

Early Years Curricula

Contents –

Page 2-6 - Section 1 - Section one of this assignment will explore whether sufficient professional development has been provided to support the effective implementation of the Curriculum for Wales and the impact that variations in access and quality of training may have on practitioners and learner outcomes.

Page 6- 11- Section 2 - Section two will consider the concept of the Unique Child, examine assessment approaches used within the Foundation Phase and the Reggio Emilia Approach and evaluate how culture can impact the results of assessments.

Page 12-14- Section 3 - Section three will include a blog suitable for a professional publication based on children's wellbeing.

Page 15-26- Reference List

AI Statement –

I have not used AI.

The Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines the curriculum as the subjects, knowledge and learning experiences included within a programme of study taught in schools. Hameed (2023) supports this, explaining that the curriculum is a framework that is taught in educational settings over time. In addition, Young (2014) defines the curriculum as a structure with a specific purpose, offering learning opportunities to children. However, El Astal (2023) suggests how the curriculum has a broader meaning and is a four step process involving the identification of learning objectives, the selection and organisation of learning activities and the assessment of how effectively those objectives have been achieved. Moreover, Mulenga (2018) states how the curriculum is a planned programme of education that reflects the goals, values, knowledge, skills and experiences that education aims to develop.

Nursaputri and Aisyah (2024) state that the curriculum is important as it supports pupils' psychological, physical and academic development. This is supported by Chhatria *et al.* (2024) who state that a well structured curriculum provides learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for success in life, while also promoting creativity and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the UK Government (2025) highlights that a strong curriculum develops the essential life skills such as media literacy, financial awareness and reading development. Moreover, according to the Welsh Government (2022), the Curriculum for Wales is designed to develop pupils into ambitious, capable learners, enterprising and creative contributors, ethical and informed citizens and confident, healthy individuals. Therefore, a well designed curriculum is important as it ensures children develop the skills, knowledge and values needed for life and future experiences.

According to Moore *et al.* (2024) a play-based curriculum focuses on strong relationships between children and adults, where children play and learn through rich experiences. This is supported by the Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings, which describes a play-based curriculum as a child- centred approach where children learn holistically through play, exploration, curiosity and real-life experiences, promoting children's emotional, social, physical and intellectual development (W.G, 2022). Suardi *et al.* (2021) explain how curiosity is important as it motivates children to learn by encouraging them to explore and investigate the

environment around them. Furthermore, Sitorus *et al.* (2025) suggest how a play-based curriculum uses structured and child-led play to support children's holistic development to encourage exploration, problem solving, interaction and self-expression, making play a vital part of young children's education.

Section one of this assignment will explore whether sufficient professional development has been provided to support the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales and the impact that variations in access to and quality of training may have on practitioners and learners. Section two will consider the concept of the unique child and examine assessment approaches used in the Foundation Phase for Wales and the Reggio Emilia Approach. This section will also evaluate how culture can impact the results of assessments. Section three will include a blog suitable for a professional publication based on children's wellbeing.

Section 1 –

The Curriculum for Wales was introduced out in 2022 and designed for learners aged 3-16 years old and is structured around six areas of learning and development and experience, which are based around skills and knowledge statements of what matters. The Foundation Phase, within the curriculum, is targeted towards the early years and is a child-centred approach, which emphasises play-based learning (W.G, 2020). Ha *et al.* (2025) suggests how a child-centred approach is important because it enables children to make choices, engage in meaningful play and collaborate with others, which supports their development of motivation, self-regulation and social competence. Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), article 31, states that play is a fundamental right of the child highlighting its importance through children's education and the curriculum (UNICEF, n.d.).

The role of the adult within the Curriculum for Wales includes providing a rich learning environment where children learn from hands-on, real-life experiences (W.G, 2020). This is supported by Piaget, who highlighted that children gain knowledge by being active learners through exploration and experimentation (Patterson, 2018). Moreover, the Curriculum for Wales states that the practitioner's role also includes questioning and observing children to gather evidence across all areas of development (W.G., 2020). This aligns with Vygotsky's theory, which

emphasises that children learn through guided support and social interaction with more knowledgeable others (Van der Veer, 2020).

However, the Curriculum for Wales has given each school the freedom to design its own curriculum to meet the needs of its learners (W.G., 2020). According to a recent study by the Welsh Government (2025) into the curriculum for Wales and assessment design practitioners reported on the challenges which left them feeling unsupported and uncertain due to the curriculum design guidance being vague, unavailable, overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Moreover, Wainwright *et al.* (2019) highlight that teachers need a strong understanding of a play-based learning to design engaging experiences and encourage and enhance children's motivation to learn. This raises the question of whether sufficient professional development has been available to practitioners to support the new implementation of the curriculum.

Palmer and Q'Riordan (2024) state that professional development is the ongoing process of gaining and improving knowledge and skills through training, courses, conferences and self-directed learning. Hutchinson *et al.* (2020) believe professional development is important because it helps practitioners reflect critically on their practice, apply theory effectively and support children's learning. It also encourages practitioners to continuously improve their knowledge, skills and professional profile.

In addition to this, Hutchinson *et al.* (2020) also state that professional development directly impacts practitioners' effectiveness, classroom practice and confidence. This is supported by Sysfrizal (2024) who states that teacher confidence is essential as it leads to more effective teaching, stronger classroom management, greater creativity and initiative which can improve pupil engagement and learning. Furthermore, Assaf and Antoun (2024) highlights how providing high levels of quality teaching is linked to higher levels of job satisfaction and can enhance academic achievement and wellbeing.

Moreover, according to the OECD (2018) professional development can also strengthen the quality of adult-child interactions through play in practice. Furthermore, Howard *et al.* (2024) suggest that this is important because adult-child interactions are associated with children's developmental progress. This is supported by the Curriculum for Wales explaining how adult-child interactions through enabling

experiences and appropriate questioning and observation guide adults to respond and extend children's thinking and learning experiences (W.G., 2023). Therefore, evidence suggests that professional development can have a positive effect on children's learning and development and contributes to practitioners' confidence and wellbeing.

However, in 2015, practitioner professional development remained a challenge, with the Welsh Government (2025) reporting a need for further training to support practitioners' confidence in practice. During the roll out of the new Curriculum for Wales the National Professional Learning Entitlement was introduced alongside the curriculum in 2022 to support practitioners through ongoing professional development. It also emphasises that practitioners have a responsibility to take ownership of their own professional learning (W.G., 2021). In addition to this, local authorities have introduced platforms such as Thinqi (2026), which provides online access for individuals to engage in their own training opportunities. Therefore, access points are available to practitioners with choices of areas for development, enabling individuals to select training and take responsibility for their own ongoing learning.

However, according to Eroglu *et al.* (2020) engagement with professional development can be limited due to workload pressures, conflicting timetables and school budgets especially when responsibility for completing it is placed on the individual. Moreover, practitioners as highlighted by the Welsh Government are uncertain and lack guidance on curriculum design which can contribute to reduced engagement with professional development due to feeling overwhelmed and unsure where to focus their priorities (W.G., 2025). Furthermore, Estyn's (2025) report shows that limited professional development opportunities continue to be an ongoing issue, affecting the quality of teaching and practitioners remain uncertain of how to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Furthermore, the Department for Education (2024) state that 18% of teaching assistants do not have a qualification above a Level 2 and that there are variations between settings in role descriptions and expectations. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development to ensure practitioners are knowledgeable and have a consistent understanding of effective pedagogy to support better outcomes

for learners and practitioners within their roles under the new Curriculum for Wales. Therefore, while the National Professional Learning Entitlement was introduced to support implementation of the Curriculum for Wales (W.G., 2021), reports continue to state that practitioners remain uncertain in the delivery of the new curriculum (W.G., 2025).

In conclusion, although the Curriculum for Wales places emphasis on professional development, evidence suggests that professional development remains inconsistent and not always targeted to practitioners' needs. Estyn along with the Welsh Government report that practitioners continue to feel uncertain about how to deliver the curriculum effectively, suggesting that access to training may not be sufficient to improve practice. The new curriculum requires practitioners to have a strong understanding of child-centred, play-based pedagogy in order to support learning through effective adult-child interactions. Therefore, while professional development opportunities are available, their impact remains inconsistent which may be contributing to practitioners' confidence and the quality of learning experiences for children.

Section 2-

The Welsh Government (2015) explains that children are different and have varying needs. This is supported by the Welsh Government (n.d.) through their Curriculum for Wales, which states that every learner has different backgrounds and ways of learning. Moreover, the Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings states that children have unique experiences and identities that must be recognised, valued and supported through inclusive practice (W.G., 2024). This is reinforced by the UNCRC, (Article 2), which states that all children have rights without discrimination, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, sex, language or ability.

The Welsh Government (2024), in their Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings explains that assessment is an ongoing formative process which focuses on progression, identifying needs and providing appropriate support and challenge through observation. The Curriculum for Wales supports this stating that assessment helps establish a starting point and an opportunity to discover and understand children's interests (W.G, 2022). Moreover, Tontus (2020) explains that it

involves gathering information to understand what learners know and can do to support future learning.

The Curriculum for Wales (2020) explains that this is important as every child is different and has varied needs, where development progresses through a continuum in a non-linear way at different rates. The Curriculum for Wales supports this through its principles of progression, which describe how children learn over time rather than through age-related development, supporting the unique child (W.G, 2020).

However, Bornman *et al.*, (2010) suggest that differences in needs, language and culture can affect how children understand and respond to assessments. Therefore, this suggests how assessment outcomes may not always accurately reflect a child's true abilities, potentially reducing the validity of the results.

This assignment will explore the concept of the unique child, examine assessment approaches used within the Foundation Phase and the Reggio Emilia Approach and evaluate how culture can impact the results of assessments.

Rodiah *et al.* (2024) state that holistic child development means viewing children as unique individuals who learn in different ways across cognitive, social, emotional and physical areas, which can be influenced by the environment. This is supported by Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which suggests that children progress through cognitive stages at different rates, actively constructing knowledge holistically from the environment (Safi *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, the Welsh Government (n.d.) highlights how the learning environment needs to support children's holistic learning and wellbeing through rich opportunities where children can play, explore and express themselves.

Furthermore, Rodiah *et al.* (2024) recognise how children's development can be influenced through social interactions and relationships. This is supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, highlighting how children may progress differently, more so through relationships and social engagement. (Van der Veer, 2020). Moreover, Erikson's psychosocial theory suggests that children develop through stages, based on their social and emotional experiences, highlighting the importance of respecting each child's unique background, culture and identity (Safi *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the Curriculum for Wales also emphasises the importance of social and

emotional development as part of recognising the whole child, through their voice in approaches such as the 'One Page Profile'. This document is shared with families to support the understanding of each learner's background, culture and needs (W.G., n.d.).

The Curriculum for Wales explains that it uses a child-centred approach through observation as a method to assess children's progress where learners are also encouraged to assess their own work and the work of others, fostering independence as they learn (W.G., 2020). Moreover, Cerino (2021) supports this highlighting how independence in young children is important because it allows them to develop confidence, resilience and self-esteem.

The Welsh Government (2024) describe how the role of the practitioner includes providing an environment where adults observe and question children appropriately as they learn holistically. Bruce (2015) notes how observation methods can include narrative or anecdotal records written on sticky notes or in longer forms, along with taking photographs and videos to capture key moments in a child's learning journey. The Curriculum for Wales also states that observations lead to assessment and that information should be recorded as part of tracking and understanding pupils' progress (W.G, 2020). Progress can then be measured against the Curriculum for Wales progression steps to show how learners develop over time (W.G, 2019).

Similarly, the Reggio Emilia Approach also uses a child-centred approach through documentation as a way of assessing children's progress (Manera, 2022). Documenting children's learning involves recording evidence of their skills, attitudes, emotions, communication, relationships and non-verbal behaviours through a child-centred inquiry based approach (Thornton and Brunton, 2015). Giamminuti (2009) explains that this method is carried out through observations, conversations, photographs and children's work, displayed on wall displays and shared with families. Rinaldi (2021) states that this is important as it enables immediate assessment because teachers can interpret and reflect on children's learning as it happens (Rinaldi, 2021).

The role of the practitioner in the Reggio Emilia Approach may be interpreted as similar to that of the Foundation Phase, where adults work alongside children as co-

learners, as they continually reflect, research and learn to support children's development (Hewett, 2001). Manera (2022) explains how this also includes observing, interpreting and responding to children's learning as it develops.

However, in contrast to the Foundation Phase the Reggio Emilia Approach is a philosophical framework focusing on how children learn rather than measuring progress to specific steps or goals (Rinaldi, 2021). This is supported by Chicken (2022) who questions whether early education should focus on preparing children for the next stage of a standardised curriculum, or instead aim to develop well-rounded, morally responsible citizens. Moreover, Rinaldi (2021) argues that assessment should enrich children's learning by focusing on their thinking and learning processes rather than final outcomes.

On the other hand, Van Buuren and Eekhout (2021) state that monitoring development through measuring children's progress against desired outcomes helps identify delays early so that children can receive support to reach their developmental potential. This is supported by the UNCRC (Article 6), which states that every child has the right to receive appropriate support to develop and reach their full potential.

Furthermore, the Foundation Phase in Wales is linked to progression steps, which can suggest a level of standardisation within assessment (W.G, 2019). Kawulich (2012) explains that observations can be subjective, meaning practitioners may focus on evidence that aligns with expected progression steps, potentially overlooking other areas of a child's holistic development. This could risk assessments becoming more structured, focusing on outcomes instead of fully recognising each child as unique through their learning and development.

The Curriculum for Wales places emphasis on Welsh culture, heritage and identity in their curriculum design guidance (W.G., 2020). Erwin *et al.* (2022) state that belonging is important for children as it supports a sense of identity, wellbeing and confidence through meaningful relationships and shared cultural experiences. This is supported by the UNCRC (Article 29), which states that education should respect children's culture and values (UNICEF, n.d.).

However, the Curriculum for Wales places emphasis on Welsh culture and citizenship, while other cultures are less explicitly mentioned within the curriculum design guidance (W.G., 2020). Moreover, the UNCRC also highlights how education needs to respect the cultures and values of individuals as well as others (UNICEF, n.d.). Furthermore, Devarakonda (2013) suggests that practitioners may lack knowledge of varying cultures and may only briefly include them within the curriculum. This may limit children from diverse backgrounds in fully developing a sense of belonging due to lack of opportunities to share their values and cultural backgrounds within the learning environment. In addition to this, Zajda (2024) states that culture can influence teachers' and learners' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours which can impact outcomes for children and pedagogy. Zaman *et al.* (2025) highlights the importance of respecting children's cultures and backgrounds as a lack of belonging can lead to low self-esteem which reduces motivation and can impact observations, assessments and children's progress.

Moreover, the Curriculum for Wales also places a strong emphasis on the Welsh language, reinforcing the cultural importance of language in education (W.G, 2020). However, Hammond and Sangster (2019) highlight the importance of teachers considering the language demands of all children as some learners may struggle with language barriers which could affect the true picture of children's abilities during assessments. This is supported by the UNCRC (Article 30) which states that education needs to also respect and support children to speak their own language as well as enjoy their own culture and religion. Furthermore, Veerman *et al.* (2025) state that research shows how practitioners who are multilingual can better support the learning and wellbeing of children. However, Lewis (2024) reports how schools in Wales are currently struggling with budget cuts and staff reductions, which could limit their ability to upskill practitioners to fully meet pupils' needs and support the unique child.

Similar to the Foundation Phase, practitioners in the Reggio Emilia Approach take a child-centred approach to assessment through observation. However, in contrast, Rinaldi (2021) states that the Reggio Emilia Approach refers to practitioners as researchers who explore and understand each child's individual culture and identity, co-constructing knowledge alongside the children. Kristin *et al.* (2022) describes how

the practitioners believe that the documentation process is an important part of co-constructing knowledge as it improves collaboration with families which can strengthen the settings understanding of children's cultures and backgrounds. This is supported by Dodd-Nurfio (2011) who states that the Reggio Emilia culture of participation includes valuing parents as active partners in children's learning and assessment and are referred to as the first educator in the child's life. Furthermore, Love *et al.* (2022) state that a mixed method of assessment, including those of parents, are effective because they combine different forms of evidence to provide a more complete understanding of children's learning and uniqueness.

In conclusion, the concept of the unique child highlights that every learner develops in a holistic and non-linear way. The Foundation Phase and the Reggio Emilia Approach both emphasise the importance of observation and play-based learning to support assessment. However the Foundation Phase provides a more standardised approach to assessment through progression steps, which may risk compromising the concept of the unique child. The Reggio Emilia Approach promotes child-led learning through documentation and co-constructing knowledge with a greater emphasis and value of the role of families as educators. Culture, language and the environment can significantly impact assessment outcomes, which may affect how accurately a child's abilities are assessed. Therefore, assessment approaches must balance structure and flexibility to ensure all children's individuality, identity, culture and development are fully recognised.

Section 3 -

Why Wellbeing Matters in the New Curriculum for Wales?

This blog is aimed at early years practitioners, reflecting on why wellbeing has become such a central part of children's learning and development in the Curriculum for Wales.

The previous curriculum in Wales was more structured, with a stronger emphasis on subject-based learning with clearer assessment expectations (W.G., 2008). However, the new Curriculum for Wales places wellbeing at the centre of education, promoting a more holistic, child-centred approach that encourages learning through exploration, outdoor learning and real-life, hands-on learning experiences, especially in the Foundation Phase (W.G., 2020).

This raises an important question, why has this shift occurred and why is wellbeing now considered central to children's academic success?

Reflecting on Wales's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in 2022 also raises questions about what may be impacting its lowest ever results, performing below all other UK nations (Lewis, 2023). However, some may argue that even recent statistics show that children's wellbeing in schools remains an ongoing concern. A recent Welsh Government report found that unmet mental health needs were the most frequently reported reason for children being absent from school (Mind, 2025).

The Children's Commissioner for Wales reports that around 46% of secondary school pupils reported to have slightly raised mental health symptoms with 24% reporting very high levels. Another survey found that two-thirds of children were concerned about their mental health and over half of parents also reported frequent concerns about their children's wellbeing (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2024).

Stress early on in a child's life affects the brain systems, which control how we respond to threat. This can impact emotions, memory and decision making, leading to long-term effects on mental and physical health (Smith and Pollak, 2020).

This evidence highlights that children's emotional wellbeing is not separate from learning but the foundation of it. When stress systems are activated in the brain children struggle to regulate their emotions, focus their attention and engage in learning experiences. This helps to explain why wellbeing has become a central focus within the Curriculum for Wales as emotional security can influence a child's capacity to learn.

How does the new Curriculum for Wales support this?

The Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience in the Curriculum for Wales has provided a holistic framework that includes physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing. It recognises that these aspects are connected and essential for learning and development supporting learners to become healthy, confident and capable individuals (W.G., 2020).

The Curriculum for Wales also recognises that children learn effectively through exploration and places a greater emphasis on play-based learning through its curriculum. This has resulted in a more hands-on experimental learning environment, where play is used to develop skills and support wellbeing (W.G., 2020). The UNCRC supports this, stating how every child has the right to play, which should be respected by practitioners as well as parents.

Through working alongside children through the old and new curriculum, I have experienced the benefits of this change where children now feel less pressured to perform and are more relaxed and ready to learn naturally.

Are we underestimating the power of play?

Play creates shared experiences between adults and children which strengthens emotional security, trust and social development (UNICEF, 2022). These positive interactions through play provide opportunities to build healthy relationships with children which can improve their confidence, communication and engagement in learning (Wiliyani *et al.*, 2024). Research suggests that secure relationships with trusted adults can encourage children to express concerns and seek support when needed (Mc Pherson *et al.*, 2024). This highlights how wellbeing is not separate from learning but enables it.

Bowlby's theory of attachment reinforces this concept explaining that when children experience a secure emotional attachment in early life it provides them with a sense of safety and stability. This helps them to feel confident enough to explore, learn and develop across all areas of learning (Khadka, 2022).

Furthermore, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests how children must first have their basic needs met, including feeling secure physically and mentally before they can focus on reaching their full potential (Booth, 2024).

However, to what extent are adults engaging in play with children, rather than viewing play as something children do independently?

The answer may lie in the knowledge and confidence of the practitioner, as new research highlights that providing high quality care and education requires skill and expertise. Practitioners experience and qualifications play a key role in recognising when to intervene (Ofsted, 2025).

This highlights the need for ongoing professional development for practitioners to increase knowledge, awareness and confidence to support both children's and their own development (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2020). However, reports highlight how the current financial pressures within education in Wales are potentially limiting opportunities for practitioners which may compromise pupil's needs being met.

The Curriculum for Wales' emphasis on exploration and play fosters healthy, positive relationships and holistic development, highlighting that children achieve better outcomes when they feel safe, supported and emotionally secure. However, parents also play a key role in supporting children's wellbeing through positive relationships and making time to play with their children

Therefore, the Curriculum for Wales has provided a framework that supports children's wellbeing recognising its effect on children's progress. However, children need this support both from educational settings and home environments working together allowing them to flourish and reach their full potential.

Reference List

Assaf, J. and Antoun, S. (2024). 'Impact of job satisfaction on teacher well-being and education quality', *Pedagogical Research*, 9(3), p.em0204.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/14437>

Booth, J. (2024). *A Theory Of Human Motivation, A. H. Maslow (1943) A Perspective Review Of Common Misconceptions And Notes On The Revisions. A Theory of Human Motivation*. Available at: doi:<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4968309>

Bornman, J., Sevcik, R.A., Ronski, M. and Pae, H.K. (2010). 'Successfully translating language and culture when adapting assessment measures', *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 7(2), pp.111-118. (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Bruce, T., Louis, S., & McCall, G. (2015). *What works in observation and record-keeping?. In What Works in Observation and Record-keeping?* (pp. 5-20). SAGE Publications Ltd, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473910225.n2>

Cambridge Dictionary (2023). Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus. Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/#google_vignette (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Cerino, A. (2021). 'The Importance of Recognising and Promoting Independence in Young children: the Role of the Environment and the Danish Forest School Approach', *Education 3-13*, 51(4), pp.685–694.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2021.2000468>

Chhatria, S., Pani, B., Digal, A.K and Sangeeta, M. (2024). 'Principles and approaches to curriculum development', *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 24(1), pp. 51-64. Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2024.2397977>

Chicken, S. (2022). 'Doing Reggio?' 'Exploring the complexity of 'curriculum' migration through a comparison of Reggio Emilia, Italy and the EYFS, England', *Global Studies of Childhood*, [online] 13(4), p.204361062110680. Available at:

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/20436106211068041>

Children's Commissioner for Wales. (2024). Mental Health - Children's Commissioner for Wales. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/policy-positions/mental-health/> (Accessed: 12 June 2026).

Department for Education (2024). *Use of teaching assistants in schools*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66e31878718edd81771316c5/Use_of_teaching_assistants_in_schools_research_report.pdf (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Department for Education (2025). *New curriculum to give young people the skills for life and work*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-curriculum-to-give-young-people-the-skills-for-life-and-work> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Department of Education. (n.d.). *Early years foundation stage statutory framework; For group and school-based providers – setting the standard for learning, development and care for children from birth to five*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68c024cb8c6d992f23edd79c/Early_years_foundation_stage_statutory_framework_-_for_group_and_school-based_providers.pdf (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Devarakonda, C. (2013). *Diversity & Inclusion in Early Childhood: An Introduction*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Dodd-Nufrio, A.T. (2011). 'Reggio Emilia, Maria Montessori, and John Dewey: Dispelling Teachers' Misconceptions and Understanding Theoretical Foundations', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(4), pp.235–237. Available at: doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-011-0451-3>

El-Astal, M. (2023). 'What is Curriculum? Building a Broader Understanding of the Term', *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 12(6), p.188. Available at: doi:<https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v12n6p188>

Eroglu, M. and Donmus Kaya, V. (2020). 'Professional development barriers of teachers: A qualitative research', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 48(1), pp. 132-134. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2021.2000836>

Erwin, E.J., Valentine, M. and Toumazou, M. (2022). 'The study of belonging in early childhood education: complexities and possibilities', *International Journal of Early*

Years Education, 32(1), pp.1–15. Available at:
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2022.2128307>

Estyn. (2025). *Teaching the Curriculum for Wales - Estyn*. Available at:
<https://estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources/teaching-the-curriculum-for-wales/>
(Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Giamminuti, S. (2009). Pedagogical documentation in the Reggio Emilia education project: values, quality and community in early childhood settings. PhD thesis. The University of Western Australia. (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Ha, T.T.T., Lien, V.T.T. and Hang, T.T. (2025). 'Early childhood education through a child-centered approach: Theoretical foundations and key issues', *Macrolinguistics and Microlinguistics*, 6(2), pp.74–84. doi:<https://doi.org/10.21744/mami.v6n2.40>

Hameed, U. (2023). Introduction to 'CURRICULUM'. Available at:
doi:<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.20586.29121>

Hammond, S, & Sangster, M (eds) (2019). *Perspectives on educational practice around the world*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc: London.

Hewett, V.M. (2001). 'Examining the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education', *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 29(2), pp.95–100. Available at:
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1012520828095>

Howard, S.J., Lewis, K.L., Walter, E., Verenikina, I. and Kervin, L.K. (2024). 'Measuring the Quality of Adult–Child Interactions in the Context of ECEC: a Systematic Review on the Relationship with Developmental and Educational

Outcomes', *Educational Psychology Review*, 36(1). Available at:
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09832-3>

Hutchinson, J., Reader, M. and Akhal, A. (2020). Education in England: Annual Report 2020. *Interlitteraria*, [online] 23(2), pp.442–446. Available at:
doi:<https://doi.org/10.12697/il.2018.23.2.17>

Kawulich, B. (2012). *Collecting data through observation*. Available at:
https://www.academia.edu/15804353/Collecting_data_through_observation
(Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Khadka, C. (2022). 'The Evolution of Attachment Theory: From Bowlby to Modern Perspectives', *TUTA Journal*, 10(1), pp.125–140. Available at:
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3126/tutaj.v10i1.74328>

Kristín Karlsdóttir and Einarsdóttir, J. (2022). *Documentation as a Tool for Changing Practices in Early Childhood Education*. pp.149–173. Available at:
doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5959-2_7

Lewis, B. (2024). 'Wales school cuts: Head teachers face budget deficits warning', *BBC News*. 20 Sep. Available at:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr546v39qldo> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Love, H.R., Cook, B.G. and Cook, L. (2022). 'Mixed-Methods Approaches in Special Education Research', *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 37(4), pp.314–323. Available at: doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12295>

Manera, L. (2022). 'The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education. an Analysis to Its Inclusive Perspectives and Their Relationships to Aesthetic Aspects', *Fostering Inclusion in Education*, pp.145–153. Available at; doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07492-9_7

McPherson, L., Gatwiri, K., Graham, A., Rotumah, D., Hand, K., Modderman, C., Chubb, J., and Kim, S. (2024). 'What Helps Children and Young People to Disclose their Experience of Sexual Abuse and What Gets in the Way?', *A Systematic Scoping Review*, *Child & Youth Care Forum*. 54. 515-544. Available at: doi:10.1007/s10566-024-09825-5

Mind (2025). *The big mental health report 2025: Wales briefing*. Available at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/dazb4b2p/bmhr-2025-wales-briefing-final.pdf> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Moore, D & Edwards, S., Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, A. and Boyd, W. (2014). Play-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education. 10.1007/978-3-319-03740-0_2

Mulenga, I.M., (2018). Innocent Mutale Mulenga, conceptualization and definition of a curriculum. *Journal of Lexicography and Terminology (Online ISSN 2664-0899. Print ISSN 2517-9306).*, 2(2), pp.1-23. (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Nursaputri, E. R and Aisyah, S. (2024). 'Exploring the benefits of curriculum development for students', *Abjadia International Journal of Education*, 9(1), pp.57–71. doi:<https://doi.org/10.18860/abj.v9i1.25862>

OECD (2018). *Engaging Young Children: Lessons from Research about Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care*, Starting Strong, OECD Publishing: Paris.

Ofsted (2025). *Experienced practitioners vital for educating youngest children*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/experienced-practitioners-vital-for-educating-youngest-children> (Accessed: 24 May 2026)

Palmer, S. and O’Riordan, S. (2024). ‘Editorial: What is professional development? An invitation’, *Journal of Professional Development*, 2(1), pp.1-3. Available at: <https://jpd.iafpd.info/volumes/volume-2-2024/editorial-journal-of-professional-development/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026)

Patterson, M. (2018). ‘Cognitive development, theory of’, *Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation*, (Vol. 4, pp. 307-311). SAGE Publications, Inc., Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506326139.n120>

Rinaldi, C. (2021). ‘Documentation and assessment’, In *Dialogue with Reggio Emilia*, pp.35–45. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854539-4>

Rinaldi, C. (2021). ‘Staying by the children’s side’, In *Dialogue with Reggio Emilia*, pp.3–20. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367854539-1>

Rodiah, I., Zulaika, G. and Saputra, D., G (2024). ‘The Importance of Holistic Education for Early Childhood: Integrating Cognitive, Emotional and Social Aspects.’, *Journal of Gemilang*, 1(3), pp.1–8. doi:<https://doi.org/10.62872/s3mf4x22>

Safi, A.B., Banouri, S.Z.U.R. and Atifnigar, H. (2023). ‘Exploring children’s development stages and preparation of a framework for comprehensive and creative curriculum’, *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences*, 1 (5), pp. 1025-1032. [https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2023.1\(5\).89](https://doi.org/10.59324/ejtas.2023.1(5).89)

Sitorus, R., Siregar, K., and Sari, R. (2025). 'The Role of Play Based Learning in Early Childhood Development', *Educia Journal*. 3. 1-14. 10.71435/610424

Smith, K.E. and Pollak, S.D. (2020). 'Early life stress and development: Potential mechanisms for adverse outcomes', *Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, 12(1), pp.1–15. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s11689-020-09337-y>.

Syafrizal (2024). 'The Influence Of Teachers Confidence On Teaching And Learning Process In School', *JOLADU Journal of Language Education*, 2(3), pp.150–159. doi:<https://doi.org/10.58738/joladu.v2i3.369>

Suardi, M., Kurniawati, L. and Rachmawati, Y. (2021). 'Curiosity in Young Children', *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Early Childhood Education (ICECE 2020)*, 538. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210322.048>

Thinqi.co.uk. (2026). *Workspaces*. Available at: <https://sirgar.thinqi.co.uk/workspaces/discovery?catalog=9962a958-1a8f-47ab-99fc-d2c69b133113&sort=Name> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Thorton. L, and Brunton. P, (2015). *Understanding the Reggio Approach*, pp.85–95. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315744018-7>

Tontus, H.O. (2020). 'Concept of Assessment and Evaluation', in *Glossary of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Lyon: Livre de Lyon, pp. 11-17

UNICEF (2022). *How play strengthens your child's mental health*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/parenting/child-development/how-play-strengthens-your-childs-mental-health> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

UNICEF (n.d.). *UN convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC)*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Van Buuren, S. and Eekhout, I. (2021). 'Child development with the D-score: turning milestones into measurement', *Gates Open Research*, 5, p.81.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.12688/gatesopenres.13222.1>

Van der Veer, R. (2020). 'Vygotsky's Theory' In: Hupp, S. and Jewell, J.D. (eds) *The Encyclopedia of Child and Adolescent Development*. Wiley. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171492.wecad101>

Veerman, E., Danbury, E., Duarte, J. da S., Volman, M. and Gaikhorst, L. (2025). 'A systematic review of empirical studies into multilingual pedagogies and their outcomes in primary education', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, pp.1–26. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2025.2472862>

Wainwright, N., Goodway, J., Whitehead, M., Williams, A. and Kirk, D. (2019). 'Playful pedagogy for deeper learning: exploring the implementation of the play-based foundation phase in Wales', *Early Child Development and Care*, 190(1), pp.43–53. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1653551>

Welsh Government (2015) *Evaluating the Foundation Phase final report*. Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/23035/3/150514-foundation-phase-final-en_Redacted.pdf (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2015). *Foundation phase framework (revised 2015)*.
doi:<https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/23915/1/150803-fp-framework-en.pdf> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2019). *Descriptions of learning - Hwb*. Available at:
<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/science-and-technology/descriptions-of-learning/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2020). *Developing a vision for curriculum design - Hwb*.
Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2020). *Introduction to Curriculum for Wales Guidance - Hwb*.
Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction-to-curriculum-for-wales-guidance/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2020). *Supporting learner progression assessment guidance - Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/assessment-arrangements/supporting-learner-progression-assessment-guidance/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2022). *Developing a vision for curriculum design - Hwb*.
Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#curriculum-design-and-the-four-purposes> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2022). *Health and Well-being: Statements of what matters - Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/statements-of-what-matters/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2023). *Enabling learning - Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/enabling-learning/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2024). *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/1f581142-6b91-41e4-845d-3d6c7765df20/a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (n.d.). *What is a One Page Profile?* Available at: <https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/home/council-services/education-schools/additional-learning-needs/additional-learning-needs-decision-making-process/3-what-is-a-one-page-profile/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (n.d.). *Introduction to Curriculum for Wales guidance - Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/introduction-to-curriculum-for-wales-guidance/#progression-and-assessment-at-the-heart-of-curriculum-design> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government. (2021). *National professional learning entitlement – Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-learning/leading-professional-learning/national-professional-learning-entitlement/> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government. (2022). *Research into assessment practices in the foundation phase: Final report*, Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2022-07/research-into-assessment-practices-in-the-foundation-phase.pdf> (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government. (2022). *Key Stages 2 to 4 - Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-2008/key-stages-2-to-4/#guidance> (Accessed: 29 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2025). *Curriculum and assessment design and pedagogy in the Curriculum for Wales: a qualitative study*. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2025-07/curriculum-and-assessment-design-and-pedagogy-in-the-curriculum-for-wales-a-qualitative-study_0.pdf (Accessed: 24 May 2026).

Welsh Government (2020). *Health and Well-being: Introduction - Hwb*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/> (Accessed: 14 June 2026).

Wiliyani, L., Reni Ester Berutu, Srininta Oktapia S and Gustina, E. (2024). *Building Secure Relationships: A Review of the Literature on the Importance of Parent-Child Attachment in Early Life*. 1(1), pp.562–565.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.35316/icorhestech.v1i1.5703>

Young, M. (2014). 'What is a curriculum and what can it do?' *The Curriculum Journal*, 25(1), pp.7–13. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2014.902526>

Zajda, J. (2024). Social and Cultural Factors and Their Influences on Engagement in the Classroom. *Globalisation, comparative education and policy research*, pp.97–115. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-61613-6_7

Zaman, R.A., Sharma, U. and Round, P. (2025). 'Key factors influencing the sense of belonging in students experiencing marginalisation: a systematic literature review.', *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, pp.1–22. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2025.2556000>