

Forest School's in relation to the Education For Sustainable Development Global Citizenship (ESDGC)



Forest School Wales is a voluntary organisation run by trained Forest School Leaders. Forest School was originally created in Scandinavia, since 1999 the practice of Forest Schools had expanded to Wales and is still being practiced (Forest School Wales, 2017). The ethos of Forest Schools is to provide children with the opportunity to connect with the outdoors. The Foundation Phase allows Forest Schools to be a part of children's lives by being a firm advocate (Welsh Government, 2015). The ESDGC links closely with Forest Schools as it allows practitioners to embed the ethos throughout Forest School activities. The framework focuses on the environment and the world which allows practitioners to make opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes that will support them in facing environmental challenges (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2008) (DCELLS).

Practitioners:

Forest school have 6 principles in which practitioners will strive to thrive and follow. Forest Schools provide a passage of learning experiences for the children (Forest School Wales, 2017). Welsh Governments ESDGC 'A Common Understanding for Schools' (2008) Document outlines 5 common areas for ESDGC which recognised challenges for access to regular training. Davis' (2005) states research shows how shared interest in the environment bring practitioners happiness, knowing they can bring personal values and knowledge to a forest school approach in their setting, such as gardening and building. Additional this supports Vygotsky, who empathised the importance of working together with communities, children and families, like Piaget stressed that knowledge and understanding is supported and developed by experiences. (Pound, 2005). The principles Forest School Association (no date) focuses on are: Plan, adapt, observe and review - Support development of relationships – Promote holistic development – Support risky play – Develop own practice – Adapt to individual child. Practitioners play a vital role in enhancing the ESDGC within Forest School Wales which enables hands on experience to build knowledge and understanding (Forest School Wales, 2017). However unlike Piaget's theory, Vygotsky's focused on the social element of learning from others, in comparison to Piaget's personal experience (Pound, 2005). This supports the whole community approach of Forest School and ESDGC. Although many staff in forest school are trained for the role, new practitioners however may find being outdoors and embedding the ESDGC challenging (Brooker et al., 2010). This may impact the ESDGC theme of children's choices and decisions and the natural environment (DCELLS, 2008). Research conducted highlighted that Forest School Wales (2017) offers membership support, the support consists of opportunities to develop best practice, including:-advice and information,- continuous professional development training -members skill-sharing meetings and networking meetings. This offers practitioners the opportunity to have access to essential support to develop best practice, when needed. (Forest School Wales, 2017). Although practitioners are important in enhancing children's development, Cutter-Mackenzie et al. (2014) disagrees to an extent as it is believed children should be left to explore and experience alone, this belief stemmed from Froebel's 'first-hand experiences' concept.

Sustainability:

Opportunity - Research states that practices in the most highly educated countries remain unsustainable (Down and Smyth, 2012). However, this has developed as Forest School Wales (2017) states children can learn and develop in the using sustainable natural materials as opportunities are provided for children to be able to play outdoors to enhance children's knowledge. This demonstrates that the Forest school organisation follows and abides by the ESDGC (Welsh Government, 2017). In comparison the Welsh government (2015) states under the knowledge and understanding of the world area of learning, that children should have opportunities to play outdoors, to be able to identify natural features. This is supported by Tovey (2016) as Froebel's theory is highlighted, as it considers the importance of children being able to have access to natural resources outdoors (Forest School Wales, 2017).

Challenge - Forest Schools (2017) emphasises the importance of play. This demonstrates that Forest schools abide by the ESDGC as the theme natural resources, as it highlights the importance of providing children to think for themselves (The Welsh Government, 2017). Similarly, the Welsh government (2015) state under the personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity area of learning, that children should have opportunities which are child led. This is supported by Unicef (2016) as article twelve of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to be able to express their feelings and views. Piaget's theory also states that children's play should be child led as this is how children learn and develop successfully (Kaye, 2016). In the same way, the Reggio Emilia approach emphasised the importance of children being able to access activities where it is child led as this is what increases a child's wellbeing (Solly, 2014). However, Bunting (2006) emphasises the importance of outdoor play being structured when using sustainable resources, as children must have outdoor experiences that are hands on. However, in New Zealand children's accessed to learning sustainability is restricted as it is believed to be too problematic for children to learn and develop at such a young age (Duhn, 2012).

Outdoors:

Opportunity - Forest School Wales (2017) state that forest school provides children with time and space. Practitioners use this time to observe and encourage children. Williams-Sieghfredson (2012) quotes "The grounds are not fenced in so there is freedom to roam at will." Confidence and self-esteem is developed by providing children with opportunities to take risks. Children learn to trust one another and to take on important roles outdoors (Williams-Sieghfredson, 2012). However, BBC News (2009) compared play in the 1960s to the present time. Play for children would take place far from home and unsupervised, whereas now there is more fear about letting children play without supervision. The rise in car ownership also lead to it being unsafe out on the streets. Hart (1993) state how Froebel saw the importance of developing children's learning by providing them with materials both natural and man-made.

Challenge - It states in Bilton (2010) that Practitioners might not know the importance of Sustainable Development, training should be encouraged. With the correct clothing and protection children should be allowed outdoors (Forest School, 2017). This links to the Foundation Phase as it states in Welsh Government (2016) exploring, investigating and using a wide range of stimuli and resources. A challenge which practitioners can come across is when working in a deprived area, families cannot afford to provide their children with the correct clothing for forest school. Child Poverty Action Group (2000) found that children living in poverty missed out on a range of experiences. This links to the ESDGC's theme of Wealth and Poverty due to families living in Poverty being unable to afford the clothing. With the correct clothing and protection, children should be allowed outdoors and learn to risk take and learn limitations (Forest School, 2017). DCELLS (2008) state outdoor environment is just as important as the indoors, children need both, this links to the ESDGC's section of Natural Environment. Upcycling is a way of teaching children about the outdoors and the impact of reusing objects to keep general waste down. Forest School (2017) states that it first started in Wales in 2000, whereas Scandinavia practiced it since the 19th century. Although both practice their role differently, holistically they follow the same guidelines (Forest School, 2017).

Conclusion

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Practitioners expand opportunities (Outdoor Matters, 2007).ESDGC prepares young people (ESDGC, 2008). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develops awareness of Environment (Welsh Government, 2017).Ethos embedded into ESDGC (DCELLS, 2008).Comparing countries (Duhn, 2012). |
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