

Quality is recognised as a safe, hygienic environment with plenty of quality toys and resources that can be used for learning inside and outside (Pacey,2023). Likewise, California department of education (2022) states that the childcare provider should offer a safe and stimulating, loving environment in which the children will mentally and physically thrive. This suggests that a quality setting should help the development of a child's mental and physical needs. This also suggests by providing children with a safe and stimulating, loving environment will help children to be confident and happy. Moreover, for children, a high-quality program may mean feeling accepted for who they are no matter what their ability or culture. It means having friends and responsive adults, being emotionally and physically comfortable and the possibility of having a variety of fun, interesting and engaging activities (finding quality care, no date). This suggests that a quality setting from a child perspective means being accepted and feeling 'at home' in the setting as well as having fun and making friends. A safe environment requires the statutory requirements of a childcare setting; safeguarding include that all staff in the workplace read about the requirements for child protection and safeguarding which can also be found at; Standard 20 of the National Minimum Standards in Wales. it is also important that at least one member of staff in the setting have a valid paediatric first aid certificate. Furthermore, every early year's childcare worker has a duty to undertake daily risk assessments of the setting, and to complete risk assessment sheets before any activity that poses a risk to babies and children (CBAC,2019). However, quality goes beyond these requirements. Quality can be recognised in a childcare setting by allowing children to have access to quality resources and toys such as open-ended materials as they support all areas of development because there are endless possibilities for the ways that open-ended materials can be manipulated and used Some examples of open-ended materials are sand, water, blocks, play dough and paint (town square, 2017).

Quality is important in childcare as explained by foundation years (no date) children who experience high quality provision are well placed to achieve higher outcomes at school and develop better social, emotional, and cognitive abilities. Furthermore, great start to quality (2023) states that When children are in a high-quality program in their first five years, they are given a safe place to learn, explore their world and build relationships. By being in this type of environment, the foundation is set for them to be successful in school, work, and life. therefore, this suggest that children who learn in

a quality environment are more likely to get a higher education and later a successful work career. Research states that 'Children who experience high quality provision are well placed to achieve higher outcomes at school and develop better social, emotional and cognitive abilities necessary for life-long learning' (foundation years, no date). Likewise, great start to quality (2023) states that high-quality childcare helps children be more successful in school and has shown improved health and increased learning outcomes over children's lifetimes.

However, Quality is defined as a degree of excellence. This means not average, not "it will do" childcare, but excellent childcare. Moreover, through the eyes of parent's quality childcare safeguards a child's health and safety (finding quality in childcare, no date). Therefore, it is important that quality is provided within early years settings for many reasons such as; putting parents minds at rest that their children are in a safe enjoyable environment. It is also important to children so that they can fully develop all areas of learning and have successful outcomes later on in life.

There are many methods to measure quality within early years. However, in this reflective paper the two method of quality assurance will be compared; a quality assurance scheme – Early Years Wales and BEEL (Baby Effective Early Learning) which is an environmental rating scale. a quality assurance scheme is a specific type of recognised quality scheme in which settings may participate (Hampshire County council, no date). Similarly, an environmental rating scale is observational assessment that assesses the process of quality of a program (NH Connections,2023). Both methods closely monitor outcomes of quality within childcare. However, these are option methods to have in a childcare setting.

Early Years Wales believes that consistently meeting all regulatory requirements to the highest standards, and continuously reflecting on and evaluating practice is key to the delivery of high-quality childcare where the best possible experiences and opportunities are provided for children and families (early years wales,2020). Suggesting that if they meet the high standard requirements and always reflect on and evaluate the practice it will deliver a high standard of childcare. Likewise, Baby effective early learning (BEEL) is designed for Early Years practitioners to become practitioner-researchers in their own settings and to drive quality improvement through

a cycle of reflective practice built on child and adult observations (CREC, no date). Which means that practitioners reflect on their practice through observations that are carried out.

Early years Wales (2020) explains that having high-quality childcare means focusing on how well the service is managed, staffed, resourced, and provided overall. The tool is used to help practitioners reflect on this and their practice, and to plan for improvements or change over time. It will help maintain and raise standards and prepare for other assessments or inspections. On the other hand, BEEL provides training and support for ECEC settings to move beyond baseline national standards. The intention is to provide a supported development strategy for all ECEC providers, with well-tested systems for ongoing quality improvement (CREC, no date). The advantages of both these methods are that practitioners that participate in either of these methods should have a greater up to date knowledge on how to drive quality into their practice as well as reflecting on things to make changes. Without practitioners' quality cannot be provided in a childcare setting.

Is unfortunate that there are disadvantages to these methods such as; BEEL provides a comprehensive, coherent, and cost-effective approach to quality improvement in all its aspects for all settings that cater for children from birth to three (the baby effective learning programme, 2006). However, quality is needed in all childcare practice and for children of all ages. On the other hand, early years Wales quality for all scheme requires that there is an expectation that all relevant regulations and National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare for children up to the age of 12 years (NMS) (link is external) are always met. Therefore, that method includes all ages of children. However, the early years quality for all scheme is a tool that must be purchased therefore, this could influence the setting due to the cost and getting the funds for the training to be able to put into their practice.

To improve quality within early years settings it is important that staff get the correct training and understand what the term 'quality' means to be able to provide it in their practice. however, with the cost of training and resources to encourage quality could impact many early years settings. this could be prevented by applying for funds to help with the cost or have fund raising days to help buy toys and resources that will provide children with quality. Fund raising days such as a 'farmers market' will be a useful

resource as the children are also learning in a natural environment as well as raising money for resources they need. The aim of BEEL is to offer a manageable strategy to evaluate and improve the quality of early learning and development and the effectiveness of outcomes for young children in a wide range of settings (the baby effective learning programme, 2006). Therefore, they state that they want to make it as manageable as possible to improve the overall quality in a wide range of early years settings. Likewise, Early years Wales (2020) explains that their main activity is to enhance the development and education of pre-school children in Wales by encouraging parents to understand and provide for their needs through high quality pre-school provision and childcare. Suggesting that they also include parents to achieve a high standard of quality within settings.

BEEL states that youngest children are seen as providing appropriate cognitive, social, emotional, physical and moral enrichment in settings which are stimulating, safe and secure. Whilst opportunities for extending children's exploratory drive and curiosity should always be encouraged. Therefore, this suggests that during their assessment they look out for all these areas of development and ensure that they are encouraging quality activities and resources to allow children to gain their development. However, this scale does not state that they look at how children literacy and numeracy skills are developing. On the other hand, Early Years Wales tool is divided into 3 sections: Section 1 - Ownership, leadership, management, and organisation, Section 2 - Children's health and wellbeing, Section 3 - The learning environment and operational practice. This does not show that they look at the areas of development in children. Therefore, this tool does not give a true reflection of quality on a wide scale. From this information gathered practitioners need to use both methods together in their practice to receive better outcomes of quality in their care as early years Wales looks at the leadership and management of the setting as well as the environment and the health and well-being of the children whereas BEEL does not look at these areas and assesses the quality of the children's whole development such as physical, social, emotional, cognitive skills which give a better reflection on how to improve quality within the setting as it is assessing the child. Therefore, practitioners will be able to reflect on what the child needs and how quality can be brought into the areas of development that need improving.

These tools drive quality through assessing the areas of learning such as the child's development, the setting, the management, and staff and reflect on how these things can be changed to improve quality within the setting. This will allow practitioners to know what resources to add to the setting to improve certain areas of development and to meet the needs of every individual for example; the evidence from the assessment does not think that children are reaching their target within physical development therefore, it is the practitioners role to use their knowledge and drive quality into physical activities for children, this could be offering the children more outdoor opportunities and providing them with resources such as hula hoops or even natural resources that are not cost effective such as made up games like 'what's the time Mr wolf' or 'stuck in the mud' giving the children the opportunity to run free.

To conclude it is clear from the research within this reflective paper that quality is essential to all early year's settings and a child's development as research suggest that high quality provision in childcare is the key for children to develop and achieve higher outcomes in all areas of learning within the setting. Therefore, it is important to provide children with a stimulating environment which suggests an environment richly resourced with exciting play materials and open-ended flexible resources that can be adapted and used in different ways, according to the needs and interests of individual children. The environment should also be a safe and hygienic place for children to enjoy. The importance of a child's safety is mandatory, safety is classed as anything that people do to protect themselves or others from harmful accidents. People can prevent accidents by following safety measures. Safety measures involve knowing when an accident might take place and then taking steps to keep it from happening (Britannica kids,2023), this is also why policies and procedures should be in place and that staff training is required in childcare. This also suggests to parents/carers that their child is in safe hands. All these factors are a element of good quality within the setting.

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