

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION DURING EARLY YEARS TRANSITIONS.

A HANDBOOK FOR THE EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONER.



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INTRODUCTION

All children have the right to an education according to article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) Early years practitioners have a vital role in this, as they provide support and guidance for a positive and successful transition from home life to school life. This handbook aims to provide professional practitioners with the information about the development of children, the theories that lie behind current practice and the knowledge and skills that are needed to help and support the planning of a smooth transition.

It is important for the child that the practitioner has good communication skills and a good relationship with the parents, carers, or childminders so that the needs of the child are met. It is important that the child's feelings, needs and individual learning skills are listened to and are met for a smooth and beneficial transition (Tower Hamlets no date).

To communicate, information, ideas and feelings have to be shared between people. Sharing doesn't only mean talking. For example, communicating can be formed through visual means, for instance sign language and watching how a child responds to difficulties. By watching facial expressions, posture, movement and how they touch or interact with objects or people, reactions to what they see or hear and note any inconsistencies in how they might play. Communication with autism can show that having a conversation isn't always the best way forward, as autistic children can be in the state of autistic aloneness, they experience a lack of interest in other people, which can even include their care givers. When lacking in social interaction practitioners are left to observe the child's behaviour and come to an informative conclusion based upon what they find. Verbal communication can not be relied upon on its own. An autistic child can engage in echolalia. Described as "the act of repeating everything somebody says, as a result of a mental disorder" by Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2021) repeating what has been said with no comprehensive thoughts behind the meaning of them. Some children can have difficulty with words like 'I' and 'you' (Crowley 2014).



(Source: The Balance Careers 2021)

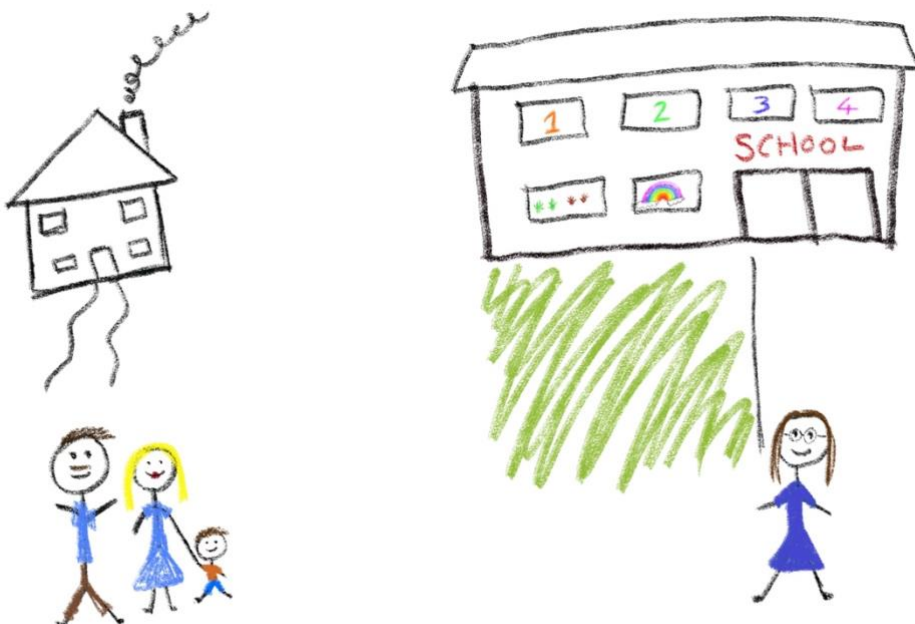
Transition and Communication

According to the Oxford English Dictionary 2012, transition has the meaning, “the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another”

Transitions are a milestone event for children. Starting school or moving to day care from home life may seem a normal part of a child’s life. Transitions are an important part of the development of children, there are many times when children face different situations and different faces that are not familiar to them. Smooth transitions are helpful to the child as they help them to feel safe and happy in their new surroundings. Transition should be a process that includes the Parent, practitioner, and the child, and not a one-time event in the child’s life (Early Years Matters 2021).

According to The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) the meaning of communicating is “to share or exchange information” Communication is Very important in The Early Years as transitions keep occurring throughout school life, as the child grows older and moves from class to class. It is important to keep up the communication with the child, as this will help discover what they like and do not like or if there is a problem area within their learning and development. Talking and listening between other practitioners, parents, or carers is important in order to aid in the child’s education and help them learn in the easiest and best way for them, practitioners can pass on relevant information, such as attainment records or school reports (Aubrey and Riley 2019).

Communication between practitioners and parents is important as it can bring to light new ways of helping the child reach their full potential.

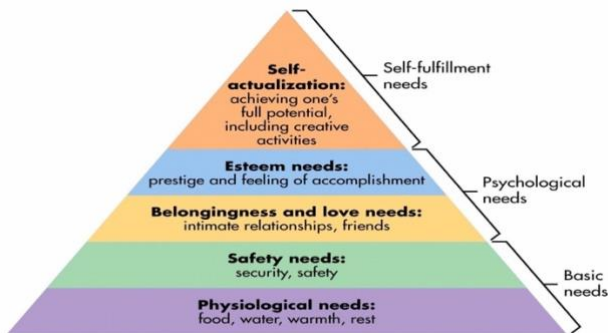


(Source: Thomas, E. 2021)

The Needs of the Child

When children are born, Oxygen, food and warmth become a basic need. There are five basic needs that the Economic Democracy Advocates (2021) have suggested. Oxygen, Water, Food, Shelter and Sleep. After this, children's needs become more individual as every child is unique. Early Years children need support from practitioners and parents or carers though all of the transitions in school life, the smoother the transition, the easier the education and happier the child could be. When a child is happy, they will want to learn and be more friendly and co-operative with their peers.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory, this pyramid model shows the human needs. Starting with basic needs such as food, water, warmth, and rest. Moving up the triangle to safety and security. After that it is friends and relationships.



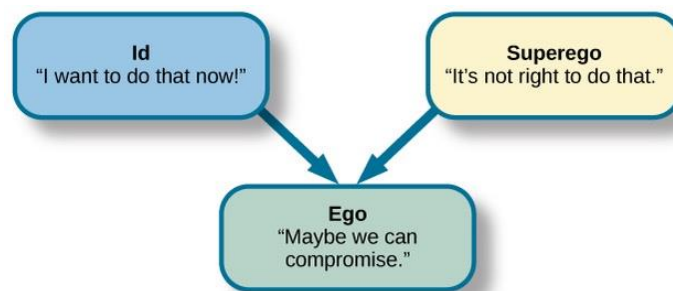
Accomplishment and full potential are at the top of the triangle. Maslow suggests that the needs from every level must be met before you can move through the next levels to then reach the top and obtain full potential and be all that you can be.

(Source: Simply Psychology)

The way these things can be provided is by:

- having fresh water and cups in the classroom, communicate with parents that healthy snacks are advised to be taken to school with the child ready for break times, encouraging parents to dress their children in suitable clothing for the weather and bringing spares, an example of rest in the classroom would be story time after a play session, where the children sit and listen to a story.
- Trust between practitioners and children encourage an environment that is safe to learn and play, the environment can be made safe physically by having security doors and gates and having children's equipment at their level so there is no need to climb.
- Practitioners should ensure there is a relationship built on trust between themselves and the child so there is a sense of belonging, and that the child feels comfortable bringing forward their emotions, struggles and views. Practitioners must also have the skills to bring children together safely to assist them in making friends in the classroom.
- Practitioners can deliver the feeling of accomplishment by introducing a reward system where the child can choose a prize or get the choice of choosing a toy for playtime first by accumulating credits. The credits can be accumulated by showing acts of kindness to their peers, answering questions, and completing worksheets.

Working through these four levels children are being prepared to learn and achieve self-actualisation and potential, which lets them be creative and grow to be the best version of themselves. Maslow (TES. 2019).



(Source: Lumen no date)

Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the ego, the superego, and the id, argues that the human mind has three parts in the conscious and sub conscious, the behaviour of humans is the outcome of interactions between these three parts of the mind. The id is the primitive part and has concerns with the instant gratification of our basic needs: for example, want it, have it, even if it did not belong to you or it would be classed as rude, the id would not care. The superego has concerns with morals and social rules or 'conscience'. This develops when a child learns what is right or wrong and learns what would be classed as rude. In comparison to the id and superego, the ego is reasonable, for example if you want it: buy it. "Freud believed that the nature of the conflicts among the id the superego and the ego change over time as a person grows from a child to an adult" Freud has been criticized for his views as he paid little observation to the need of environmental or cultural impacts. (Lumen no date)

(Source: Spanish Workshop for Children 2017)



The Role of the Adult

Many theories have been developed in this area, according to Crowley (2014a) four theorists state that the role of the adult is important. Starting with,

“Skinner: Facilitates development by reinforcing desired behaviour.

Bandura: Adult acts as a role model for child and facilitates the child to learn by observation.

Piaget: Provision of a rich and stimulating environment for the child.

Vygotsky: Adult facilitates development through the direct interaction with child, Work with child within zone of proximal development to extend child’s abilities beyond what they can achieve on their own.”

Adults that benefit transition are:

Early Years Practitioners

As one of the adults involved in transition, the Early Years Practitioner needs to be aware and know how important it is to have the knowledge and skills that are required to make a successful transition. Communication between Practitioners and children is important. To achieve this, children should be supported and encouraged to talk and also, to listen to others (foundation phase 2015).

Parents and Carers

Montessori recognised that it is important for the parent or carer to become a partner and to communicate with practitioners in order to aid in the transition of early years children, and to make sure that the needs and development of the individual child are met. Parents can communicate with practitioners by asking for meetings or attending teacher and parents evening. Montessori states the importance of “the union of the family and school” (Aubrey and Riley 2019a).

A Role Model

Aubrey and Riley (2019b) state that According to Bandura’s theory, “Children learned through observational learning”. Practitioners, parents, and grandparents take on being the main role models for children as they are the closest adults the children observe, and where they observe, they learn.

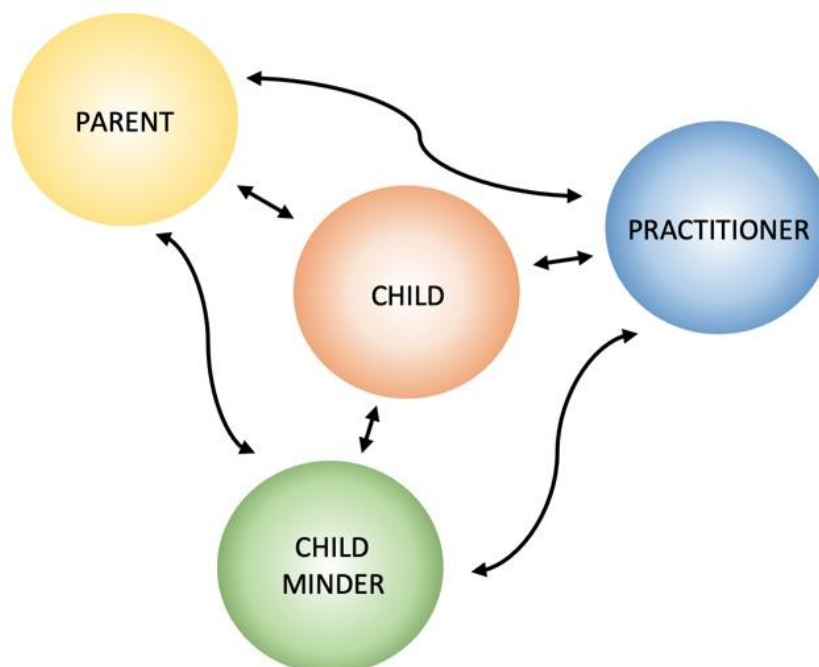
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory attempts to show the range of circles can affect a child, His Five circles show that, around the child are Microsystem, Mesosystem, Macrosystem and Exosystem. The circles that are closest to the child would have more of a direct influence. Bronfenbrenner recognised that considering the ecological system, human development was more understood and that those who were included in a child’s development should all work together for the child’s best interests (Aubrey and Riley 2019e).

Partnerships

Article 12 of the UNCRC: The child has a right to express their views and have them considered. Listening and communicating with the child is important for the transition.

Transitioning from home life into school life can either be easy or difficult for a child depending on his or her individual circumstances. Children may be moving to school from a home life with parents or carers, or the child may have moved on from a childminder setting, for example Flying Starts, which is the Welsh Government's Early Years Programme. Communication between professional practitioners is important as this highlights any effective routines, for example a story after break or lunch time, or adhering to a toilet training schedule to keep the child in their comfort zone. Communication can also help by bringing to light the child's favourite activities that can engage the child's concentration and creativity which can help for them develop at their own rate. This is where listening to the child and other professionals connected to the child, not only the parents is key. Conversations about the child is important as information about the child helps for a smooth transition (Ferguson 2020).

This diagram shows how important it is for the child to be the centre of a partnership. Everyone in a partnership should have the child's best interests at the forefront of mind.



(Source: Thomas, E. 2021)

Interventions

To plan an effective intervention, the areas that need to be improved must be observed first and should be observed in a space where the child feels safe and comfortable so they can be feeling at their most confident and happy.

Aubrey and Riley (2019c) states Bandura “humans have superior cognitive capacity, they are able to internalise what they have observed symbolically and then later use this information to make decisions based on these internal representations”. The child can watch somebody else’s behaviour, if somebody else’s behaviour gets rewarded, the child can then imitate that behaviour to be rewarded too, they don’t have to be personally rewarded to learn something.

Where children can learn through observations, they can learn good behaviours. But also, bad ones. These can be from other children or even their own family. It is why good communication must be formed with the parents or carers, so there can be discussions about it, meetings where they can look at how they can improve or people they can talk to for help or to get involved. To improve something, goals must be set, achievable goals that are constructed with challenges that can be accomplished for both the children, parent and practitioner, there must be a strong commitment to these goals too. For example, keeping a record of book reading, both in school and at home. This will accomplish the goal of parent child time and work on literacy skills. The goals should be made achievable to each child, this is why observation is key, when observing the child, it is easier to tell what their struggles are, we can talk to them about it, they might be too scared to bring it up themselves. If the goals are set too high, they could be viewed as personal threats and shy away from them. The child must be approached with an appropriate challenge, something they can achieve to feel the success and confidence to move on, the more they can achieve the more they are likely to increase their efforts (Aubrey and Riley 2019d)



(Source:
Turning point of
Tampa, 2021)

Proposed Outcomes

Practitioners, parents and carers, and children all working and communicating together will aid in a successful transition and this will be realised when the child has reached and demonstrates that he or she is happy and are settled into their surroundings. Children are unique and develop at their own speed, it is important that the child shows complete trust in the practitioner, for example, If the child does not look for the parent in the early years setting and starts playing independently or listening and doing what they are told by the practitioner. The transition for this part of the child's life helps them to learn and will be a solid steppingstone for the rest of their lives. Play is an important part of learning whether alone at home, or with peers in a setting or classroom.

Practitioners have a duty of care to make the child feel safe in the environment they are in, as this leads to the enjoyment of play which is important for learning. This is used within all Early Years settings throughout Wales. The Welsh Government (2021) states about the new curriculum that is coming into action: "A school's curriculum is everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it." The new Four Purposes that are set out for children in wales are:

- "Ambitious Capable Learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.
 - Enterprising Creative Contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.
 - Ethical Informed Citizens, of Wales and the world.
 - Healthy Confident Individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society."
- (The Welsh Government 2021a)

Pedagogy has been defined by The Oxford English Dictionary (2012) as: "The profession or theory of teaching." There are twelve pedagogical principles that are used for curriculum design,

1. constant attention of the purpose of the curriculum
2. Challenging learners to reach high but reachable expectations
3. Using a mix of approaches including direct learning
4. Promoting critical thinking and problem solving
5. Tasks that build on knowledge and engage interest
6. Authentic contexts
7. Assessments for learning principles
8. Ranges across all areas
9. Reinforces numeracy, literacy, and digital skills
10. Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning
11. Supporting positive relationships and emotional and social development
12. Encouraging collaboration

(The Welsh Government 2021b)

Many Countries have a similar curriculum, all based on the idea that children learn through play and that the child comes first, this is key for the child to develop and become the best they can be. New Zealand have Te Whariki, which is a document that has focus on tolerance and respect, well being and learning, respect for cultural values and values consistent with school needs. New Zealand put the child at the centre of the curriculum. As the child learns and engages with the surroundings, the curriculum can adapt to the development of the children (Educa 2017).

America has Highscope, their curriculum includes practices that are backed by evidence. Highscope looks for the evidence for what is working, to aid in the support of the child and their families. They believe that all children, no matter what their circumstances are, should be given

the opportunities to become their best selves. They believe that there is strength in the community, creating a better future for children by working together (Highscope 2021).

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