Regaining Paradise

Hello, my name is Sharon Davies, my student number is 2209734 and I would like to present to you my assignment about Regaining Paradise and sustainability in the Early Years. For this module I was asked to create a scrapbook that shows what I discovered, explored, conserved, and shared in line with the John Muir Award.

Before this module I did not really understand the term Regaining Paradise and sustainability, I knew it had something to do with the environment but not exactly sure what. So, as you look through it, I will explain what I found.

The area that I discovered is a road/ path that is right outside my door, in the Carmarthen area. I have seen many people use it whether being on bikes, running and walking with or without dogs. I have walked it a few times but mostly drive my car on it. But since getting my dog a few months ago I have been walking the area nearly every day. Before this assignment it was just a case of walking the dog, let it do its business and home we go, but now I stop still, look around and listen to the different sounds and smell the different scents. Looking around I saw loads of trees and even though I knew trees provide oxygen, but they do more, like protecting birds and insects, even feeding bees especially the lime trees. Trees also protect us from flooding and water pollution, and even their fallen leaves make compost. Another thing I noticed was all the brightly coloured wildflowers that lined the road, the ox eyed daisy is a favourite of mine since I learnt that the yellow part of the flower is made of many little flowers. I also thought it was just wildflowers growing but when I investigated and researched it, they weren't flowers. they were herbs like the thistle and the hemp herb. And these herbs are very medicinal, they can help heartburn, asthma to actual liver problems. Even stingy nettles make a nice cup of tea which I have

made and tried, it was like a bitter taste, and I am sure my tongue was numb for a couple of days after.

The different aromas from the flowers were lovely to smell, some sweet and then some musky smelling ones, I only saw and heard a few birds on my walks and discovered that there were more birds out in the morning and evening then during the day, probably because of less human and road traffic. In my area I saw different types of birds, great tits, black birds who are very vocal, but I would have to say the most common bird by me is the magpie.

Even though there is all this beauty around me, there are some people who do not try to help the environment, for example, dropping litter not picking up dog poo. Just not caring in general. So, I thought I would do a little reminder for them to pick up their dog's poo. Dogs poo is dangerous not only to humans but to insects and other animals and can be harmful to the surrounding area too. It does not help that there are only 3 bins on the entire road. Also, they are slowly taking away our fields for new housing, so where are our wildlife going to live and survive. Where are the birds, insects and animals going to go?

On reflection this did get me quite upset because it's not just us humans that live here, the wildlife has the same right as us, we are not more important, with this in mind, I wrote an email to the local councillor regarding the situation of the bins, and housing development and explaining how worried I am, and asking if they have a plan put in place, so far I just have had a reply email saying he was going to forward it on to the relevant people.
Because I have got so involved with this, I talked to my sister and mother about this module regaining paradise, and now they too like me are taking a more closer look at what they can do for the environment. Myself, I am making sure I am buying more biodegradable things, being more strict on my recycling to the extent of bossing my family about it too.

Thank you for listening to my reflection on my scrap book, I hope you found it interesting. I will now present my academic presentation on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship. The structure of the presentation will be as follows

What Does Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship mean and why is it important?

Then why is it important to educate children about sustainability?

Following on with How can practitioners educate children about sustainability and global citizenship?

Then How can practitioners educate children about it?

What Does Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship mean and why is it important?

Firstly, what does Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship [hereafter, ESDGC] mean? To get a better understanding of what it means, breaking down the wording will help. According to National Graphic (2024) sustainable development means using natural materials from the earth responsibly in the present so they will still be here for generations to come. Kulik (2024) agrees to this by saying, it supports the future generations by having the ability and knowledge of conserving the planet now, and how to plan for the future. Furthermore, Tinney and Merriman (2018) agree that sustainable development is changing everyday life habits to improve the

environment around us. However, Holden, Linnerud and Banister (2014) say a clear definition of sustainable development has not been found and agreed on. Furthermore, Davis (2010) agrees by saying that the word sustainability is a complicated and controversial subject that has no commonly accepted description. Additionally, Tabas (2021) says that sustainability can be broken down between two types of people, which are “sustainabilists” who believe that materials are in short supply for the human population to survive. Also, Tabas (2021) says that the second type of persons are “developmentalists”, these people believe that intelligence is in short supply, as developmentalists say that if there was more intelligence we would have more knowledge, therefore more technology to discover new materials for sustainable development.

Also, according to the Welsh Government (2008), this is an accumulation of what links humans to society and the environment worldwide. Also, Tinney (2020) says that sustainable development is not just about the environment but how it encompasses the social and economic side too. Additionally, The John Muir Award supports ESGDC by helping people of all backgrounds to get involved with the environment and the communities (John Muir Award, nd). Mitchell and Shaw (nd) conducted a study before and after people took part in the award, and again a year and half later. The data revealed that most people who took part in the award were more likely to carry on conserving the environment (Mitchell and Shaw, nd). However, results also showed that the award had no effect on people’s self-esteem, and it did not improve a healthier lifestyle for them (Mitchell and Shaw, nd).

The next part is why is it important to Educate children about sustainable development?

Welsh Government (2008) says that ESGDC means what happens in the future from the way people act today whilst protecting the rights of current and future generations. Moreover, Welsh Government (2022) says that from an early age children need to

understand what consequences might arise from human being's actions when it comes to their community and planet, so they are better equipped with knowledge of how to help and commit to the sustainability of the world. Additionally, Davies (2010) says it is important for children to learn about the environment as they are already being affected by the way the environment is the way it is today. Furthermore, Davis (2010) says that even though there is worry for children from wealthier countries who have the materials and knowledge, children from more undeveloped countries will not have the resources and materials to cope with these problems in their future.

Additionally, Tinney (2010) says that for some children from undeveloped countries another factor is that their health might be at risk as it is being affected by pollution. However, Davies (2010) says that with the correct support and education, these children can be incredibly determined and optimistic about improving the world around them. Additionally, Tinney (2020) says that having the digital era the way it is today, the use of internet and social media at their fingertips, children are becoming more knowledgeable about what is happening world-wide. Furthermore, Prince (2010) says that children have a natural affinity to nature and as children are the future, children should be educated in all aspects of sustainable development. Davies and Elliott (2014) support this by saying children are the future and they have the power to help and support change for sustainability. Furthermore, Tinney (2020) also says that children in the future will have the authority of being problem solvers.

Additionally, Agenda 21 was produced during the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development UNCED Earth Summit (1992). This agenda 21 realised the importance of both children and adults to be educated and to be able to understand the significance of providing longstanding social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Tinney, 2020). Furthermore, United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child [hereafter, UNCRC], (UNICEF 2019), states in article 29, each child has the right to an education that will support the child to develop their education holistically whilst encouraging children to respect and regard other human rights as well as their families, communities and the environment. However, John Muir Trust (2022) says not

every child has the chance to be educated by a knowledgeable practitioner, one way to further the child's knowledge is by taking part in the John Muir award.

The John Muir Award is used as a framework to help deliver the outdoor learning part of the curriculum for Wales; this will include the four purposes and areas of learning (John Muir Trust, 2022) and (Welsh Government, 2024). Additionally, Welsh Government (2024) educates children from three years old to 16 years old. However, to take part in the award the child must be five years old which is unfortunate as the younger the child is the more information they can absorb (Gualtieri and Finn, 2022).

How can practitioners educate children about sustainability and Global citizenship?

Welsh Government (2024) says that the new curriculum allows educators and practitioners to create their own curriculum, by choosing the topics and activities that connect the different areas of learning such as science, mathematics, art, language, and geography. Also, being outside will also improve children's health and well-being including the physical development of the child (Welsh Government, 2022).

To illustrate this point, in my scrapbook, from part one, there was a lot of litter in my chosen area. So, when the practitioner introduces sustainability in the environment, litter can be one of the chosen topics the children can discuss at length. The practitioner can also involve the school councils in this especially the eco- school council. This will promote the value of communities within the school environment too. When litter picking has been decided and agreed on by the children, they can arrange to go around the school litter picking and write posters saying things like "do not litter" and "put your rubbish in the bin". Davies (2010) says that theorist Froebel believed that children learn through play and when children experience things first hand, they will have a better understanding of the world around them. Additionally, Theorist Vygotsky also believed that children needed to link their life experiences with what they learn in the classroom,

as this will allow them to understand the situations that surround them better (Davis, 2010).

Also, the children can venture outside the school into the local community. When this happens, the public will start to be aware of what they are doing and get involved and hopefully the children can share their thoughts with them and spread the word about sustainability. To illustrate this point, Pringle (2019) says that having school councils will allow the children to get more involved and create a community within the school and they will understand that their views matter. Additionally, UNICEF (2019) supports this as it says in article 12, that every child has the right for their ideas and opinions to be heard. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2023) says that eco- councils in schools are a positive impact on children to become more aware of the environment and communities around them as these councils allow the children to learn and practice activities that will improve sustainability in the environment. Additionally, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 supports this by saying that to provide opportunities for the children of the future, this law will ensure that everyone takes part in continuous improvement in the social, cultural and environmental development in Wales (Welsh Government, 2024c). Furthermore, Reynolds (2016) says that introducing the 17 sustainable Global Goals to the children and to choose one of the goals is closely related to the topic that is being taught. However, Boyd and Hirst and Siraj-Blatchford (2018) says that focusing on one topic could restrict gaining knowledge of other issues in sustainable development.

However, Reynolds (2016) says that this is a new and positive way to show children what other global issues are happening them without them being frightened. Additionally, Stenger 92022) says that teaching children about global issues should not make them feel depressed, to overcome this a practitioner could read a story about the environment with a familiar character in it. This will allow the child to emphasize with the character and make it more realistic to them, also it allows the children to see how others live and what the world is like (Sharp, 2019). Furthermore, Sharp (2019) says that

if the character in the book is conserving the environment, children will often copy the character, as reading what is happening in stories will inspire them to do the same.

Unfortunately, not all practitioners are capable to educate learners appropriately as they have not had the relevant training and experience that is needed, which can lead to a lack of confidence (Welsh Government, 2022). However, Welsh Government (2022) says that says that all practitioners should do continuous professional learning so they can provide a positive experience for the children. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2024b) says that in the new Welsh curriculum for Wales, practitioners should undertake ongoing courses to improve the quality of their knowledge which will then improve the education of the children. Furthermore, Tinney (2020) says that Vygotsky believed if educators are more knowledgeable, they are more able to support children to a greater understanding. (Wilson and Devereux, 2014) says theorist Bruner called this scaffolding, where a child can build a greater comprehension on what he or she has already learned. Additionally, when a child has gained confidence and is starting to work independently, the scaffolding can be removed slowly until the child is able to work unaided and is progressing to the next step (Wilson and Devereux, 2014).

However, according to Evans (2024) another reason practitioners are not able to fulfil this role, is from illnesses such as a biophobia. According to Soga and Evans (2024) biophobia is when people have powerful adverse feelings about nature which unfortunately has negative effects on their health and well-being. Furthermore, Soga and Evans (2024) say that biophobia can affect the individuals' actions that they take towards sustainability as they could be more inclined to support projects that could remove all natural developments, including the wildlife. However, Soga and Evans (2024) say that by learning about nature at a slow calm pace the individual could overcome the phobia.

Conclusion

In conclusion I think teaching children especially in early years setting about sustainability and ESDGC is important, as they need to understand how our actions are affecting the world. It will also show them how to be more responsible when making decisions that impact their own environment and the globe in the long term. It teaches the children to learn how to communicate, solve problems and to respect each other and that humans are not more important than anyone or anything else.

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