

Part 1

Taking part in the John Muir award has led me to think about how to enjoy and conserve the natural wild spaces close to me. However, researching the issues of sustainability led me to think bigger. The issue of sustainability is complex for example when looking at ways to protect beautiful, wild landscapes such as Snowdonia, Dartmoor and The Scottish highlands from climate change. The solution of adding wind turbines spoils the beauty and wildness that is needing to be protected. I find this thought provoking and maybe a bit beyond me. What I can do however is live my life with awareness of the global sustainability issues and make informed choices based on the knowledge I have gained. As a parent I will aim to instil responsibilities in children and my platform as an Early years practitioner can enable me to inspire the children in my care to become ethical, global citizens now and in their future.

I have gained knowledge. I have found myself looking into ways of sustaining the natural wild places close to me. If each of us made just a small change, together we would have a big impact

Part 2

Time spent in natural wild places promotes positive well-being, these wild places should be cared for, loved and respected for all they provide us with (John Muir Trust, no date). According to Varela (2023) There are an estimated 24 million gardens across the United Kingdom. This amount of space would form an area for wildlife larger than all of the United Kingdom's National Nature Reserves..

The health of global ecosystems and the human population are intrinsically linked. According to United Nations climate Change (2022) Human beings are living beyond their means and Governments need to make changes to stabilise the climate, protect environments and their habitats. However, we cannot wait for Government intervention measures that need to be taken now. There is increasing concern about the economic, social and natural environment for future generations. These sustainability factors are known as the three pillars. The purpose of the three pillars of sustainability is to achieve sustainable development that can be achieved only when the three pillars coexist.

The Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) is to integrate sustainable development and global citizenship into curriculum. Both the

well-being of future generations act and the ESDGC aims to provide a holistic approach to well-being and creating a sustainable future.

In Wales, sustainability is integrated into the early years curriculum through initiatives like Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). The aim is to instil sustainability values in all children, Aiming to provide awareness and knowledge to Implementing the ESDGC into the Curriculum for Wales ensuring that children will grow to be informed, responsible and active citizens. When people understand the consequences that their lifestyle choices have on the world they can make informed choices to action sustainable living. John Muir was a conservationist who believed that time spent in a wild place, exploring and enjoying the natural environment provides first hand knowledge and understanding of the natural area, enabling informed steps to be taken to care for and conserve it.

The John Muir Trust (No date) believed that individuals sharing their experiences from the scheme will encourage others to take an active environmental approach and to think of how their own actions can affect the world we live in, inspiring them to make change to help our planet. John Muir created the National park system and established the Sierra club, which is an organisation in America that promotes environmental conservation. The Sierra club has successfully protected and maintained millions of acres of land from mining and logging and has inspired people to protect the planet for generations (Muir 2001).The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme that encourages people to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places. Welcoming people of all ages to focus on direct experience of conservation through personal action in the outdoor action (John Muir Trust, no date).

encourage people to contribute to sustainable development and global citizenship. Hands on meaningful learning is key in embedding.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) (2015) aims to improve the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of Wales .The Act Encourages people to think about the impact their decisions have on sustaining the planet for future generations and encouraging public bodies to ensure that they are fulfilling their roles accordingly without compromising the potential of future generations.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2023) recognises that quality early childhood education and care significantly contributes to education for sustainable development. UNESCO created 'Learning for sustainability' to acknowledge protecting the environment contributes to keeping individuals safe and maintaining a good well-being (UNESCO, 2013).

Welsh Government (2022) lays the foundations for children to become ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world in the Curriculum for Wales. Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship is a theme that runs through many Welsh curricula. One of the The curriculum for wales' four purposes is to prepare children to be knowledgeable, ethical members of the community.

The curriculum for Funded Non-maintained Nursery Settings (Welsh Government 2022) states that children should be offered rich, authentic learning opportunities in the outdoors to develop skills in line with the four purposes, one of the four purposes is the aim to develop children to be ethical, informed citizens. The focus of developing ethics, informed citizens include global citizenship. Promoting sustainable practices and understanding environmental issues. Children who can understand the importance of sustainability.

Additionally, The five developmental pathways help children to have a sense of who they are and who they can become through exploration and encouraging curiosity. The role of the practitioner is to enable children to participate in ESDGC through experiential learning opportunities. Engaging in meaningful learning opportunities, experimenting and exploring in an outdoor environment. This ensures the child's right to education. Article twenty nine of The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that children should have the opportunity to develop a respect for the environment, building their respect for other people and the world around them. Children learn through real life experiences. real living things offer meaningful hands on experiences, helping children to think about the environment, sustainability and climate change (Froebel trust 2022)

Children who are able to engage and connect with nature can build an empathy for the environment and develop an awareness of their impact on the world. This can

provide awareness of sustainability in an appropriate, practical way (Welsh Government 2022). Teaching children about sustainability is crucial for their awareness and understanding of environmental issues. Children can learn about sustainability through engaging and effective learning experiences. The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings is a play based curriculum with a child-centred, holistic approach to learning. Tinney and Merriman (2018) state that a hands-on, play based approach to learning can naturally encourage conversation and therefore understanding about sustainability. Children can be made aware of the seven themes of the ESDGC. through discussions whilst actively planting flowers for bees and butterflies for. Children can learn the importance of caring for these essential pollinators now and take action to help to sustain the future of our planet. When children are given opportunities to fully experience the natural world they can build empathy for the surrounding environment, building an awareness of their own impact on the world. Ephgrave (2020) and Ephgrave (2018) state that natural, open-ended resources enhance curiosity, imagination, and creativity. Children who have the freedom to explore and learn about nature in nature should be reminded not to interfere with wildlife and their habitats.. Children should be allowed to observe and make connections, respecting the environment as they do so. Enhancing and caring for the outdoor areas, making bird feeders, planting flowers for future bees and butterflies gives children belief that they can make a difference. This encourages children to engage with, care and look to protect our planet. These hands-on approaches to learning allow the children to actively experience the outdoors themselves developing empathy for the environment (Welsh Government, 2022). Dewey (1998) and Froebel (1887) believe that children develop holistically when learning through first hand experiences. D'Ascoli and Hunter (no date) asserts experiential learning, where children learn through actively taking part in hands-on experiences can reinforce sustainability ideas whilst strengthening connections with the natural world.

The early years are a fundamental time for laying foundations of lifelong learning. Integrating sustainability into early years education will provide children with awareness and understanding of environmental issues from a young age. Thus empowering children with the values, knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development. young children can engage and be active participants in improving the sustainability of their settings and wider communities. It is the role of the early years

practitioner to influence behaviours that encourage sustainable thinking within the children and their families. The Early years practitioners play a crucial role in the development of the children in their care as they can influence and inspire them from a very young age. Siraj-Blatchford, Smith and Samuelsson (2010) states that early years practitioners have the significant role of creating experiences for children to support their knowledge and understanding of the environment. Davis and Elliot (2023) support this stating that practitioners should enhance the children's learning with sustainability at the centre. The practitioner should be a positive role model, making environmentally friendly choices and displaying caring behaviours towards nature and our planet. Making learning relevant and meaningful promotes empathy and the children's holistic development preparing them to contribute to a sustainable future.

Davies (2015) explains that education for sustainable development and global citizenship should not be viewed as too complicated for young children, a child is not too young to be taught about sustainability issues. A child being kind and sharing with their peers or caring for a living creature can be recognised and celebrated for making steps towards sustainable development and global citizenship. The child should display values at the heart of ESDGC. Through real life experiences, children learn about the interrelationship of all living things. This helps them to think about the bigger questions of the environment, sustainability and climate change

Embedding sustainability principles into curriculum by promoting experiential learning and involving families and communities can build strong foundations for sustainable development in the early years. Practitioners may however not feel comfortable or confident in their own knowledge and understanding about sustainability issues. To Overcome this barrier Szenasi, Oates and Hey (2020) believe that continued professional development to ensure practitioners have the necessary skills and knowledge to promote sustainability in the early years.

Conclusion

In conclusion, everyone should play their part in the sustainability of the environment. The early years are a crucial time to build strong foundations. Children can learn through engaging hands-on experiences to love, care for and respect the planet. Curious children may explore, investigate and ask questions and to find out more about the environment, its wildlife and how they can make positive change and

impact on their world. It is the role of the adults to facilitate fascinations and provide the source of information to extend children's learning about environmental issues. Esdgc is embedded in the Welsh curriculum which should ensure our planet is cared for today whilst ensuring a better world for our future generations .

Reference list

- D'Ascoli, H. and Hunter, D. (no date) Froebel trust. *A Froebelian approach. Re-engaging with nature* Available at: [Re-engaging With Nature \(froebel.org.uk\)](https://froebel.org.uk) (Accessed: 7 July 2024)
- Davis, J. (2014) *Young Children and the Environment: Early Education for Sustainability*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, J. and Elliott, S. (2023) *Young children and the environment: Early education for sustainability*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1998) *The Essential Dewey, volume 2: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Available at: [common-understanding-for-school.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/common-understanding-for-school.pdf) (Accessed: 2 July 2024)
- Ephgrave, A. (2018) *Planning in the moment with young children: A practical guide for early years practitioners and parents*. United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Ephgrave, A. (2020) *Planning in the Moment with Two and Three Year Olds: Child-initiated Play in Action*. United Kingdom: Routledge
- Froebel, F. (1887) *The Education of Man*. New York: Lovell & Company
- Froebel trust. (no date) Froebelian principles. Available at: [Froebel Trust | Homepage \(bing.com\)](https://froebel.org.uk) (Accessed: 27 June 2024)
- Hadland, C. (2020) *Creating an eco-friendly early years setting : a practical guide*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Hansmann, R., Mieg, H. A. and Frischknecht, P. (2012) 'Principal sustainability components: empirical analysis of synergies between the three pillars of sustainability', *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 19(5), pp. 451–459. doi: 10.1080/13504509.2012.696220.
- John Muir Trust. (2023) The John Muir Award. Available at: [Engagement Initiative | John Muir Award \(johnmuirtrust.org\)](https://johnmuirtrust.org) (Accessed: 28 June 2024)
- Montessori, M. (1967) *The Absorbent Mind*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

- Muir, J. (2001) *The Wilderness World of John Muir*. United Kingdom: Houghton Mifflin.
- Piaget, J. (1952) *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*. International Universities.
- Siraj-Blatchford, J., Smith, K.C. and Samuelsson, I.P. (2010) *Education for sustainable development in the early years*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: OMEP, World Organization for Early Childhood Education.
- Szenasi, J., Oates, R. and Hey, C. (2020) 'The enabling and sustainable practitioner.' In *The Student Practitioner in Early Childhood Studies*. pp. 87-107. United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Tinney, G. (2023) *Nature, Ecology and Early Years Education*. Wales: Sophia Centre Press.
- Tinney, G. and Merriman, E. (2018) 'Early Years Education and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)- Two Sides of the Same Coin?'
- Unicef. (1990) *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child*. Available at: [Layout 1 \(unicef.org.uk\)](https://www.unicef.org.uk) (Accessed: 25 May 2024)
- United Nations Climate Change. (2022) *Adapting to Climate Change Can Save Lives and Livelihoods*. Available at :[Adapting to Climate Change Can Save Lives & Livelihoods | UNFCCC](https://www.unfccc.org/adaptation/adaptation-reports/AR5/AR5-WGII/AR5-WGII-Full-Report/AR5-WGII-Full-Report-Full-Text.pdf) (Accessed: 6 July 2024)
- United Nations. *Development Goals*. Available at: [Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/) (Accessed: 3 July 2024)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. (UNESCO) (2023) *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: learning objectives*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/education-sustainable-development-goals-learning-objectives> (Accessed: 1 July 2024)
- Varela, C. (2023) *How to increase biodiversity in your garden*. The Woodland Trust. Available at: [How To Increase Biodiversity In Your Garden - Woodland Trust - WoodlandTrust](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2023/04/increase-garden-biodiversity/)<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2023/04/increase-garden-biodiversity/> (Accessed: 7 July 2024)
- Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Waite, S. (2017) *Children Learning Outside the Classroom: From Birth to Eleven*. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications.

Welsh Government (2020) *A Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*

Available at:

hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/b1801d78-38c3-4320-9818-d9996c21aef8/220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf (Accessed 2 July 2024)

Welsh Government. (2022) *Curriculum for Wales*. Available at: [Curriculum for Wales - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](http://Curriculum for Wales - Hwb (gov.wales)) (Accessed 1 July 2024)

Welsh Government. (2015) *Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*.

Available at: [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (legislation.gov.uk)) (Accessed: 3 July 2024)

White, G. (2013) *Journeys in the Wilderness: A John Muir Reader*. United Kingdom: Birlinn limited