

Part 1 (1,500)

Effective play-based curricula are implemented well when children are given space, time, and autonomy to be able to engage in activities that the children are interested in and enjoy. There are many ways of playing, an example of this is open-ended play or adult LED play activities can be led by grown-ups can help influence the children start the play but open-ended play it's also important as it gives children the opportunity to explore and play at their own pleasure. It is important to give vast amount of play time that involves outdoor play /indoor play but not just that it's offering natural toys and equipment's. Outdoor play unleashes wonder and curiosity and teaches the children to embrace the environments and enjoy nature. Reconnecting with nature has never been more crucial for children as many children in less fortunate communities who don't have the option or space to play outdoors can really benefit from outdoor play in early years settings. Research shows that only 27% of children play regularly outside their homes. Today figures show that more and more children are most likely to be inside playing on technology rather than exploring the outdoors. This is sad as many children are missing out and are glued to technology. Outdoor activities and free play allow the children to explore and develop physical skills that boosts endorphins and encourages the children to step out of their boundaries and enjoy. The outdoor also encourages mental health as fresh air is believed to be good for the brain development which is needed for the child to develop. Outdoor play that allows children to develop more advanced motor skills that improves agility balance and coordination. Outdoor learning is included in policies and curriculum across Wales in England. Recent findings by Hunts Et al (2016) states that's outdoor learning is it important as ever however secondary schools struggle with the element of outdoor learning and believe that outdoor play is regarded as a privilege and not a necessity for children Power et al (2009). Nicole 2014 states that outdoor learning is not always connected to the curriculum and opportunities are missed due to lack of experience practitioners and time.

Doctor Lockwood (2024) states that outdoor play can benefit children in many developmental ways including social skills as children are allowed to freely express their emotions and play at their level and build communication skills. This is a healthy way of forming friendships and developing languages to form long lasting relationships. Similarly, Froebel (2023) agrees he also states that's outdoor play allows children play more freely and gain first hand experiences in the world around them. This enhances many elements of developments that include social and emotional develop development and problem-solving skills and fine and gross motor skills as Froebel (2023) believed children's developments

was holistic. Froebel believed that children that are in a engaging and stimulating environment would thrive much more according to his outdoor play theory as he believed that children were curious and creative beings that develop much more when they are enjoying and given mass opportunities to explore and develop. Influenced by Froebel's theory is the early childhood curriculum framework called Aistear that is followed in Ireland. The curriculum focuses on four points in particular beginning with well-being identity and belonging communicating and exploring and thinking. Like Froebel's theory is Montessori and Dewey's. All theorists have similar views and theories about the importance of outdoor play. Similarly, the curriculum in Scotland is supported by Dewey's who is influenced by Froebel theory. Play is central for child developments. Moss and Petrie (2012) state all early years practitioners need to be reflective and understanding of how children develop. Play allows children to gain new skills a knowledge and enhance their quality of life. It is vital that all practitioners fully understand how children develop how important the adult's role is in child developments. The child's development is paramount and should be considered first to all practitioners. There needs to be communication between parents and practitioners to ensure that the child is fully understood, and that the practitioner can fully attend to each child's needs and be supported by the parents/families at home Gandini and Forman (2008). Article 31 of the UNCRC (1989) states the rights of the child to play.

The early years curricula require practitioners to take active role in children's play by supporting the environment and building on children's interests as stated by Fler and Wynes (2006). The practitioners have an important role to play when teaching children on encouraging them to develop to the full potential. The foundation phase requires the practitioner to be able to identify different areas of learning such as structured play, active learning, child initiated and practitioner directed Maynard et al (2013). The Welsh Assembly Government states but the pedagogical practice of the practitioner is a problem in the foundation stage Siraj Blatchford et al (2005) evidence showed that many foundation stage settings needed further supports to develop and maintain a play-based pedagogy. Issues involved included at those guided play an interaction seemed to be the challenge. Wood (2004) believe that learning through play if channelled correctly would ensure responsive relationships are formed and planned activities should be constructed and mediated. The OECD (no date) states for change to happen all elements need to be looked at unimplemented changing one element won't do anything. NAFW (2001) believed by bringing a document called the learning country world would build on encourage stronger foundations in the foundation stage in early years provision. Moorehead (2010) stated that in order for successful results the pedagogy system needs to be implemented and changed research

showed in Wales the practitioner needs to adapt a theoretical understanding of the child which is informed by the social cultural theory. If the practitioner does not have time and supports recognise and acknowledge appropriate philosophical and practical changes practitioners will not be able to be successful. Aasen and Waters argued (2010). Their theory believed that their pedagogical practice reflects developmental approaches in the curricula.

Flear and Robbins (2015) believed that for teachers to achieve significant pedagogic results all practitioners need adequate time and support. Donaldson argues for the curriculum to succeed in Wales there needs to be appropriate training given to practitioners to ensure that the children get the best chance and opportunities to develop and learn. Appropriate training ensures the practitioners are fully confident in their professional knowledge and can make good quality pedagogic decisions which involves having good communication skills within the team and the parents and to fully understand why some pedagogical choices are more effective than others. The Welsh government have a 10 year target in place to ensure the early years workforce place has supports given to 2 individuals to address the problems in both maintained and non-maintained sectors Lewis (2014). Training should be given to all practitioners' and would entail emphasis on observation to ensure that all children's progress is measured and assessed adequately to support ongoing teaching techniques and practices.

Part 2 (1,500)

The 'Unique Child' is one of four main principles that shape the early years practice. Positive results will show if the Unique child practice is made meaningful and appropriate for each child in the early years setting, Nutbrown (2006). The four purposes for the curriculum of Wales is to ensure that all children are ambitious and capable learners, healthy, confident individuals, enterprising, creative contributors, and become ethical informed citizens.

A Unique child can mean different things for different people but one definition that would describe the 'Unique child' would be inclusion and not just for children with additional needs but the tools and capability to understand individuals, cultures, society's, settings, and practitioners. It is important that practitioners understand and recognize that the unique child is constantly learning, adapting, resilient, capable and that every child learns and develops on different times. To build stronger foundations for learning the NAFW (2001) has developed a document that released intentions and explanations then further on in (2003) there is further developments which includes developing a curriculum that strengthens principles in the practice. The rich curriculum is made to ensure that all areas of learning are focused and delivered Welsh Assembly Government (2008).

Research from the Welsh Government (2012) found that Assessments in the foundation stage were reflected positively as the assessments were carried out through observations. Research showed when observing through play it was simple but when observing through structured work it would be tricky as it was time consuming especially in the higher classes of foundation stage. The Foundation phase Pedagogical set principles for practitioners to follow doesn't always mean they will be effective as training and communication skills is required to ensure that all practitioners understand and feel appreciated. Many practitioners feel that assessing a child when playing gives you clear view of how the child is developing as they are given time to make their own minds up. However, children need to be assessed on a regular basis to ensure that the correct learning styles are working and to ensure that all children are understanding and developing as children develop at their individual time. Donaldson (2015) believed the new curriculum will bring change to the children's education as it would deliver a new framework that encourages all children to reach their highest potential. Viennet and Pont (2017) agree that the policy implementation is more likely to be successful if a strong case underpins the need for change. In the past there has been low scores that reflect that the curriculum needed to change to ensure that all children have the right to expect quality education but reports from the OCED (2014) show that students were scoring below. The national curriculum based on the Education Reform Act (1988) was

reviewed in 2008 and figures show inconclusive results that shows that students in Wales require significant changes. Donaldson (2015) agreed that the education in Wales needed flexibility to adapt teaching needs to ensure the needs of the students. The new curriculum ensures that all children have access to a high quality education and for those with additional learning needs. The Education Act (2002) expresses the importance that the curriculum is promoting spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development and prepares pupils to explore opportunities, responsibilities and experiences for later life. Curriculum Frameworks in America and Australia are focused on key skills while in New Zealand young people are encouraged to develop competency thinking by using language and symbols to manage themselves and others by contributing and participating. Similarly to Wales, Scotland is focused on developing four capacities to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. However one thing is clear that all curriculums are purposed to directly influence decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Waters (2015) and Payler (2018) agree that teaching is bringing world into range. Practitioners are important role models that need to inspire children to go beyond and that the learning they develop at school can accommodate them outside of school when entering work. A aspect that is needed as stated by the Welsh Government is good communication skills with outer agencies to schools as they bring abstract learning to life. Metacognition can help learners take control of their own learning. Teaching skills like this is very beneficial as to become a capable learner children need to be able to stand back and observe their own process of learning and learn ways on how to improve. Doing this allows the children to learn how to be active participants with an understanding of how to learn and create the best conditions for their own learning. Therefore, a core value to take into consideration when teaching pedagogy is to ensure that all you are being clear with all students and are interacting with the children. The (2013) OECD report argues that learning and teaching is a combination of being responsive to emotions and motivations and not just cognitive development.

When assessing arrangements should ensure that clear purposes are in place to ensure what matters is being assessed. Secondly that practitioners use a wide range of techniques to ensure appropriate purpose. Thirdly engage students in their own assessment, and lastly avoid any unnecessary bureaucracy by ensuring that reports to parents and carers are focusing on progress and not negativity. A important strategies to secure is to ensure that the practitioner is engaging with the student in the assessment process as children learn every

day but they need to be able to reflect and diagnose their own progress to further on their learning needs. Therefore, self-assessing is a important skill to teach children as it is seen as a important way for children to see and understand responsibility for their own learning. Additional evidence of performance is a perfect example of relating to the four purposes of the curriculum that provides more rounded progress. Self-assessments and peer assessments are encouraging ways to teach children to take greater responsibilities for their own learning. Assessments are done to ensure that every child is individually tracked and that there is evidence to show that the child is showing progress across the curriculum. Assessing can also ensure that if a child is struggling or needs additional help then by looking back at multiple assessments it provides evidence that can support to ensure that the child receives extra help or can help the practitioner detect what level or if the child needs to be challenged further.

For the curriculum to develop schools need to involve learners, parents, carers, agencies and local communities. Doing so promotes authenticity and ensures that the curriculum is meeting learners needs. It is important that all the above are able to contribute to the curriculum design as Bronfenbrenner (1977) believed that children's developmental is implemented by the parents, neighbour, friends around them. The Foundation Phase (2015) state that children develop skills at different times therefore for them to progress effectively children should be given opportunities to practice them in different situations. Primary school in Wales (2020) also agree that no school or child is the same as every child is different and unique therefore it is important that schools adapt their framework within the curriculum to suit all needs of the children. A bi-cultural curriculum that is followed in New Zealand is the Te Whariki. The curriculum encourages children to learn how to learn.

Other theorists have similar opinions, but one is Vygotsky who believed that learning is a social process that is learnt through social interactions. He believes that children's cognitive development is on all different levels. Morton and Guerin (2017) agree and states that development is clear when interactions with others happen. Teachers who recognize children as individuals and as learners are more inclined to think critically about understanding disability and plan assessment in inclusive ways. Banks is another theorist who believed and known for being the father of multicultural education. The multicultural dimensions is split into five sections that include content intergration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school culture and social culture. Jeanie Fulbright stated that every child is unique therefore education should be unique too.

ECERS, Sylva et al (2003) suggests the quality of pre school consist of seven subscales which provide an overview of the quality of individuality care and social interactions. ECERS focuses on four main points in school to ensure that all children are being taught mathematics, science, language and literacy and diversity. The assessments are in place to collect qualitative data Siraj-Blatchford (2015). The pedagogy suggests the achievements of setting is evidenced by their cognitive outcomes and appear to be directly related to the quality and quantity of the practitioners focused groups. Evidence shows that ECERS score are higher when the practitioner is caring and warm when the children are upset or hurt rather than cold and not welcoming. Millet and Bizell (1983) and Macron (2002) agree that children that are taught in a specific way and given clear instructions perform better. However, research shows that these outcomes are shortly outlived as children appear to be more stressed and anxious because of the pressure and standard that is put upon them. Weikart (1997) argued that due to direct instruction children were more emotional impairment leading to children needing special educational provision. The scaffolding pedagogy can be seen to be successful in some ways as theorists state that the practitioner will provide the support that is needed for the child to succeed. After acknowledging what their capability and understanding is. During the process appropriate support is given to ensure correct provision is given and for the child to acknowledge what successful outcome is on their own. By doing so the practitioner will withdraw slowly and allow the child to develop confident in their independent performance.

To conclude by considering the concept of Unique child I have acknowledged the importance of progress tracking age related development within the play-based curriculum. I agree that there is some logistics in ensuring different methods of assessments to ensure that children's development as I believe that every child is unique and by observing and assessing children you learn what pace and development study the child is upon. Every child develops at their own and that is special as the UNCRC (2020) states all children have a right to be healthy and happy and be free to explore and learn at their own pace.

Part 3 Blog (1,070)

Five Reasons To Let Your Children Play Outdoors

January 03, 2024 Connie Thomas

Is it beneficial to let children play outdoors?

When answering this question there would be many different answers regarding is it beneficial to let our children play outdoors, but In my opinion YES it is beneficial and I believe it is vital that parents/ carers/ guardians and especially practitioners in early years settings are giving children the opportunities to explore and free play. Playing and learning outdoors has been a part of our heritage since the 19th Century. When Froebel discovered outdoor play or more so the garden he believed that It was the perfect and safest place for children be able to develop a natural understanding of the world around them and appreciate it's beauty. By learning and being outside the children can learn the importance and see the beauty of nature and how to look after it. As children were given their own spaces in Froebel's garden (1967).

When implementing a play-based curriculum, it is essential that all staff are credited and are up to date with necessary training and guidelines considered to ensure that all children get the full advantage of a play-based setting. All practitioners working with children need to understand and be aware of children's progression stages of development so that they can prepare appropriate activities for the children, Welsh Government (2022)

Children led to learn through play and imagination as Vygotsky (2021) states in the Early Years Educator blog are believed to develop social, cognitive, and emotional development through imaginary play. Play is a essential ingredient in the Curriculum for Wales (2022) that is implemented in the daily routine of the school to ensure that all activities are made fun and stimulating. The Rumbold Report (1990) still stands firmly today and states that play that is been structured and planned helps increase children's understanding of the world around them. Each school has its own way of implementing the Curriculum for Wales (2022) framework outdoor play into their routines depending on their space and equipment.

One area of play that takes my interest is outdoor play. Outdoor play is a exciting sensory experience for both children and adults. It is seen to be statutory in every early years setting today, as stated in the Article 31 of the Convention of Rights (2002). All children have the right to engage in play and in appropriate age activities outdoors and indoors. There are many benefits to outdoor play such as being able to develop socially, emotionally, creatively, physically, and mentally. The IPA have published a short video clip that promotes and celebrates the children's right to play as stated by the UNCRC (2013) Article 31.

In recent experience from working in schools when children are given opportunities to play outside in safe spaces, they can develop to their best potential as they are able to build selfesteem, confidence and awareness of their surroundings. Many children don't have the opportunities to outdoor play at home therefore it is highly impactful on their development to be given opportunities to experience play in the outdoors. Previous experience has shown me that being outdoor allows the children be children and explore ag their own time and pace as many children develop and progress on different times. Another country that also believes in outdoor play is Ireland. Their Aistear Curriculum framework for children ages 0-6 years has been influenced by Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey's theory. The Framework focuses on the wellbeing, identity and belonging, communicating, exploring, and thinking of children. Similarly, to the Curriculum in Wales the Aistear framework promotes outdoor play.

5 reasons to let your children play outdoors

1. Playing outdoors is the most natural and physically healthier experience we can give our children. Being outdoors boosts children's endorphins which later in life reduces issues like Anxiety that can occur if not dealt with. Being able to run and chase allows children to develop stamina, fitness, and agility. Children need free time to burn off energy so that they can reduce future problems like obesity and muscular issues that can impact a child's activity. The freedom to climb can improve balance, strength, and coordination but most important it gives children time away from busy routines and timetables. Recent figures show children are spending more time on electronic devices than outdoors in recent studies that show that children are becoming lazier as a nation as they are glued to their screens.
2. Being outdoors helps Improve motor development that activates the neocortex part of the brain that builds new circuits in the prefrontal cortex. Free outdoor play that is

led with no guardian intervention allows the children to make their own decisions, learn how to take turns, how to regulate emotions and solve problems independently. Outdoor play engages the activity in the brain that helps boost new circuit and release hormones to the body that develops the motor development.

3. Going outdoors boosts our Self-confidence, independence, and self-esteem. Outdoor activities activate the five senses in a way that indoor play cannot. Vitamin levels improve outside as children are having fun which on itself makes you happier. The children are free to learn at their own pace when outside and can take risks at their own pace which improves and develops independence. It is believed children are more likely to try new activities if given the opportunities to play outside.
4. Playing outdoors gives us a chance to connect with nature. Being outside can help children develop academic performances and critical thinking as it allows the children to think beyond their surroundings and build well rounded perspectives. By being outdoors it allows the children to learn about nature and appreciate its beauty at its best.
5. Decreased appreciation of our environment happens if the children are not given opportunities to explore and develop skills as they have no information or appreciation to anything that is around them. If left unaware of the outdoor surroundings there will be no respect or appreciation to nature.

To conclude the blog I believe it is vital that children are given opportunities to play outdoors as evidence shows above that giving children the time to explore outdoor not only embraces their environment but gives the children a unique and highly engaging experience that stimulates their senses, have adventures and express themselves in many ways.

Reference

A curriculum for funded and non-maintained nursery settings (2022) Government. Crown Copyright. Available at <http://www.gov.fundedandnonmaintainednurserysettings.org> (Accessed on the 10th of June 2024).

Alsubaie, M.A. (2015) 'Examples of current issues in the multicultural classroom', *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(10), pp.86-89. [On-line]. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081654.pdf> [Accessed: June 21st 2024].

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.

Blatchford, S. Sylva, K. (2004) *Researching pedagogy in English pre-schools* British Educational research journal. Vol.30, No 5, Early years education pp.713-730

Children schools and families select committee (2010) Transforming education outside the classroom. Sixth report of session, 2009-10, HC 418. April 1 Third special report (HC525) London. Education committee

Donaldson, G. (2015) 'Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales' Available at: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/22165/2/150225-successful-futures-en_Redacted.pdf (Accessed: 10th January 2024).

Evaluating the foundation phase (2015) final report. Welsh government. Social research Available at <http://foundationphasefinalreport.org> (Accessed on the 10th of July 2024).

Macdonald, N. (2018). *The Great Divide: Separation of Care and Education in Wales and examination of policy, reform and research evidence*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328838084_The_Great_Divide_separation_of_care

e_and_education_in_Wales_an_examination_of_policy_reform_and_research_evidence
(Accessed: 10th January 2024).

McMahon, S. and Dyer, M. (2018) *Advanced Work-based Practice in the Early Years*. Oxon: Routledge.

Jenkin, C.J (2016) *Investigation of teacher educational delivery of bicultural education*
Australian journal of teacher education 41(6) p180-196 Available at
<http://linktojenkinsarticle.org>
(Accessed on the 21st of January 2024)

Kingston, D. , & Siraj, I. (2017) Supporting the implementation of the foundation phase through effective professional development. *Welsh Journal of Education*.19(1) pp.39-68

Research into assessment practice in the foundation phase (2022) This research explores the use of assessments in the foundation phase of schooling. Welsh Government
Available at [http:// gov.wales/research/assessmentsandpractice.org](http://gov.wales/research/assessmentsandpractice.org)
(Accessed on 10th of July 2024)

Sarah Macquarrie (2018) Everyday teaching and outdoor learning; developing an intergrated approach to support school based provision, *Education 3-13*, 46:3, 345-361, DOI
Available at <http://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2016.1263968>
(Accessed on the 10th of July 2024)

Teacher'sTV(2015)*AUniqueChild*.
Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=danfo5KqCWY>
[Accessed: January 8th 2024].

Waldron, N.L. and McLeskey, J. (2010) 'Establishing a collaborative school culture through comprehensive school reform', *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 20(1), pp.58-74.

Waters-Davies, J. and MacDonald, N. (2023) 'The capable child as a threshold concept for inclusive early childhood education and care.' Chapter in Conn, C. and Murphy A. (editors)

Inclusive Pedagogies for Early Childhood Education: Respecting and Responding to Differences in Learning. London: Routledge.

Welsh Government (2021) *Enabling Pathways*. Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/enabling-pathways-consultation-document_0.pdf

(Accessed on the 9th of January 2024)

Welsh Government (2021) *Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/curriculum-funded-non-maintained-settings-consultation-doc.pdf>

(Accessed 10th of January 2024).

Welsh Government (2023) *Assessment arrangements for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-and-assessment-arrangements-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings/assessment-arrangements-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings>

(Accessed on the 11th of January).

WJE article (2015) Future education system in Wales. *Time to grow up*. The foundation phase.