ECEY6010 Early Years Curricula
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Word Count 4104

Section 1

Word Count 1538

The New Curriculum for Wales was established in 2022. The Welsh Government are striving to establish a high quality, rights-based approach set out within A Quality Framework for Early Play, Learning and Care in Wales. It is stated that the early years learning plays a vital role in a child's life and helps to shape their future. The Welsh Government have put developmental needs and well-being for children at the centre of the framework to provide the children with opportunities to give them the best start to life. The framework is put in place for all leaders and practitioners to guide provision as it contains research and practice from both national and international research that contributes to children's holistic development (gov.uk 2025). The Welsh Government (2022) states that focusing on holistic approaches to develop and deliver consistent nurturing learning and development by setting provisions of high-quality play-based learning. The Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care will develop children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills, supporting well-being and lifelong learning. 'Learning Through Play' has been designed with today's world in mind and to allow the children access to gain lifelong skills that they will carry into the future (Thomas 2016). The Four Purposes are set out for children to possess by the time the leave education. The Four Purposes have been created to give children not only with an educational knowledge in mind but more that children are given life skills and allowing them the social and emotional development that the need. It it's the New Curriculum for Wales aim that children should be: - Ambitious, capable learners. Enterprising, creative contributors. Ethical, informed citizens and Healthy, confident individuals by the time they leave comprehensive school and continue into higher education (gov.wales 2025). The Cross Curricular Responsibilities: - Digital Competence, Numeracy and Literacy are delivered by practitioners through the six different areas of learning: - Humanities, Science and Technology, Maths and Numeracy, Language, Literacy and Communication, Health and Well-being and Expressive Arts. Playful Pedagogy blends curricular learning with play experiences that will engage the child and captivate their interests. By allowing the child the flexibility, they can have their own individual needs met and get what they require out of the activity (Taylor 2016). It incorporates the Montessori Method that was developed by an Italian physician Maria Montessori over 100 years ago. It is an approach that will focus on hands-on learning, allowing the children independence in a carefully planned and prepared setting that will let the children thrive and develop throughout the areas of learning. Children that are engaged in their play are learning how the world works around them and the value of independent learning and inquiry, staying on task (Dodd-Nufrio 2011)

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McLachlan (2018) states practitioners within the early years have child-led activities that are planned and prepared to the curriculum guidance. The concept will be incorporated into the activity for children to explore and play whilst communicating with practitioners for them to understand the new vocabulary. Observations are carried out daily to ensure children are making progress or if they are struggling and need support and intervention. Schemas are used within Early Years provisions to allow children any individual interests that are needed to be explored for them to be able to regulate their attention and release any frustration. The schemas are linked to five developmental pathways: - Well-being, Physical Deveopment, Communication, Belonging and Exploration. The provision will be set up with activities designed with the schemas in mind. By allowing the children to experience the set out activities and in their own time gain an understanding of how to self-regulate this will help them with their development long term. Research shows that children who can access schemas in the Early Years have a decreased risk of adopting Behavorial issues when they are older (gov.wales 2025). The New Curriculum for Wales (2022) states, although activities appear to be child led, it is the adult input that ensures children are learning through all areas of the curriculum and achieve the four purposes by having regular observations and interventions to steer them on the right path to excel in their learning and development. Although it is stated that children learn through play, the learning is scaffolded by practitioners and the children learn what the practitioners want them to learn. The activities are crafted with the goal of getting the children to learn new vocabulary and new skills. The areas are set up with the concept that the children are working on so they can immerse themselves with interaction with both peers and practitioners. The learning is planned and directed by the adult with scope for children to explore individually and have their own unique experiences whilst developing their own knowledge of the topic. Many educators feel that the children are not responsible for their own learning and are still constricted with their learning and development (MacDonald 2018).

Looking at another curriculum, The Reggio Emilia Approach (2022) was established in Italy after the World War Two where parents and educators collaborated to provide an education philosophy and pedagogy that has been centred around a three pronged image that states that the children are considered to be capable, curious and active and is focusing on a child's emotional, social and intellectual development. The approach was inspired by Vygotsky and Dewey emphasising hands-on, project-based learning where children can explore, question and construct knowledge interacting with their peers and their environment. The Reggio Emilia Approach to education is stated as a philosophy that has been based on the image of a child. It allows for development by providing strong potentialities. It is an approach based on rights and an educational project. There are traces of the similarities of this approach dating back to the mid-ninetieth century and there are over 145 countries worldwide that particate in this

approach mind-set. Education is a right given to all children and as such a responsibility of the community is stated by McNally (2017). This way of learning has the similar foundation of the New Curriculum for Wales where the child is the centre of their own education and are allowed the opportunity to develop and grow at their own pace. Should a child have a disability they are still valued as equal and are given the title of having ‘special rights’ identifying them as strong children that are able to fully participate in collaboration and learning with others (Thornton and Brunton 2024). The children are submerged in engaging activities that help them to understand their world by experiences. They are given the opportunity to develop their own complex system of strategies to learning and develop helping them to establish relationships with peers and trusted adults within their environment (Rinaldi 2006). The Reggio Emilia Approach is designed around the 100 languages of children which has the emphasis and belief that children can learn and express themselves through various languages that go beyond verbal communication. This concept shows that children use various methods to learn, understand and develop knowledge of the world they live in. The 100 languages is a symbol to the boundless and endless potential that each child possess and their own unique creativity and development through diverse means (McNally 2017). Unlike The New Curriculum for Wales, this approach focuses more on key components. One of the components is the ‘Atelier’ that is a designated area where the children are encouraged to engage in various creative mediums to express themselves, ideas, feelings of how they process the world around them. Atelieista’s are trained artists who work with the children and the partitioners to integrate art into the curriculum supporting children’s ideas and that their own individual creativity is a vital part of the approach. In the classroom, the environment is designed meticulously to encourage children to explore and provoke curiosity. Materials are selected with the intention of inspiration to the children providing them with the opportunity to investigate ad ask questions whilst engaging in meaningful activities. By documenting and show casing the children’s work either by samples of work, photographs or transcripts of conversations allows practitioners to capture and reflect on the children's learning process (The Reggio Emilia Approach 2022). It is stated by The Reggio Emilia Approach (2022) that the Environment is essentially the third teacher. One of the main strengths of the approach is how the collaboration between the community is fostered. Children are encouraged to work together, whilst parents are treated as partners in learning with the educators. This promotes a deep sense of empathy and respect resulting in an appreciation for a diverse perspective (McNally 2017). The hands-on project-based learning allows children to develop critical thinking skills and actively construct their own knowledge as the learning is self-directed. One difference between the New Curriculum for Wales and this approach is there is a lack of clear academic standards or structured curriculum, and this has been criticised by other educators and researchers. As this approach is learning based on children’s own interests and ideas it has proved challenging to assess student progress and that ensuring all academic outcomes are covered. It is a

contrast to Montessori education, whereas the learning styles rely on structured environments and structured teaching throughout the learning (Dodd-Nufrio 2011).

Section 2

Word Count 1544

The New Curriculum for Wales (2022) defines the 'Unique Child' concept as that every child is individual that possess their own unique needs, interests and strengths. The New Curriculum strives to provide learning environments developed to aspire the individual needs that will allow opportunities for all learners to grow in knowledge and mind set. It is a vital component within the curriculum helping practitioners to provide areas of learning that will support each child's individual learning journey, helping them discover diversity and provide them with knowledge and skills needed for the modern-day world. Devarakonda (2021) states every child is different, and the New Curriculum should allow them to acquire and develop skills in their own time so that they are able to explore and discover their environment whilst learning at a pace that is unique to them. Practitioners should encourage and respect children's work for its individuality and creativity, allowing them to reflect on their work and given the opportunity to evaluate themselves. Ethical and cultural factors play a role in a child's uniqueness and practitioners need to be impartial and supportive to all beliefs and cultures of individual families within the setting. It can also be difficult for the children to identify other cultures and understanding the differences. Although children do not see colour or race, questions can be raised as to why there are differences, and experienced practitioners will be able to step in and give appropriate support. It is crucial that when practitioners are carrying out observations that they are impartial to any culture or diversity differences, and these must not impact the observation in any way (Devarakonda 2013).

The New Curriculum allows schools to develop and deliver their own version of the curriculum so that they can accommodate every child's own unique needs, meaning that no two schools are the same. For practitioners to meet the needs of all children in the setting and for them to help them learn and develop, assessments are put in place to monitor the effectiveness of the learning. The New Curriculum is centred around play and the fundamental right that all learners should be entitled to. Supporting holistic development across the curriculum, play and play-based learning is the core principle of the curriculum, giving children in the Eary Years the opportunity to 'learn through play' (Else 2018). By assessing the children whilst in this environment then it is more likely you will be able to get a true reflection on how the child is progressing through their learning (gov.wales 2022).

The Foundation Pase Framework (2015) includes Principles of Progression incudes observations are carried out to discover the interests of the child and how they explore the activities alongside interacting with both peers and adults. It allows for analysis of

skill and knowledge development and whether they are making progress or experiencing difficulties where intervention will be required. Practitioners will be able to alter or adapt the learning environment to allow the children to have enriched experiences where they can learn and develop at their own pace. Early Years settings should complete an initial assessment within six weeks of attending the setting so that practitioners can have an understanding of the child and where they are in terms of the New Curriculums Progression Steps including the four main areas: - Literacy, Numeracy, Physical development, Social and Emotional Development. The Progression Steps provide reference for each point of learning, and they are expressed from the learner's vision with a vast span of learning to cover ages 3 to 16. They are not identified as stand-alone tasks or assessment criteria but are more a road map of learning so that practitioners are able to identify that progress is being made regardless of the time limit (gov.wales 2022). The Achievement Outcomes are delivered through the child's mind so are formed as 'I can' and 'I have' statements that works within the curriculum's core principle pupil voice. Observations and assessments are carried out as part of the Progression Step Plan as it gives practitioners the information required that supports the children's learning, helping them with future planning to revisit, consolidate or even challenge the learning (Thomas and Lewis 2016). The developmental pathways allow children to become more confident as they learn and develop, engaging more with peers and adults incorporating the Four Purposes in their learning and development. By allowing children to follow their own individual pathway within the Progression Steps they can build emotional resilience whilst engaging effectively with attention and listening. Discovering a variety of concepts will incorporate emerging understanding as they learn from their own mistakes, engaging in activities that interest them will allow them to act and think more effectively and be creative (Kingston and Siraj 2017).

Movement Tracking is an observation method that allows practitioners to assess the child's individual interests. By having a play of the setting and following the child's movement, noting down the allocated time spent at each activity, practitioners are able to identify a child's unique need. It is completed by a practitioner having a drawn-out map of the setting with the sections detailed with the activity or task. A child will be chosen to be assessed and when the session begins the assessment will start. The practitioner will track the movements and see where the child goes first. Noting the time spent at that activity and any information that would be relevant such as interaction with peers. The observation will be conducted for the duration of the session and then can be assessed to see what went well what didn't. One negative of this type of observation is that if the length of time at one activity is short it is good for practitioners to compare with other children to see if the timings at the activities are individual or if the activity is not of interest to the class and is not working as it should (gov.wales 2022).

Reseach for gov.wales (2025) has shown there are negative impacts of these Progression Steps where learning has been simplified into a linear, step-by-step complexity of learning that might not allow for actual reflection on a child's progression. Difficulties arise when children excel in one area of learning but not another, as practitioners and parents/carers could heighten expectations with reality not being considered. Constantly assessing children's progress and observations could make the children doubt themselves leading to them losing confidence in their ability and attainment to learning is considered rather than the progression.

Statements of What Matters is another form of assessment within the New Curriculum (2022). These statements are mandatory within schools in Wales and ensure that what the children is meaningful and relevant for all learners. The assessment helps to develop a holistic understanding of the child and allows them to be both challenged and supported within the setting. Practitioners are able to produce next steps for the individual child with the underlying basis of both strengths and weaknesses. Assessments must not be used to make a singular judgement on the child and practitioners need to ensure that any cultural or ethical backgrounds do not encourage perceived perceptions of the child's abilities. The assessments can provide a fundamental asset to the Achievement Outcomes in All Areas of Learning and Development, establishing a pathway for the individual child to follow (gov.wales 2022). Grouping children according to their ability allows practitioners to rank and sort children so planning can be constructed to offer better support and challenging their own individual learning. Research has shown by carrying out this practice has shown improved academic progress through both the higher and lower abilities as the learning is fixated on achieving set goals and objectives. More advanced tailored lesson plans can be produced and activities set out the meet the required needs of each ability group without the children becoming overwhelmed. By having a lower-level ability group then the children are more likely to have a fixed state ability and whilst having a less demanding curriculum it allows them to not feel pressure that they are not achieving as well as others in the setting. The New Curriculum for Wales (2022) states for higher ability children or MAT pupils (More Able and Talented) practitioners can challenge them further to ensure they can reach their full potential and enhance their malleable intellect. The negative impact on ability grouping can have potential impacts on a child's well-being causing issues with social interaction and affecting their self-esteem. It is important that teachers observe the well-being of each individual child and address any concerns with other professionals and parents/carers. By carrying out a Social Tracking observation on children it allows educators to establish any underlying concerns and identify any issues or problems that are starting to emerge promptly so that intervention can take place. A social Tracker observation will watch a specific child throughout a session detailing on how the child engages with, activities, peers and adults within the setting. By keeping a tally of how many times the child engages and writing down

relevant information, practitioners can work together to ensure the child is progressing with social and emotional development. Practitioners working together with other professionals will help and support the children to achieve the Four Purposes and allowing them to enjoy their learning journey (gov.wales 2022).

Section 3

Word Count 1022

The New Curriculum for Wales (2022) has been designed with children's well-being at the forefront. This has been put in place due to the pressures that have been placed on children throughout their education. The New Curriculum was devised to elevate the pressures put on both pupils and educators with research showing that children put under exam stress could potentially suffer mentally with their well-being and it can impact their academic performance. The New Curriculum (2022) is being gradually roles out so that all learners will be taught under this umbrella by 2026. It is to provide children with the numeracy and literacy skills needed alongside the Four Core Purposes. The Four Core Purposes have been established to give children life skills as well as academic skills. They are a key component of the curriculum, and it is stated that all children should be able to possess these skills when they leave education. The Four Core Purposes are: - 1. Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives. 2. Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work. 3. Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the World. 4. Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (gov.wales 2025). The Four Purposes are supported by integral skills that will be developed by various learning strategies to achieve maximum value and importance. The skills are: - Creativity and Innovation, where children should be supported to connect knowledge with skills and experiences helping them to explore and decipher their own solutions. Critical Thinking and Problem solving, where learners should be encouraged to be inquisitive in asking questions, evaluating and analysing information given. Personal Effectiveness supporting learners with emotional intelligence, providing them with opportunities to develop their social and cultural skills. Planning and Organising so children are given the chance to set their own goals and apply both synthesis and analysis (gov.wales 2025). Mandatory Cross Curricular skills of numeracy, literacy and digital competence are linked in across six arears of learning: - Expressive Arts. Health and Well-being. Humanities. Language, Literacy and communication. Mathematics and Numeracy. Science and Technology. The curriculum is designed to allow the children to become confident in making their own decisions and problem solving. Pupil voice is vital within the curriculum and learners are given the opportunity to decide what they would like to gain more knowledge on with topics that are of interest to them. A concept will be given by the practitioners with an underlying agenda for the children to develop their skills.

The children are given the opportunity to use the topic to their advantage and take it down the route of their choosing. Curriculum for Wales (2022) states starting in the Early Years the New Curriculum has the emphasis on 'Learning Through Play'. Activities are strategically set out for children to explore their surroundings and discover their world around them. By practitioners interacting with the children, they can communicate their ideas and discuss their findings. Having qualified educators working together, they can provide the children with the opportunity to develop their own knowledge and learning by asking appropriate questions and allowing them to discover their surroundings, deepening their understanding of the world around them. One of the main aspects of the New Curriculum (2022) is that it is centred around the child's well-being. In today's world, mental health is talked about and addressed far more than in previous years. Research had shown that children have been suffering from school-related stress due to factors such as academic pressure, social expectations and time management challenges. Children who are competent in the classroom are failing at exams due to the pressure from the environment surrounding completing exams and tests. Even in the Early Years, children are aware of when they are under tests conditions and can act out of character due to feeling pressure and not having the reassurance that they can have support. Children can also feel pressure from their parents/carers due to the constant expectation for children to be the best in their class to propel them into education, so they have the qualifications they need to succeed in life (gov.wales 2025). The New Curriculum (2022) understands that every child is different and learns and develops at their own rate. By setting challenges that are adaptable and assessable to all then practitioners can have a clear understanding of how each individual child is learning and at what pace. There is for too much stigma from birth that children need to hit milestones by certain times that cause unnecessary stress and worry in parents/carers that there are underlying needs with their child. By carrying out observations in settings and interacting with children, practitioners get a clear understanding of the individual child and how they are developing with their learning. Should they feel they need to be challenged more, then the activities will be adapted and if a child is finding it difficult to comprehend then interventions can be put into place to assist the child further (gov.wales 2025). The New Curriculum (2022) is no longer structured in Key Stages but now blending learning throughout the school with Progression Steps being the focus. By giving children control of their own learning so it sparks their interest will make them eager to learn and engage in activities, developing their knowledge without them realising. With the New Curriculum (2022) allowing the children the opportunity to develop their knowledge academically whilst also developing lifelong skills with in the Four Purposes, it will give them the best start to life. It will prepare them for the challenges they will face when they leave education, and they will be independent individuals who are able to navigate their way through whatever path they choose next. I feel that The New Curriculum will allow children to learn and develop in their own unique way whilst growing in confidence and allowing them to discover their

own unique individualities. Children will be ambitious, capable learners that will be allowed to aspire to their full potential and be confident to lead their own lives and thrive in the modern-day world (gov.wales 2025).

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