

Part 2 Presentation

Hello, my name is Eliesha Rogers, and my student number is 2308244. This presentation's aims are to discuss the items that I have included into my sustainability scrapbook and the lessons learnt while creating it. I will provide a brief overview of sustainability, and then critically assess how it relates to the early years.

To reflect on my scrapbook, I chose to discuss Sir David Attenborough, a conservationist. I understand that he is well-known and that a lot of people might choose him, nevertheless he is an expert in his field of environmental conservation and wildlife preservation. His videos and books captivate you and inspire you to discover more about the earth and how we may preserve it. According to my study on David Attenborough, he is enthusiastic about his work and encourages everyone to acknowledge the problems we face today in the environment and the wildlife. I discovered that if everyone is aware of the problems, perhaps we can alter things and give nature a chance to flourish. Although I was aware of some of the problems, my investigation revealed that wildlife and the environment are in danger, with several animal species at risk of extinction within the next 20 years. This is because of the world's resources being used up more quickly than they can be naturally replenished due to urbanisation, international trade, population increase, and human consumption. Ecological balance is being threatened, and ecosystems are being disrupted by the decrease in the diversity of plant and animal life. As the number of wildlife habitats is reducing and the rate of wildlife extinction on Earth is increasing, I discovered throughout my study that biodiversity loss is a major issue. A balance between nature and humanity is required.

A detailed description of the walk my family took is also given. I decided on Trelewis's Taff Bargoed Lakes. It takes around a mile to walk around the main lake. I grew up there, went on my first date with my husband there, and frequently take my dogs and birds (a Cockateill and a Conure) on walks since it's a lovely, peaceful place. For this walk, I realised that I've always looked but never seen. This time, I was captivated by the numerous boards that provided information on the local wildlife and environment.

Along the walk, I was sharing with Macsen (my 7-month-old son) all that I read and saw. I described to him the many colours, shapes, and sizes of things. No matter how old your children are, I believe it's crucial to tell them what you observe. Children are always eager to listen and learn. He showed a great deal of interest in what I was saying and showing him. He also liked to touch the flowers, and he tried to eat them, but I stopped him. I reflected on how most other walkers were older than me and that many families and children might not have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor spaces such as this.

I've always considered the route to be a pleasant stroll, but now that I've seen the incredible animals, environment, and educational opportunities, I'm even more eager to walk, not only around the lakes, but the surrounding wilderness areas. It was a learning experience for my husband and myself as much as for my son. I had no idea that there was so much to learn and that learning is never too early or too late. It was pleasant to observe throughout the stroll that there was plenty room for the waterfowl to rest and raise a family.

I've seen more varieties of waterfowl on my recent walks down there, but this time we didn't see many of them; I'm not sure if it was due to climate

change. However, I'm hopeful more will come back soon. Even though there was a wealth of information on various tree and waterfowl species, there was little about sustainability. There seemed to be a disconnect between the natural environment and the climate and sustainability issues that might impact it in the future. This was noticeable in terms of the way rubbish was collected and dealt with; there were only a limited number of waste bins and no option to recycle. The information boards did not make any connection between the wildlife habitat and the impact of climate change and sustainable practices. I believe that more must be done to educate people about the state of the environment and nature in our planet.

On my walk, I did not see any bug houses or other deliberate attempts to encourage insect life. I made the decision to contribute to the conservation of animals and the environment by building bug houses since, in my opinion, all creatures, no matter how large or tiny, should have a place to call home. I also want to improve nature by planting more wildflowers for more wilderness to thrive and this would work alongside the encouragement of insect variety.

Part 2 of 2

What is sustainability?

Moving on to my academic piece Davis and Elliott, (2023) state that the notion of sustainability is still unclear and controversial, lacking a universally recognised name or definition. Caradonna (2022) asserts that a sustainable lifestyle is one that is intended to last. It is directly related to

climate change and serves as a counterbalance and corrective to the use of finite resources such as fossil fuel. Our species will probably be preoccupied with climate change for the remainder of the century, if not forever. Agovino et al (2019) state that changes in the hydrological cycle that cause extreme weather, rising sea levels due to melting ice caps that eliminate species, and increasingly unpredictable temperatures and weather patterns are just a few of the troubling ways the climate has already started to change natural systems and the environment (Portney, 2015). However, Thunberg (2019) explains that managing natural resources and tackling climate change are only two aspects of sustainability. The interdependencies and connections between social justice; With making sure that all populations equally share in the advantages and costs of environmental protection. Economic success; attaining sustained economic expansion without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own demands. And environmental integrity ; the capacity of natural systems to maintain life and operate efficiently, guaranteeing resources for current and future generations all of which are included in sustainability (Elf, 2024, Sternfels *et al*, 2021 and Elsen *et al*, 2023) Furthermore, according to Cardonna (2022), sustainability is a means of recognising the imbalance that humanity has produced. In the modern era, human activity has taken over as the primary force influencing the environment (Thiele, 2024).

According to Perugia (2024) sustainability is essential to the health of our world and the welfare of current and future generations; using the planet's resources responsibly and appropriately is a key component of sustainability. It encompasses all activities that contribute to the long-term well-being of the world's ecosystems and the animals that inhabit them.

Sustainability, according to Greenpeace (2025), is the use of resources that have an endless supply, such as renewable energy. An activity is considered sustainable if it can continue without depleting resources or causing harm.

How is sustainability relevant in the early years.

Hedefalk *et al*, (2014) assert that children are currently born into a world where key global concerns include poverty, pollution, CO2 emissions, climate change, and the loss of biological variety. Around the world, politicians, scholars, and the media all address these topics. Additionally, there are local issues that are discussed and taught in schools. In addition, there is a powerful effort to teach children sustainable behaviour.

Sustainability, as defined by UCLA (2025), encourages the development of resilient, varied and vibrant communities for current and future generations. This informs the approaches used in the early years settings as climate change will impact future generations.

Davis and Elliott (2023) claim that if educators in the early years are not mindful about sustainability, they will find it difficult to teach the next generation. Fundamentally, teaching and learning that is framed by, comprehended by, and committed to sustainability is what defines education for sustainability. According to Samuelson and Park (2017) the UNCRC serves as a foundational framework for thinking about how sustainability is incorporated into early years education and enables children to engage with society in sustainable practices. However, Waltner *et al* (2020) discuss the need for other theories and frameworks to be used in demonstrating sustainable education, noting that the Bronfenbrenner theory (1979) ignores the ways in which biosystems may impact human

development. In contrast, Luff (2018) explains that Dewey (1938) theory creates opportunities for children to bring their interests and experiences into the classroom to support learning. Combining the perspectives of Bronfenbrenner with Dewey's principles and concepts holds considerable potential as a theoretical and applied foundation for sustainable early childhood education. Additionally, it has long been argued that education at all levels is essential to bringing about the profound and wide-ranging social change needed for sustainable futures. Furthermore, Vesterinen and Ratinen (2023) state that although education plays an important part in tackling sustainability issues, it is essential to highlight that educators and children cannot solve all the world's problems on their own.

Engdahl (2015) asserts that young children understand the earth and key concepts related to environmental challenges, as well as the personal responsibility that each has for sustainability. It has been made very clear that adults frequently underestimate young children's abilities. Elliott and Young (2015) imply that early childhood educators frequently believe that experiences in and about nature are adequate to address the urgent sustainability issues rather than rising to the challenge of addressing significant sustainability questions.

Somerville and Williams (2015) demonstrate how early childhood sustainability education is becoming more popular, although a prior literature assessment indicates that there isn't much actual evidence to support this. Despite increasing efforts to promote sustainability in early childhood education, the area lacked a solid foundation of research to "understand, build upon, and critique these developments." It was challenging to provide a holistic response to the sector's growing curiosity

in education for sustainability due to these particularities, which included the diversity and complexity of the organisations and services, structures, certification regimes, and governance arrangements (Spychalski, 2023).

According to Gerasimova (2017) children born today may anticipate living longer and receiving a higher quality of education and quality of life than their parents in a large portion of the world. Such advancements give us hope as we reflect on the things that still need to be done and as we acknowledge our shortcomings in creating a safer and more secure planet for present and future generations.

Hands on Learning

Kemp *et al*, (2022) and Lindfors *et al*, (2021) show that as a hands-on experience, the natural world is primarily positioned as a resource that helps all aspects of children's development. Through embodied exploration of the human and non-human environment, ludic play and exploration as well as hands-on learning, children should be able to make sense of the world they live in and gradually expand their understandings, knowledge, and abilities (Odegaard, 2021).

Hands-on activities such as recycling and gardening teach children about sustainability by helping them understand how their actions affect the environment. Through engagement and investigation, the Froebel approach (1837) helps children learn about the world. For children's learning and development, Froebel thought that engaging with nature was essential since it encouraged them to realise how intertwined everything is (Tansy, 2022 and Bruce *et al* 2023).

Ginsburg and Audley (2020) state that for children to learn pro-environmental habits including recycling and energy conservation, they must be exposed to the environment. However, are pro-environmental actions sufficient to ensure a sustainable Earth for future generations considering the current climate crisis? To promote a sustainable Earth in the wake of the climate catastrophe, children need to be specifically taught about sustainability principles and actions. Furthermore Gomes-Olmedo et al (2020) say to encourage long-term sustainable living behaviours with children, educators must consider education about and for the environment in addition to education in the environment. Children who get education about the environment are better able to understand the significance and complexity of the natural world as well as the relationships between human and environmental systems. Environmental education uses the outdoors as a setting and learning resource (Donnison and Halsall, 2023). Gaining a greater knowledge of outdoor learning's application is essential to maximising its potential, especially in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) contexts. It has been demonstrated that some children may feel more at ease in natural settings as they can be open and unrestricted as well as calming (Kiviranta *et al*, 2023).

Odegaard (2021) suggests that rethinking ECEC for social sustainability is the goal. It is imperative to focus on the long-term research question of how to prepare young children for the future.

Learning through nature

Mann et al (2022) and Welsh government (2025) explain that a child's natural surroundings improve their social skills and sense of self. Children's physical and mental health has been shown to improve when

they are in nature. Every child should participate in nature-specific outdoor learning as it offers significant benefits for their social, emotional, intellectual, and overall well-being. However, it is still unclear how useful nature-specific outdoor settings are as a backdrop for both academic and extracurricular learning (Chawla, 2015).

Liu and Green (2023) show how children's experiences and educational environments throughout the world reflect the decline in engagement with nature. This is due to children having less access to natural areas because of urbanisation. Furthermore Skar et al (2016) says there is less time for children to play in nature since the organised sports or activities they participate in are structured and in artificial settings. The growing amount of technology that children use has a significant impact on time spent outdoors. Seeres et al (2022) adds that another factor contributing to the decline in children learning in nature is that parents are finding that playing indoors is safer and more enjoyable for the children due to their anxieties of illnesses, gangs, and other hazards shown in the media. However, this anxiety is in turn impacting on the growth of the children (Cohen, 2025, and Jucker and Au, 2022).

For children's health and wellness, it is important to make sure they get sufficient access to nature. Education is often based on the idea of indoor learning despite it being acknowledged that it is important for children to develop pro-environmental attitudes and practices in the early years (Skar et al, 2016). Sobel (2025) explains that considering all the advantages, early childhood programs should encourage learning in nature. Many teachers who have been teaching inside, may find themselves at a loss when it comes to teaching outside. They question themselves, but nature is the

teacher; it encourages children to ask questions that mean that wider aspects of the curriculum can be incorporated into (Department for Education, 2023). Research indicates that many working as environmentalists had common features to their early education; they had an adult who modelled concern and care for the natural world, and they had the opportunity to play in nature and the environment. Children will learn about environmental challenges and how they can contribute if teachers and parents continue to do this with them today (Sharma-Brymer and Bland, 2016).

Both the Hands on learning as well as the learning through nature all connect with the John Muir Award in a way that children can discover, explore and conserve.

Conclusion

To conclude sustainability remains a complex and debated concept, often defined as living in a way that preserves resources for future generations. It involves environmental care, social justice, and economic responsibility. With climate change and ecological degradation accelerating, sustainability education is becoming increasingly important—especially in early years settings.

Children are born into a world facing pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Early education can play a crucial role in shaping their understanding of and attitudes toward sustainability. Theories such as Bronfenbrenner's and Dewey's help support sustainability learning by integrating children's interests with real-world environmental issues.

Research shows that young children are capable of understanding environmental responsibility, though educators often underestimate this. Hands-on experiences like gardening, recycling, and nature play promote environmental awareness and development. Approaches such as Froebel's encourage learning through nature and exploration.

Despite growing interest, early childhood sustainability education still lacks a strong research base and consistent practices. Urbanisation, technology, and safety concerns also reduce children's access to nature.

To truly prepare children for a sustainable future, educators must move beyond nature-based play and actively teach sustainability principles. Collaborative efforts from parents, teachers, and communities are essential to foster lasting change.

Thank you for listening.

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