based learning effectively. However, in action, practitioners found the definition exceptionally challenging and some confusion in identifying the differences between child-led and adult-led learning through active play. Initially, this stems from Maynard *et al.* cited in Waters (2015) discovered through research that there were no fixed statements or clarifications within the FPh Framework implementation guidance, of what is expected in the role of the practitioner, in terms of the effective approach and pedagogy to be used. Therefore, staff involved in all pupils' education and not fully understanding the terms 'child-led' and 'play-based' can cause complexities in implementing the FPh.

However, the Welsh Government (2015a) shares that most cases found in Wales, 97% of Head Teachers were complacent with how their school and staff members implement the FPh, scoring 5 or 6's in their surveys, 6 of which is entirely satisfied. Furthermore, it is documented that no additional training is identified for Head Teachers, specifying how the FPh is to be implemented by their staff. Therefore, this affects how they are able to support, encourage and guide their staff constructively, stressing that although they are satisfied with how their staff work and implement the play-based curricula as a team, from the Local Authority and Welsh Government, they are receiving inconsistency with guidance material, training, and policies. In result of this, the Welsh Government (2015b) shows that 40% of Head Teachers feel that the FPh support materials require improvements to diminish the confusion of implementation and definitions and enhance clarity. Additionally, 26% of Head Teachers feel that training also needs to be reviewed for themselves as well as their staff.

Estyn (2011b) believe inconsistency reflects through observations. A sporadic amount of school pupils are not provided with appropriate areas that provide challenge, therefore not building on existing skills in the FPh. Although, they believe child-initiated play-based learning is essential, there must be a suitable balance of practitioner-led learning additionally. To conclude, practitioners are likely to show successful implementation when they have a clear interpretation of the FPh principles and pedagogy and awareness of the pupils' abilities.

Additionally, a survey completed by school practitioners published by the Welsh Government (2015b) showed that educators were concerned for future implementation of the FPh due to the insufficiency and uncertainty of the priority in updating policies. Moreover, their survey and observations addressed that funding is the most concerning barrier, effecting the precision in guidance and training, neglecting the practitioners understanding of the fundamental morals in the FPh. Similarly, 43% of Head Teachers state that the funding is not sufficient for the FPh to resolve this (Welsh Government, 2015a). In addition to this, Hunter (2019) explains that there should be given time for additional training from outside agencies as it would be a beneficial tool to enhance professional development, however this cannot be accessed due to inadequate funding also.

However, evidence throughout the analysis strongly shows the lack of understanding and various views from practitioners and settings on play-based learning pedagogy underpins the complexities in implementation of the FPh (Macdonald, no date; Welsh Government, 2014a; Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2005; Waters, 2015). Overall to resolve this and for all schools to be in congruent, Macdonald (no date) and the Welsh Government (2015b) suggest that the quality in policy and guidance must be clear and consistent to provide effective support and stability in the implementation of play-based learning across the school sector.

The Welsh Government FPh Action Plan published in 2016 share that the main approach in the FPh is to ensure pupils have access to all opportunities through a continuously developed play-based curriculum, adaptable to all abilities. It is said by practitioners and through evidence within the action plan, that the FPh as current

curricula despite the issues with aspects of training, has been an impactful pedagogy to implement in practice overall. Additionally, Macdonald (no date) indicates overall, the outcomes of the FPh are generally reasonable. However, Estyn (2011a) argues that despite the delivery of the FPh being an effective pedagogy, additional measures are recommended to enhance the implementation of the FPh. Furthermore, continuing to develop current implementation of the FPh, practitioners feel that it can strengthen and solidify effective practice in the new curriculum for Wales. Therefore, feel that continuing and extending the play-based approach into the new curriculum is valuable. Chapman (2020) states the publication for Successful Futures adopts approaches from the FPh to mature, whilst developing the New Curriculum for Wales 2022 that is solely built for pupils learning and designed by professionals who understand how pupils learn and challenge progress steps, beneficially (Donaldson, 2015). Additionally, an article released on Wales Online by Wightwick (2016) published that the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) concludes the education system in Wales for the fourth consecutive time, as the lowest ranked in the United Kingdom. The continuous low achieving PISA tests in Wales is what has influenced Donaldson to modify and change to the New Curriculum for Wales 2022 (Donaldson, 2015).

Section 2

This section considers concepts of the unique child throughout whilst critically analysing assessment tools, progression, tracking, monitoring, and age or stage related development within play-based curricula.

In line with the international agreement, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises that nationally (Welsh Government, 2021a), every child qualifies for free, purposeful education in Article 28 (UNICEF, 2017).

According to Early Years Matters (2022) every pupil is continuously learning, becoming confident, competent, and resilient learners. Similarly, Early Education (2012) describes this description as the unique child. It is said pupils are more likely to acquire these unique skills through experiential environments that support curiosity and positive relationships with more knowledgeable others (Brodie, 2014). Furthermore, Parekh (2017) shares that through curriculums learning pedagogy, observing, assessing, and tracking are controlled by the child's evident ability, noting that all pupils' abilities are unique to them, which dominates the outcomes of observations and assessments for each pupil. Additionally, the Foundation Phase Profile (FPP) is supported by the Foundation Phase (FPh) which is a continuous developmental curriculum that meets the unique needs of each pupil aged three to seven years. This includes pupils who are developing at earlier outcomes and those who are more knowledgeable (Welsh Government, 2017). Nevertheless, it is demonstrated that pupils must be given the time and opportunity to develop their skills at their individual and unique pace to prevent the pupil as well as the observer from the feeling of overwhelmingness (Welsh Government, 2015d). Moreover, Early Years Wales (2020) states all pupils develop and obtain new unique skills at different progressions to become confident learners. However, Jones (2021) discussed that the baseline compact assessments are measured against scores in the outcomes of the FFP which is then submitted to the Local Authority (LA) to track all pupils' progression. Arguably, it further evaluated that this puts all bodies involved under pressure to ensure pupils as young as four years are assigned to numerical scores that are in line with the expected outcomes.

The Welsh Government (2021b) acknowledges that observations, assessments, and tracking are the principles of a play-based curriculum and the motive of the FPP. Moreover, throughout the pupils' time in the FPh, their extended learning and development are supported through assessments implemented, guided from the FPP during their play-based learning. Therefore, applying the use of formative observations, assessments, and monitoring, enables practitioners to understand pupils' abilities and deliver a suitable holistic curriculum (Welsh Government, 2017). However, it is evident to the Welsh Government (2012) that the FPP vocabulary is considered to be problematic and complicated, therefore immediately creates a barrier for the observers, known as practitioners, failing to grasp the understanding of the detailed assessment process and potentially producing inaccurate observational evidence, disadvantaging the pupil.

Additionally, teaching and learning necessitates constituent partnerships between the pupil and the professionals involved, as a fundamental requirement to assessments in the curriculum. Furthermore, practitioners specifically play a central role in observing pupils' actively in day-to-day practice, following the FPP. Through this, benefits practitioners practice, to identify all pupils preferred methods of learning and understand how to support and facilitate their curiosity whilst participating in the process of experiential learning (Welsh Government, 2021c). Similarly, the Welsh Government (2018) adds that successful, continuous observations allow practitioners to plan suitable, daily provision to their ability, accessing scaffolded learning in preparation for following progression steps promoting comfort and participation in learning. Evans (2015) defines each outcome statement from the FPP conducts additional guidance, defining examples of what skills are expected to be achieved in 'Bronze' up to FPh 'Outcome 6'. This benefits practitioners' knowledge and understanding of what outcomes their pupils are achieving effectively, promoting consistency in all practitioners observing, and the LA accessing more reliable progress of each pupils learning.

Practitioners who observe pupils interacting and learning through experiential, free play provides visual and natural assessments of their true ability and understanding of the world around them, indoors and outdoors (Azilo Training, no date). Additionally, at

an advantage, although dated Oxfordshire County Council (2008) share practitioner's and other professionals' involvement in observing pupils enables them to identify whether the resources and environment surrounding the pupils are stimulating their learning and development. A more recent source, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years, known as PACEY (2016) conclude that observations are as essential role in practice, supporting practitioners understanding of each individual unique child in their care. Similarly, Kimberley EYC (2016) state observations such as written snap shots are an assessment tool that scaffolds and benefits practitioners to thoroughly learn about each pupil in the setting, identifying their likes and dislikes, their stages in learning and progression, and their needs. Additionally, Azilo Training (no date) discussed observing pupils allows practitioners to analyse findings, identify any areas that are too challenging and prepare and support all pupils to succeed. Therefore, observations provide clear indications as to which preferred learning style supports each pupil to flourish (PACEY, 2016).

However, Centre for Education and Youth (2015) disagrees, stressing that all forms of assessment do not provide an accurate reflection of pupils' progress in skills and holistic development. They continue with children who are progressing at a positive pace for their ability shows improvement from where they first started in education. However, according to the observational assessment outcomes in the FPP, it may identify that the pupils are still not meeting their year group expected milestones. This immediately negatively effects the pupils' progression, rather than positively looking and observing how far the less able pupils have developed. Supporting this, Jones (2021) comments on how observations and learning are implemented to prepare pupils for the next 'developmental stage'. However, believes that pupils should be encouraged and observed on the development of skills that will prepare them for life and future situations.

In line with the New Curriculum for Wales 2022, the new guidance published supports schools to develop their own curriculum and assessments that effectively promotes all pupils' development towards achieving the four purposes (Welsh Government, 2022). However, similar to the FPh, Welsh Government (2020a) shares assessments still must continue to be intrinsic to the school's curriculum design. Within the New Curriculum Framework, lay 27 statements of what matters. Therefore, it is important

that all practitioners have a full understanding of these, to ensure consistency throughout the settings (Central South Consortium, no date). The statements of what matters and how the settings plan their curriculum design will reflect through the pupils' observations. The five categorised progression steps provide support for pace in progression, however, the progression steps, previously known as outcomes in the FPh group children's learning and development through age. Estyn (2018) share that they have encouraged their practitioners to experiment in diverse teaching and assessment approaches which may support the pupils' abilities and development. Therefore, through the trial-and-error approach and assessment findings, staff are able to comprehend a successful and more thorough understanding of the strengths and weakness of each chosen approach in pedagogy. Moreover, reviews and opinions published by the Curriculum for Wales 2022 Feedback Analysis (Wavehill, 2019) show a high percentage of respondents, mostly professionals which felt the New Curriculum should adopt more of a Scandinavian approach when carrying out formative assessments. However, other mixed opinions conveyed practitioners feel that the "I can" progression steps display an understandable proposal of the learning expectations (Wavehill, 2019).

Sellgren (2017) published that it is a common strategy used in Early Years to group pupils by their ability. Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017) demonstrates research carried out on grouping pupils for learning by ability in the Early Years, in many educational sessions where they would be taken out of the learning classrooms for a short amount of time. It is evident through research that adopting the approach to grouping pupils in mixed ability for teaching provides a more successful advantage to all pupils overall learning. Furthermore, 81% of Reception teachers documented that they used the grouping approach for Phonics. However, by Year 2, statistics had increased, and additional settings implemented the grouping approach in further Areas of Learning, 66% for Mathematics, 60% for Literacy, and 72% for Phonics. It is evident through statistics that grouping pupils by ability plays an influential role in all pupils learning and retainment in development. Sellgren (2017) additionally shares that grouping pupils in ability groups is less time consuming when planning activities, providing more effective learning and focus for each group of similar abilities, and supporting their learning outcomes. However, as pupils became aware of which learning group they are placed in, in practice practitioners concerns grew,

acknowledging that this can disadvantage (Robert-Holmes, 2019) children's autonomy, confidence, and self-esteem, labelling pupils as the 'lower' or 'higher' groups (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017). Similarly, Sellgren (2017) expressed that it can cause a negative impact on the pupils' aspirations, confirming stereotypes and missing the abilities of the unique child (Robert-Holmes and Kitto, 2019).

Blaiklock (2011) documents that Te Whāriki, the Early Years curriculum in New Zealand is forever praised by all professionals who implement the pedagogy, in the education sector. Te Whāriki has five ever extending strands in pedagogy with goals to achieve indicative learning outcomes, all which focus on purposeful skills, Belonging, Communication, Contribution, and Exploration. Furthermore, Te Kete Ipurangi (2019) states that pupils participating in play-based learning, imitate the pedagogical foundation of Te Whāriki. However, the New Zealand curriculum firmly believes that the Early Years pupils should not be assessed with any desire to observe specific learning outcomes, grouped by ability or age. Ministry of Education (2017) state that although there are no specific learning outcomes to observe for assessment documentation of progression, practitioners in the Early Years following the Te Whāriki approach observe young pupils to benefit their knowledge and understanding of each pupil. It enables the Kaiako, known as teachers, to evidently find out what pupils have achieved and how they progress from each assessment, how it can be facilitated further and most importantly, their interests in play-based learning. Additionally, with similarities to the FPh, it allows practitioners to identify where requires additional support. Ministry of Education (2016) believes the uniqueness of the pupils' ability, guides the practitioner to effective planning and support to enhance pedagogy.

Kindyhub (2021) who adopted Te Whāriki's approach to assessments shares that formal and informal assessments take place with practitioners. Analysing either or from consistent observations, fuels knowledgeable development from natural learning. This puts practitioners in an advantaged position, allowing them to track each pupils' capabilities, not just from their own assessments but from the pupils' family observations too. Nevertheless, Pack (2016) identifies that portfolio's such as Learning Stories are a successful observational tool that practitioners manipulate with use of taking photos of the pupils engaging in play-based learning and documenting what the pupils have achieved for the pupil and family to view rather than identifying progression

for the specific pupil, yet still not meeting the expected outcomes for the year group, in the FPh (Welsh Government, 2017). However, Blaiklock (2011) defines practitioners are to focus more on each pupils' personality and behaviour when observing and documenting a learning story. Furthermore, they continue to evaluate that the effectiveness of learning stories as an assessment tool is dependent on the practitioner's interpretation and implementation.

Te Kete Ipurangi (no date) discussed that sociocultural theories are at the core of Te Whāriki's principles and learning outcomes, supporting readers and educators to understand how pupils learn and develop, and to facilitate and implement on their existing knowledge. Additionally, McLeod (2020) shares that Vygotsky's sociocultural approach supports all Early Years Curricula, recognising all young pupils understanding and development are influenced by the environment, relationships, and interactions that surround them. Furthermore, Vygotsky underpins Te Whāriki's principles, echoing that all pupils learn in multiple environments during all times, building their own personal, cultural, and social experiences and recognising that these cannot be separated (Drew, 2021). Therefore, it is impeccable for practitioners to observe consistently, forming a true reflection of all pupils' capabilities (Blaiklock, 2011).

In comparison, however specific, the FPh requires practitioners to observe, assess through summative and formative assessments and track each pupils' progression of development through set outcomes in the FPh Profile Handbook (Welsh Government, 2017) and Te Whāriki has no essential requirements to assess specific Areas of Learning, but to observe all pupils naturally to identify a clear interpretation of their development and progression (Blaiklock, 2011).

Section 3

Blog: Children learning through play beyond the indoor walls and taking risks.

As an Early Years practitioner following Foundation Phase pedagogy, I have experienced mixed views about learning through play in the outdoors with certain co-workers and parents, not really appreciating experiential, play-based learning, and the bewildering opportunities the outdoors has to offer. However, I beg to differ. I have observed the pupils come to life and their faces beam with joy and witness them absorbing the wide opportunities which the natural environment can provide in comparison to the indoors.

Play Wales (2022a) recognises play as the core aspect of learning throughout each pupils' life. As part of the Foundation Phase (FPh) curriculum, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) (2009) published an outdoor handbook to support practitioners in a direction to implement effective learning in the outdoor environment through play-based pedagogy. Yet, MacQuarrie (2016) feels that there is little research that has assessed effective ways on how outdoor learning can be implemented. Despite this, teachers have still been encouraged continuously, to promote and implement outdoor learning, in reflection of the indoors, in the Early Years. However, DCELLS (2009) states that the indoors and outdoors should be reflective, although outdoor free play is usually opportunities that cannot be replicated inside. They further stress that the outdoor environment allows each pupil to experience learning through free choice and roomy movements, to make lots of noise, and to be creative whilst taking risks in opportunities that provide a uniqueness in their learning (Bento and Dias, 2017).

The Foundation Phase Framework explains that stimulating, fun, and safe outdoor environments will support the pupils' autonomy and discovery (Welsh Government, 2015c). It is observed by Maynard and Waters (2014) that outdoor learning strengthens all pupils' potential to succeed in all areas of development and to maintain their development, holistically. DCELLS (2009) mentions the importance of being aware of the FPh and outdoor play being in partnership and how they are inseparable.

Tovey (cited in Maynard and Waters, 2014) states pioneers of outdoor play such as Isaacs, Montessori, and Froebel all have underlying similarities in their theories, on the significance of nature and further outdoor environments being effective with great emphasis on the role and the presence of the adult.

Early Education (2019) recognising outdoor play and risk taking as valuable, all pupils learn to become aware on the limits of their bodies and observant explorers. Testing limits requires pupils to take risks, challenging their boundaries. Play Wales (2022b) states risk taking outdoors is a key component to pupils' initiative of their competence and building confidence. In this case, Waller (2017) views outdoor play as a unique opportunity that offers experiences that can be more challenging to find or achieve in indoor play. In line with the New Curriculum for Wales 2022, outdoor learning is recognised as supporting the four purposes and all areas of learning and experience, in a cross-curricula approach (Welsh Government, 2020a). Pupils who have the opportunity to take measured risks, supported through outdoor learning are also supporting the four core purposes in the new curriculum (Nature Days, 2018).

Why is taking risks during outdoor play so valuable to childhood? Rodgers (2018) conclude that there are risks and there are potential areas and objects that can cause harm or serious injury. Pupils need to experience risks as part of independent learning. However, the role of the practitioner is to distinguish between the two, eliminate the serious hazards, reinforcing boundaries and ensure risk assessments are in place. Planning for outdoor learning that involves risk taking allows pupils to challenge their abilities physically and intellectually and to encounter problem solving, thriving to become ambitious and capable learners that set themselves high standards (Welsh Government, 2015d).

Sandseter, Kleppe, and Sando (2021) believe that there is a reason as to why pupils endeavour in free and risky play outdoors. It provides rich, adrenaline, and exciting experiences, no matter how safe practitioners make their learning environment. In outdoor play, risky play falls into many categories. Pupils are able to enhance their skills through risky experiences and affordances such as climbing and jumping from heights, experimenting with tools and real-life materials and loose parts, and independent exploring with practitioners on the periphery of their free play. Rodgers

(2018) states with use of outdoor play as an extended area of learning, pupils experience the consequences of free play and taking risks that may be stimulating. Nevertheless, this provides Early Years pupils to learn from their mistakes and reinforce trial and error, supporting pupils to become creative individuals who think critically (Welsh Government, 2015d).

According to Ouvry and Furtado (2020) many people misunderstand the perception of learning through play in the outdoor area. Some individuals feel that the outdoors must be planned with a supply of expensive equipment such as climbing frames, but this is not always the case. From the Evaluation of the FPh, it is evident that there has been an increase in the use of the outdoor environment as an educational objective. Statistics show that 75% of staff shared using the outdoor environment two to three times weekly and 34% others reported using it every day, however weather permitted does affect the percentages (Welsh Government, 2015a). If the FPh and outdoor play are in separable, then surely the statistics should increase? Pupils ought to have persistent and continuous learning in the outdoors, for practitioners to witness clear, evaluative and impactful progression steps, through implementing experiential play (OEAP, 2018).

OEAP's (2018) research demonstrates the importance of implementing pedagogy in the outdoors for pupils' health and well-being. It is evident that the outdoors is where young pupils' favour. Allowing pupils to explore the natural world surrounding them independently, reinforces their well-being and emotional development, accessing a more resilient journey in their learning and supporting the four purposes (Welsh Government, 2015d). Pupils learn to empathise with nature and the non-human living things around them, empowering all pupils to become ethical and informed individuals (Welsh Government, 2020b).

All professionals are to ensure they have a clear understanding of their role in free outdoor and risky play, stepping back and on the periphery of their play and how to effectively implement this, ensuring that four purposes are supported holistically through planning and a range of effective materials and loose parts available.

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