

<u>TARGETS</u>	<u>How I Have Met These Targets In This Assignment</u>
To evaluate further counter arguments supported by literature.	I have included sources with a wider variety of opinions and views within this assignment.
Read even more widely to give your work even greater depth.	I have used a wider variety of sources to support this assignment.

ECAD4008 – Reflective Portfolio

- Good teaching and learning means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching.
- Good teaching and learning sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest.
- Good teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and Experience.

(Pedagogy - Hwb (gov.wales))

Consider the 3 pedagogic principles outlined above. Discuss these principles in relation to practices in education, showing secure understanding, identifying strengths and areas for development for each principle.

“Pedagogy is about more than ‘teaching’ in the narrow sense of methods used in the classroom. It represents the considered selection of those methods in light of the purposes of the curriculum and the needs and developmental stage of the children and young people. It combines theoretical and practical knowledge and skills with fine judgement about what is required to promote effective learning in particular contexts. It lies at the heart of what it means to be an excellent teacher.” (Successful Futures, 2015, p.63)

Introduction -

The PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) testing is hosted by the OECD and is used to measure reading, mathematics and science ability in 15-year-old students across different schools and countries globally (OECD, Unknown). Wales consistently demonstrates the lowest performance among all UK nations in the PISA tests, a trend that has shown a decline since 2018 (Welsh Parliament, 2019). To improve the country’s average PISA results, the Welsh Government introduced the ‘Curriculum for Wales’ in September 2022 (Welsh Government, 2022). Graham Donaldson is a prominent figure in education, particularly known for his work in curriculum development and educational reform. He served as the Chief Inspector of Education and Training in

Wales and was instrumental in shaping the Curriculum for Wales 2022. Donaldson led the review that resulted in significant changes to the Welsh curriculum, emphasizing a more holistic approach to education, including cross-curricular learning, and focusing on the development of essential skills for lifelong learning (Welsh Parliament, 2015). Donaldson produced the document “Successful Futures” to demonstrate his findings and the conclusions based on his review were used to frame the new curriculum (Professor Graham Donaldson CB, 2015). The Curriculum for Wales is designed to be more flexible and responsive to individual learner needs, with an emphasis on progression, organised into five “Progression Steps”, as well as literacy, numeracy and digital competency (Welsh Government, 2022). The curriculum is organized around six “Areas of Learning and Experience” (AoLEs): Expressive Arts, Health and Well-being, Humanities, Languages, Literacy and Communication, Mathematics and Numeracy, and Science and Technology (Welsh Government, 2022). These AoLEs are intended to provide a broad and balanced education, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and the acquisition of essential skills for lifelong learning. In the Curriculum for Wales, cross-curricular learning promotes the integration of different subject areas to provide a holistic educational experience, focusing on the development of the ‘whole’ child. By emphasizing connections between disciplines, this approach encourages deeper understanding and prepares students for real-world challenges requiring interdisciplinary thinking. Additionally, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of embedding Welsh language, culture, and heritage across all areas of learning. This is highlighted within the “Four Purposes” that define the Curriculum for Wales, encouraging children to become;

- “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” (Welsh Government, 2022).

Lastly, the Curriculum for Wales is underpinned by twelve ‘Pedagogical Principles’ which define what “Good Teaching and Learning” looks like, allowing teaching professionals to deliver the curriculum to school pupils effectively (Welsh Government, 2023). Throughout this assignment, I will use the pedagogical principles listed above to consider their strengths and weaknesses in terms of delivering the curriculum using different teaching

strategies. I will also reach conclusions based on strategies I intend to integrate into my personal future teaching practice.

Pedagogical Principle 1 -

Pedagogical Principle 1 (I will refer to this as PP1 throughout) states that “Good teaching and learning means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching”. This principle recognises that while direct instruction is valuable, it should be complemented by other methods such as inquiry-based learning, guided learning, cooperative learning, experimental learning, outdoor learning or project-based learning (Teach.com, 2020). These collective methods can be described as “contextual learning”, which aims to make information more meaningful for pupils, by encouraging valuable real-life scenarios and opportunities to learn independently, providing a richer learning experience (Times Higher Education, 2022). As well as this, different types of tasks should be considered, including independent tasks, group work and partner work. This holistic approach acknowledges the diverse needs of learners and aims to cater to them effectively, maximising engagement and understanding, encouraging the development of the ‘whole’ child. There are a wide variety of theorists that support this concept. These include Froebel, Montessori and Steiner, whom all believe that to develop the “whole child”, “physical, spiritual, feeling and intellectual” aspects of development should all be seen as “equal holistic influences” (Bruce, 2015, p.23). During Observation Week at School A, I was able to observe a variety of teaching strategies used throughout the day. I noted that the class teacher often began the lesson using direct-teaching strategies, with the whole class sat on the carpet. Here, the teacher would deliver information in a structured and instructional way. The pupils would benefit from this as they obtained clear content and direction. However, some pupils are unable to remain focused during this form of teaching and would become distracted easily. Following this, pupils were sent to their small groups to complete rotational tasks and activities in either independent, pair work, or group work manner. This allowed the pupils to put their understanding of the information delivered through direct teaching into practice to gauge their understanding accurately. Additionally, I noted that the class teacher often used free-play time to encourage imaginative and inquisitive learning. Here, pupils had access to all continuous provision in the classroom and in the enclosed outside area. Theorist Froebel believed that “Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood” (Early Education, 2021). This suggests that children learn and process information best

through the means of play. Often, activities using enhanced provision were set up within the classroom. “Enhanced provision consists of the extra materials and resources that teachers or practitioners provide for their children that makes continuous provision more challenging” (Twinkl, Unknown). Enhanced provision provides a method of introducing a new concept or topic to pupils in a way that encourages free play and creativity, rather than through the formality of direct teaching. Within School A, enhanced provision is used in the form of role-play areas. For instance, during the current term, year 1 had been learning about the solar system. The class teacher and LSA’s had worked together to create a “Rocket Classroom” in the corner of the class, with information displayed inside in a fun and interesting manner, to promote inquisitive and imaginative play. This concept is supported by the Foundation Phase Framework, produced by the Welsh Government, which states “It is essential for children to have access to a variety of media to express themselves and ample opportunities to apply their imagination in a purposeful way” (Welsh Government, 2015, pg. 6). By teachers employing a blend of approaches to teaching and learning, it is more likely that all pupils will have their educational needs and requirements met.

Challenges that potentially may arise when implementing Pedagogical Principle 1 include the possibility that not all schools and classes have the ability provide a blended approach to learning. This could be due to a lack of resources and funding to provide the resources, a lack of outdoor area to provide outdoor learning sessions, or a lack of staff members to facilitate and organise the blended learning tasks. Therefore, this means that for some, it is difficult to fulfill this pedagogical principle. 

Pedagogical Principle 2 -

Pedagogical Principle 2 (I will refer to this as PP2 throughout) states that “Good teaching and learning sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest”. This pedagogical principle strongly connects to the concept of the “scaffolding technique” which refers to educators “setting clear learning objectives and offering a level of guidance that is adjusted to the academic level of the student” (Structural Learning, 2021). The technique involves providing a level of guidance and support to learners that is gradually reduced as the capability and understanding of the student increases, with the aim to “foster a student's

ability to achieve positive learning outcomes independently” (Structural Learning, 2021). As well as this, the “Scaffolding Technique” allows pupils to build on their previous knowledge and experience by “establishing details surrounding a unit before it is actually taught” (Peters, Unknown). This suggests that the Curriculum for Wales requires teachers to plan and set learning activities that will encourage learners to flourish independently and remain engaged in the learning. This is supported by the Four Purposes of the Curriculum, which state that the aim is for pupils to become “ambitious, capable learners” (Welsh Government, 2022). The use of the “Scaffolding Technique” in education links to theorist Vygotsky’s “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD). The ZPD refers to “the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner” (McLoed, 2024). The ZPD emphasises that tasks beyond a child’s ability are attainable if the pupil is supported by a more knowledgeable other (MKO) (McLoed, 2024). I was able to observe the use of an MKO during my observations at School A, where a year 1 and 2 class teacher would set three separate maths and numeracy tasks, slightly above each group's maths ability. As the groups were completing their independent task, the teacher would be available to aid any pupil where they needed help. As well as this, the highest ability maths group were encouraged to act as “helpwr heddiw” (today’s helper). Here, after finishing their task, these pupils would move around the classroom, helping lower ability students to finish theirs. By using this strategy, the class teacher was able to encourage lower-ability learners to complete a task that had previously been considered “un-attainable”. As well as this, the class teacher has allowed the higher-ability learners to consolidate their maths knowledge by explaining the concepts to other pupils within the class. Therefore, the teacher has been able to build on previous knowledge and experiences and engage interest, by setting tasks and selecting resources that complement a pupils’ ability level.

On the other hand, there are arguably some areas of this Pedagogical Principle that could be disadvantageous for teaching professionals. For example, within a classroom, there may be children with a wide variety of different abilities, across all six of the AoLE’s within the Curriculum for Wales. This means that a teacher will be required to set tasks for each of these pupils and abilities accordingly. This could be a difficult process as it is often difficult to determine the specific ability of a child. As well as this, the process will require additional time and resources regarding planning. Furthermore, the teacher may find conducting lessons where several tasks are being

completed challenging. This is because it could be difficult to explain instructions clearly to several different ability groups at one time.

Pedagogical Principle 3 -

Pedagogical Principle 3 (I will refer to this as PP3 throughout) states that “Good teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and Experience”. As previously mentioned, the Curriculum for Wales includes six “Areas of Learning and Experience” (AoLE’s) (Welsh Government, 2022). These AoLE’s include; Expressive Arts, Health and Wellbeing, Humanities, Languages Literacy and Communication, Maths and Numeracy, and Science and Technology. Within the Curriculum for Wales, it is outlined that developing “Cross-Curricular Skills” is mandatory. In its simplest form, Cross-Curricular learning can be defined as “establishing patterns of information between different academic subjects” (Twinkl, Unknown). Within the Curriculum for Wales, the “Cross-Curricular Skills Framework”, introduces this concept through two separate frameworks, which highlight literacy, numeracy and digital competence as “mandatory cross-curricular skills” (Welsh Government, 2022). The Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) and the Digital Competency Framework (DCF) both play a crucial role in providing whole-school approaches across Wales in terms of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competency development. ESTYN states that “the greatest challenge was to ensure that rich experiences stimulate pupils’ interest and continue to develop their skills. Teachers now plan for cross-curricular themes that interweave literacy, numeracy, ICT and digital skills regularly and purposefully” (2018). This highlights the fact that incorporating cross-curricular aspects to learning is a significant priority since the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, and in doing so, children can gain a richer learning experience, especially in terms of real-life contexts, at all ages. In their year 1 and 2 class, School A uses various techniques to incorporate cross-curricular learning into each lesson. This included the use of iPads within Maths and Numeracy lessons, where children are able to complete mathematical activities, whilst developing digital competency (thus linking the LNF to the DCF). Another example of cross-curricular learning in School A is the use of songs and dances to deliver information and topic content to the pupils. For instance, to allow the children to gain confidence when re-calling the names of the planets within the solar system, the class teacher used a song to encourage the pupils to participate in active re-call. This approach connects the Science and Technology AoLE to Expressive Arts. Similar to this, ESTYN provide an example of “excellent teaching practice” which lists activities

such as “the teaching of algebra, then the working of the associated rules into codebreaking activities related to the Second World War topic, which develop pupils’ reading and reasoning skills” (ESTYN, 2017). It is stated that in response to this teaching practice, “notable improvements in consistency and quality have been observed” (ESTYN, 2017). This highlights the significance of teaching and learning ranging within and across all AoLE’s, especially in regard to literacy, numeracy, and digital competence.

While cross-curricular learning evidently offers numerous benefits, it also presents several challenges, especially in foundation learning, which may hinder the confidence of teaching professionals when delivering cross-curricular learning. For example, evidence shows that teachers believe “teaching cross-curricular skills takes additional preparation” (Gozutok and Seckin, 2010, p.4) and that “additional time is needed to teach cross-curriculum skills” (Gozutok and Seckin, 2010, p.4). This implies that the introduction of cross-curricular activities into teaching practice can cause additional stress and difficulty for class teachers when considering planning and application. This could potentially mean that some teachers are less likely to provide a cross-curricular aspect to their lessons as they do not have the means to do so, possibly because they do not have adequate time to cover the required content within their timetable. Lastly, it is also stated that some teachers highlighted “loosing students’ attention while teaching cross-curriculum skills” (Gozutok and Seckin, 2010, p.4) as an issue. Especially within foundation learning, children may find it difficult to remain focused on a task if other subjects become integrated into the lesson. For instance, using iPads (digital competency) in maths lessons may cause excitement amongst pupils as they may consider the activity a game, rather than a learning resource. This could potentially lead to disruption among the class.

Conclusion –

Reflecting on the completion of this module, I have come to learn and appreciate the importance of the Twelve Pedagogical Principles within the Curriculum for Wales, as they act as a guiding framework for educators, ensuring that each lesson delivered to pupils meets the criteria set by the Curriculum for Wales. Their ability to define an ideal teaching and learning relationship allows an optimised delivery of the curriculum and a well-rounded,

'holistic' development of each pupil, preparing children of all ages for real-life scenarios and experiences, catering for the demands of the 21st century. I also believe that for the Pedagogical Principles to be an effective tool, teaching personnel must be confident in their purpose and how to implement this into their daily teaching routines and planning.

Therefore, I am excited to incorporate three innovative strategies into my teaching approach to comply with the demands of the Twelve Pedagogical Principles. Firstly, I will be focusing on considering cross-curricular activities and approaches when planning lessons and developing resources. By adding this element into my planning sheets and process, it will allow me to prioritise the cross-curricular approach to my focus tasks on a daily basis. Next, I will be ensuring to provide a contextual learning experience to all pupils within my class. I will ensure to deliver topic content using different strategies such as direct teaching, free and inquisitive play using enhanced provision, independent tasks, group work, and outdoor learning. This will ensure that children with different optimal learning styles and needs will be catered to, to reach their potential. This will also ensure that pupils within my class during my BA1 placement, and throughout my teaching career, will remain engaged in the teaching and learning I will provide, and they will enjoy their in-school experiences to a higher extent, allowing a more positive relationship between children and education. Lastly, I will be prioritising the "Scaffolding Technique" when planning and organising resources during my BA1 placement and future teaching practice. I will incorporate this into my lessons in multiple ways; including adjusting support based on a pupils' understanding, fostering independence, and offering feedback to students, ensuring that they are aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses.

Upon the completion of the BA1 placement, I intend to self-assess my ability to meet the demands of these three Pedagogical Principles and assess the effect that these techniques have had on my teaching practice, in terms of pupil understanding, engagement and progression.

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