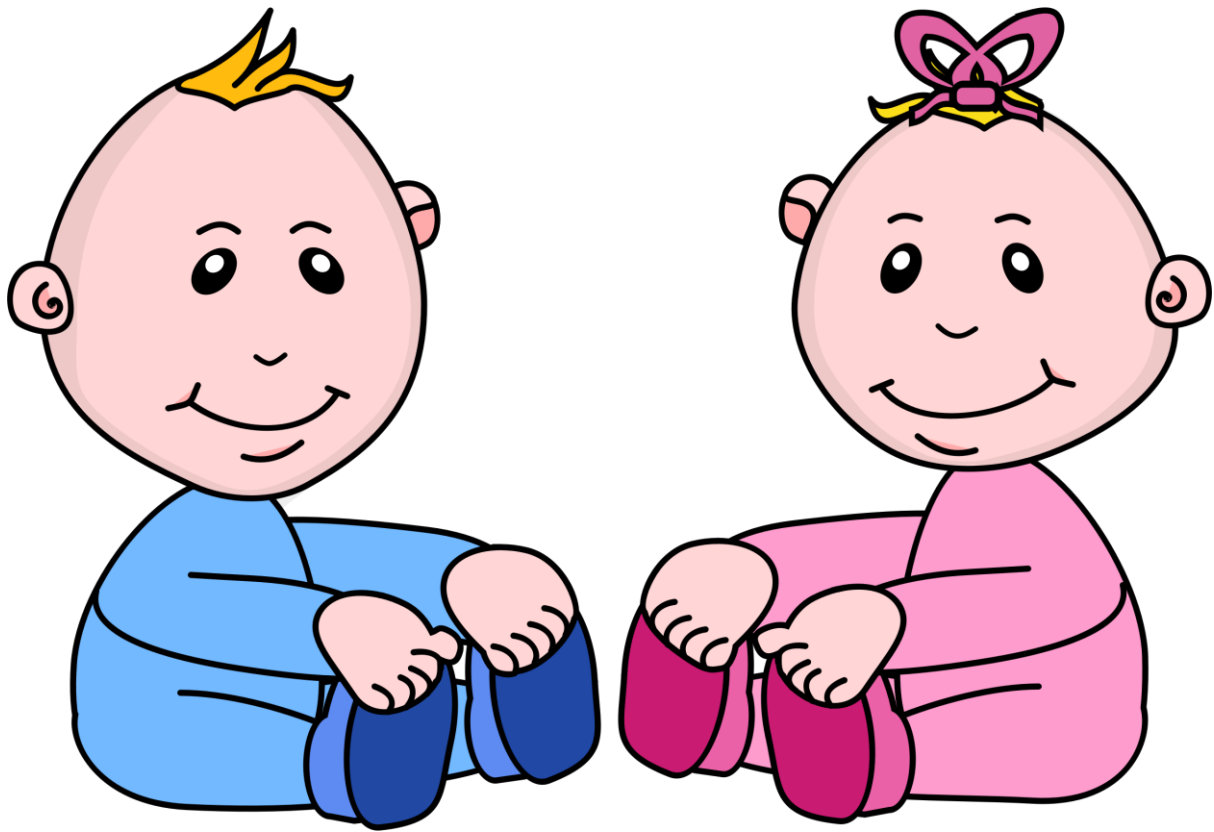




The First 1000 Days

The first 1000 days of a child's life is crucial for laying the foundation for long-term emotional and physical health (Leadsom, 2021). It builds the holistic needs and views for the child and shapes the person they are likely to become.

The first 1,000 days of a person's life, from conception to age two, lay the groundwork for their cognitive, emotional, and physical development. The World Health Organization's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescent's Health, UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative, and in England, the NHS Long Term Plan and Public Health England's 2016 guidance on "giving every child the best start in life" all recognise the significance of this age range. Babies are most vulnerable during these 1,000 days, which are also a crucial period for development. Some newborns have a diagnosed handicap, while others have developmental needs that may lead to a need for special education.

Uncomplicated pregnancy - The unborn child is prepared for a healthy existence by a healthy pregnancy. the infant develops

The foetus is sensitive to the world around the mother while it is within the womb; it hears what the mother hears, eats what the mother eats, and may respond when the mother is upset.

In addition to being crucial in and of itself, a mother's mental and physical health is crucial for the proper growth of the child.

a good start in life - Babies are especially sensitive to their environment from conception through age two. Babies are totally dependent on their carers, and their love bond to their parents has a profound impact on later development. Researchers continue to discover more each year about the negative impacts that so-called "adverse childhood experiences" may have (ACEs). These are

traumatic occurrences that can happen as a result of parental drug use, abuse, or poor mental health, among other risk factors. The Review also learned how parental discord may affect the infant's mental health. It is crucial that parents and carers have the appropriate support to enable them to provide for their children.

Additionally, the first 1,000 days are a crucial time for the development of both physical and verbal abilities. Usually, by the time a child turns two, they can walk unassisted, speak 50 or more words, kick a ball, climb furniture, and doodle on the spot. However, parents and other carers must support and encourage infants to master these skills, and it is important to keep an eye on their growth. If developmental delays are not discovered and treated right once, this could lead to serious issues down the road.⁷ Some newborns may be disabled or exhibit abnormal developmental patterns. Ensuring parents and carers have access to the knowledge and resources they require can improve long-term outcomes (HM Government, 2021)

Why the first 1000 days are crucial to a child's development



The importance of the first 1000 days is fundamental to the rest of the child's life. In this time period, the child should develop skills and knowledge which they will be able to apply to future situations.

The child's brain development is one of the most important things, it starts from conception. Even when a woman is pregnant, the child's brain is growing rapidly, if it has the right nutrition. Essential fatty acids make up 40% of the material in our brains. The mother must make sure she has enough for both herself and the infant because the latter will "pinch" what it requires, which frequently causes the mother to feel exhausted or suffer from "baby brain" (NMT, 2021). This suggests that the mother should be educating herself on what foods are good for their child's brain, and overall health. If the child does not receive the right nutrients from conception, the child could be at risk of suffering from something called stunting. This is where the child's brain and body don't mature in the way that they should. They could be underdeveloped mentally, and physically and this would not give them a great start to their life (WHO, 2021)

Exceptional Care and Why It Is Important



Exceptional care is used in order to provide the skills and knowledge that promote ideal teacher behaviour, a formal degree with at least some specialised training in early childhood education or child development is helpful. However, for training to have an impact on quality, a clear plan must be in place to provide staff members in a variety of jobs with systematic, long-lasting, and transformative continuous professional development.

Less students per instructor results in better outcomes for the students since it allows for more individualised attention and promotes better student and teacher behaviour.

Although ratios in Reception year groups are substantially higher than those indicated to maximise the impact on children's development, early years settings are compelled to follow these criteria.



Current Challenges Practitioners are Facing



Currently, there are many challenges practitioners face when caring for young babies in early years settings. Firstly, one of the main challenges now is the set-back babies have from COVID. This is huge, as a lot of babies may not have interacted with others, in the way that pre-covid babies did. Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that a child needs all their needs met, in order to develop fully. These needs are physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. Due to the pandemic, babies may not have received as much feeling of love and belonging as is required, because of factors such as social distancing measures. Also, the fact that babies are more at risk of dying due to COVID, parents would not have risked their babies catching it, so may have kept them at home for long periods of time, meaning the baby would have less experiences to learn from (The conversation, 2021)

Another big barrier practitioners must overcome is the new curriculum. In the new curriculum, there are developmental pathways. These are belonging, communication, exploration, physical development and well-being. These pathways allow for a holistic view of the child's development, rather than focussing on one specific skill. Using the developmental pathways means that professionals can identify where each child may need extra support, especially when considering individuals with ALN. All the 5 pathways combined, help build the relationship between the practitioner and the child, as well as the parents. This results in the child trusting the practitioner and allows them to bond meaning more effective learning can take place.

Overall Benefits to Challenges

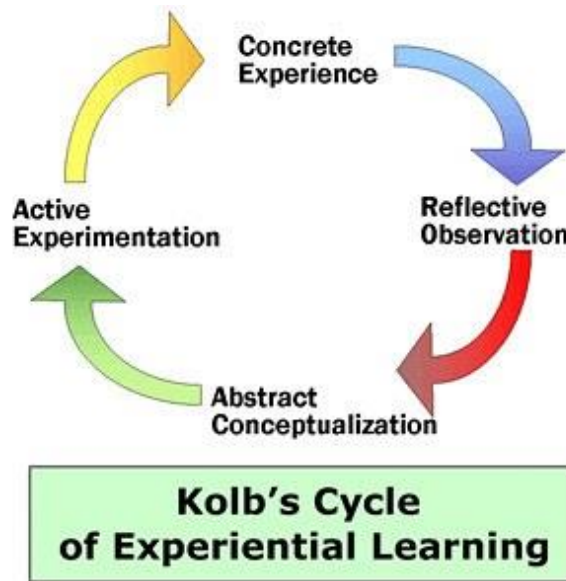


image by Karin Kirk

Experiential learning is learning through experience. According to Kolb, the more experiences a child has and the more activities they endure, the higher quality of the child's development. In a setting, this is why having access to activities such as loose parts is beneficial for children. It allows the child to learn what would happen if for instance, they put a certain object on top of another object, or turn a plastic screw into a bolt. It allows them to make their own choices and learn from their mistakes. If something is not working, but they keep trying in different ways, eventually they will learn what works well, and what not to do next time, all on their own (Kolb, 2014)

The importance of language development is fundamental to the child's holistic development. Without language and communication, it is hard to know what the child's needs and wants are, in effect it is difficult to meet the needs of the child. Factors such as food, water and hygiene are the foundations to a human's life, and these basic needs can be met, regardless of communication. (Dickinson, 2019)

The curiosity approach is beneficial for a child's development as it puts children at the centre of their own development. The way in which it works is the setting in which the curiosity approach takes place, must have limited colours, and natural resources. This is so it mimics real life objects and materials, so it would be easier for the child to relate their play to real-life situations (Berg, V 2021)

The Enabling Environment



When it comes to a child's development, the environment is a major factor that should be considered. In a setting, the indoor environment and the outdoor area should be considered as one. There should be one of each activity in the combined environment. For example, one sand pit, one loose parts area and one water tray. This will give the children more opportunities to have a variety of different activities, to develop different areas of their brain. Giving them free access to the outdoors, means that they can work on developing their schemas subconsciously. The type of schemas individuals may further develop from being outdoors are transporting and orienteering which allows for better development overall.



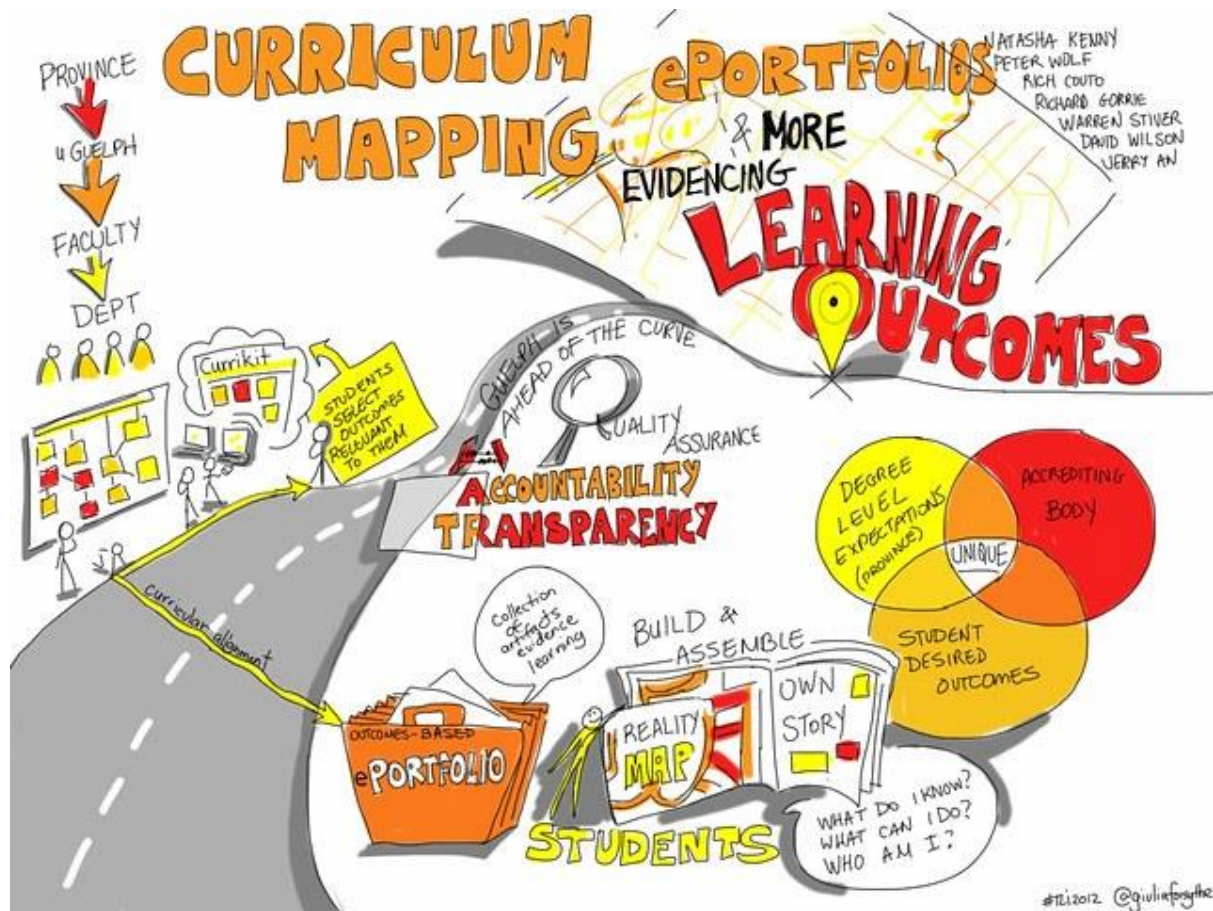
Benefits to the Environment



There are so many benefits for children to have free access to loose parts within a setting. Loose parts are a great opportunity for children to explore and develop their schemas. It allows them to create their own solutions and be imaginative as possible. Schemas are an essential part of learning in children. As they get older, their schemas will develop, and this is how children learn behaviours. For example, if a child throws an object on the floor, someone picks it up, then they throw it again, this is repetitive behaviour. It may seem annoying, but the individual has to have patience and resilience with the child, as they are observing what happens when they throw the object; what noise it makes, how heavy it is, and this allows them to develop a specific schema to enable them to progress further. An example of loose parts could be plastic screws and bolts. Playing with these objects will develop the child's rotational schema. They will learn that if they turn the screw into the bolt, it will get tighter. Schemas are fundamental in a child's development. The loose parts theory was written by Simon Nicholas in 1971, and is still a huge part of the curriculum in Wales, now more than ever (early years outdoors, 2017)

It is important that children can play and explore without the professionals getting involved. For example, they may be in the construction corner playing with building blocks and then a practitioner approaches them asking them what they're building. This interrupts their thought process and concentration. Instead, the practitioner should allow them to play without interruption, the professional should simply observe their play. Observing how they act when they can't achieve something, or when they do and simply be there in case the child asks them to help them, then it would be a good opportunity for the practitioner to get involved and play how the child wants them to, to meet the needs of the child.

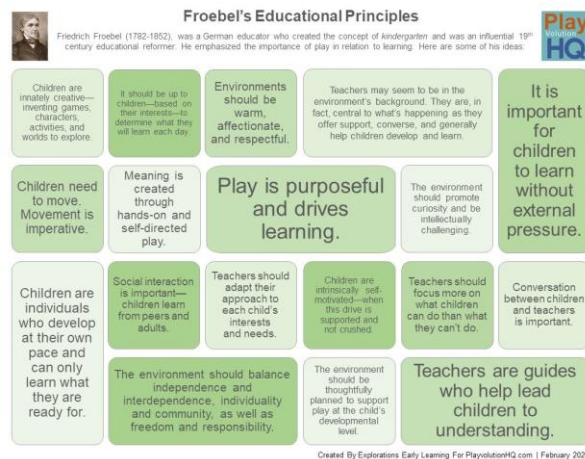
Theorists and Studies



Froebel believed that children learn best through play. Rather than children sitting at a desk, carrying out tasks and activities, he believed that learning through play is the best option in the developmental process of a child.

Froebel suggests that play is the best way for kids to learn since it enables them to explore the world at their own speed. Free play should be available to kids on a daily basis, and they should be inspired to get their hands dirty, stay active, and pursue their specific interests. Each child's developmental rate should be respected, and the game should be played at their own pace. All children learn at their own pace and in different ways, as noted by Froebel, and he thought it was more crucial for kids to set their own paces than for teachers to do so.

The only purpose of educators and practitioners is to serve as a guide for the children in their care. They serve as guides rather than knowledge keepers (Online learning college, 2021)



1 - Playvolutionhq (2020)

Montessori believed that natural activities are more useful than traditional way of teaching. The two main tenets on which Maria Montessori's theory of infant development was built were these:

Children have an inbuilt path of psychological development, whereas adults engage in self-construction (expressing one's own identity) through interactions with their environment. The first principle inspired Montessori to place a high importance on both the physical layout of the classroom and the particular objects she employed for the various age groups.



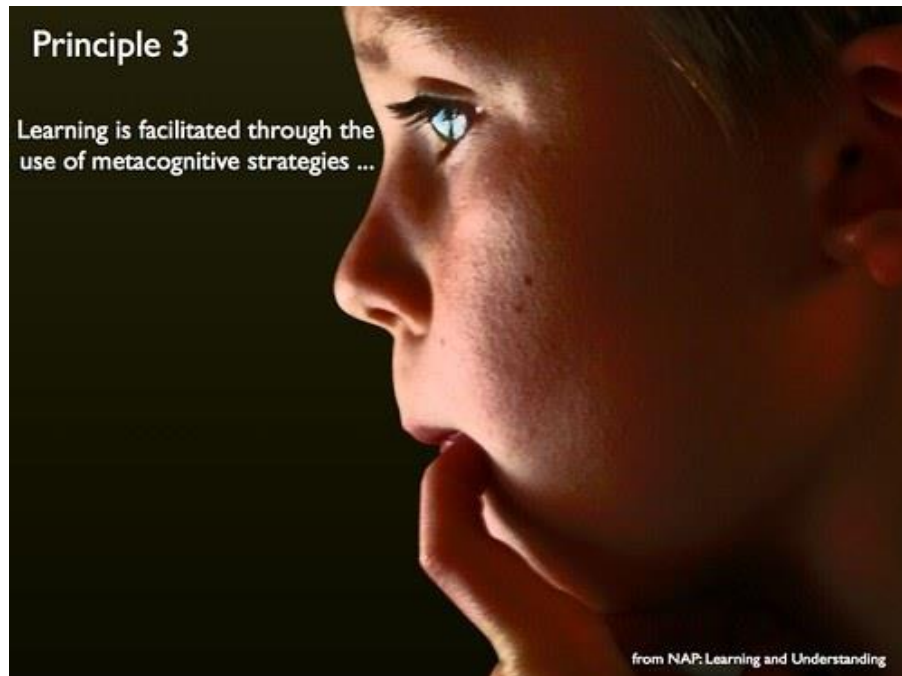
According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), a child's environment is made up of a series of interconnected structures. He arranged them according to the impact they have on children. Bronfenbrenner's focus shifted to the durable and persistent forms of interaction in the local environment, or the "proximal processes of development." His attention turned from environmental factors to the maturational processes people go through as they age. Bronfenbrenner's focus shifted to the durable and persistent forms of interaction in the local environment, or the "proximal processes of development." His attention turned from environmental factors to the maturational processes people go through as they age.

His theory can be applied in settings and education, according to the theory, instructors and parents should maintain open lines of communication and collaborate to the child's advantage in order to improve the development between the ecological systems in educational practise (simplypsychology, 2020)

Teachers should also be aware of the circumstances that families of their students may be in, including social and economic aspects that are a component of the various systems. According to the hypothesis, a positive relationship between parents and instructors should have a favourable impact on the child's development. The youngster must also take an active role in their education and be

involved socially and academically. To promote healthy growth, they must cooperate with their classmates and engage in worthwhile learning opportunities (Evans, 2012).

Meaningful Learning Experiences



Many educational psychologists have concentrated their efforts on attempting to create models that explain how we learn new information. One of the models that has done the best job of explaining how meaningful learning occurs is Ausubel's concept of meaningful learning. In order to learn, one must connect new knowledge to prior understanding. Since they must reorganise and arrange information, the subject has an active part in meaningful learning.

Strong constructivist influences can be seen in this idea. True knowledge, according to David Ausubel, is created by the subject through their own interpretations. The only information that can be based on literal memory is repetition as a result. It is barely significant or meaningless. The subject doesn't interpret anything in this kind of knowledge.

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