

Part 2

Quality in Early Years Education.

In early childhood, quality provision can provide a child with the best opportunities and experiences to develop emotional, cognitive, and physical skills, to achieve better outcomes giving an enhance ability for further learning experiences according to Foundation Years, (n.d.) and the Welsh Government, (2013) Building a brighter future report. Quality provision can be subjective, depending on the persons experiences, knowledge, and future targets according to Cottle and Alexander, (2012). Parents or carers may be looking for settings where, the environment is hygienically safe, the day is very organised and structured, there are not many children attending, and staff are very cautious with regards to children taking risks, suggests PACEY, (n.d.) and Troiani, (2020). A setting manager or leader may be looking for a child centred approach, considering their individual needs, regardless of their race, gender, or any other socio-logical factors. However, their socio-logical factors are what makes the child individual, their experiences and cultural beliefs need to be at the heart of their learning, and practitioners need to value and build on them, states, Molocwa, *et al.* (2022).

Effective time management, thus meaning, the child has opportunities and experiences which can enhance their development whilst at the setting. Practitioner, therefore, need to have knowledge and understanding about child development, and ways to enhance that, for example following the new curriculum for Wales. An environment which is fully inclusive, of parents, carers, staff, children, and others involved to ensure an engaging, happy, and safe environment which can encourage the children to fully submerge into their learning, (Louisiana Healthcare Connections, 2020). Ehmke, and Schuster, (2023) suggests, that children who are unhappy in school can find it difficult to learn and develop. This could be for may reasons, one being anxiety, where the child is worried and concerned about an issue. They may suffer from an upset tummy, struggle to concentrate, behavioural issues, or have low attendance. Anxiety can affect the brains function, therefore, making it difficult for the child to access learning opportunities. With that being said, Molocwa, *et al.* (2022) states, practitioners need to be considerate of the child's socio-logical factors and cater for their needs. Lancashire Early Years, (2020) supports this and suggests that practitioners need to model calm, organised behaviour, talk about feelings and show

that all feelings are excepted, build a positive relationship with the child, to allow them to feel safe and have someone they can talk to, thus demonstrating quality care.

Workman, (2021) suggests that more investment is needed in early years childcare, for parents, which can make quality childcare more accessible. For the childcare providers, where cost of running the business and maintaining staff that are able to provide quality provision is more cost effective. Likewise, Melhuish, and Gardiner, (2018), and Blanden, Hansen, and McNally, (2018) believe that to improve quality provision in early years settings, staff qualification, training and ratio are areas that need to be developed, therefore, as the lowest paid practitioners, within education, funding is needed in order assist with improvements. The Froebelian approach as explained in Early Education, (2021), agrees that early years practitioners are the lowest paid, yet, these are the most influential years. Skills, knowledge and understanding children learn in these years will take them through into their adult life. Qualified and trained staff is essential for the early years, as Froebel believes that practitioners should become students and students should become practitioners during activities, in order for both to achieve a deeper understanding of each other and the learning opportunity. The adult child interaction whilst both engaged in an activity, can also be known as sustained shared thinking. A longitude study (Sylva, *et al.* 2004) known as The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE), concluded that high-quality provision in an early year setting can have positive impact on a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Fully qualified practitioners, with extensive knowledge about child development and the curriculum, offered a range of play-based activities, where the children can choose freely, yet, have the opportunities to extend their learning. These practitioners would then engage with the children, to extend learning through sustained shared thinking. This initiative was visible where progression was high.

The Welsh Government, (2017) introduced a national mission to raise standards in the education system, with a goal for practitioners to raise their educational standards, strive towards achieving their potential by continually assessing professional development opportunities. Leaders who collaborate with others in order to share effective initiatives. An environment accessible to all learner with opportunities to develop their own learning. And assessment tools which consider the child's individual needs. These cover the four areas that equate to quality care in Wales. Whereas, in Nigeria, there is an outcry for quality control on early years

provision. Abosede, (2016 p.108) exclaimed that early childhood education was in the hands of a child's mother. Their focus was to care and contribute to their local community. However, Abosede, (2016 p.108) recognising the effect of quality education, during the early years of a child's life can set a good foundation for further development, which in turn can give back to society with their knowledge and understanding.

Quality assurance can be measured in many different ways, in an early years setting, it is the collection of data gathered from children, staff and the setting to determine the level of quality care available, and areas for development. It can be understood as a way to raise standards or to ensure responsibility is taken according to Williams, (2016). National Day Nurseries Association known as NDNA is a scheme to support day nurseries in delivering high quality care, with a vision that children and their families thrive during their early childhood experiences and care. NDNA principal is a child centred approach ensuring that the child's needs and rights, according to the UN Convention on the rights of the child are met (NDNA, n.d.a). This displays a similarity with Bronfenbrenner's theory (Psychology Notes HQ, 2021), the microsystem with the NDNA approach is the child's parents or carer. This is catered for by working closely with the childcare settings in order to communicate with families, to build positive relationships and support network around the child. Next is the mesosystem, this is the workforce. The NDNA work closely with Cwlwm, (2021), in Wales, therefore offering bilingual support. The two schemes offer opportunities for practitioners to look at their professional development and how they can implement that into the setting. For example, by playing along side the children, practitioners with the knowledge and understanding, can enhance their learning opportunities with open-ended questioning. This interaction also can enhance the development of social and emotional skills by modelling good behaviours and communication (Sylva, *et al.* 2004). The NDNA,(n.d.a) believe that practitioners need to have the drive to develop themselves, be genuinely enthusiastic about a child's development and progress with a nurturing touch. However, according to Kimberley, (2016), some practitioners feel that the demand is increasing, with the amount of paperwork, whilst trying to keep to the ratio. Managers not supporting or making them feel appreciated and the salary remains low.

Then the exosystem, to maintain the settings growth and sustainability. Working with leaders the NDNA (n.d.b) can assist with a development plan, policies, and

procedures. Finally, the NDNA, (n.d.c) have the macrosystem and the chronosystem together. For the setting to be sustainably with the community and then also to be able to influence the change over time. The work they do with settings allows them to award a certificate or carry out an online audit to prepare for the inspection process, over 90% of settings registered with NDNA have been rating good or outstanding in recent years. Moreover, Cwlwm (n.d.) acknowledges the lack of funding for early childhood providers and has brought this to the attention of the Welsh Government, the importance of quality provision and how this can play a vital role in the economy as children grow and develop. Therefore, further funding is required.

Katharina, (2013) explains that children from wealthy backgrounds are able to access high quality provision, as their parents can afford to subsidise the setting to cover costs. This is not accessible to all children, and all children have the right to high quality provision. Some settings are struggling to cover the general costs, therefore, to pay for the support from the NDNA would be impossible.

The Welsh Government, (2017) have the national mission to raise practitioner standards, additionally, the key finding during the EPPE project (Sylva, 2004), and the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years, known as the REPEY project (Siraj-Blatchford, *et al.* 2002), suggest that to provide quality provision, practitioners need to have qualifications in the education sector, thus including knowledge and understanding about child development. Likewise, the NDNA scheme, look at ways practitioners can develop, in order to provide that quality provision. They are there to support growth and development for the whole setting, it is a quality assurance scheme.

The Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being scale, known as the SSTEWS scale, is a way of measuring the effectiveness of practitioners and how they support growth and development for the child, as well as measuring the child's emotional wellbeing and development. The SSTEWS scale is very effective and is used in many research projects, more recently the Study of Early Education Development according to Watch Me Grow, (n.d.). In contrast to this Melhuish and Gardiner, (2021) state, that the scale could be more beneficial if there was a limited amount of items, which would reduce the assessment time and cost. The SSTEWS scale is a seven-point scale, there are five sub-scales which assess the child's autonomy, social and emotional well-being, interactions, communication, and higher cognitive development like their problem solving (Brodie, 2015). There are 14 items within these five sub-

scales and Melhuish and Gardiner, (2021) believe that with fewer items, settings will be more susceptible to participate in research.

The new curriculum for non-maintained settings, (Welsh Government, 2022a) have five developmental pathways which are key features. These look at a holistic approach, and are centred around the child to ensure, enabling adults are providing the unique child with an enabling environment, in order to achieve autonomy, by having a sense of belonging in an environment that meets the child's need and interests. Leading to the enabling adult interacting with the child, communicating, and supporting their well-being, whilst enabling the time and opportunity for exploration, and developing their problem-solving ability. Vygotski believed that this was called the zone of proximal development, where the adult can scaffold the learning, enabling the child to develop a higher cognitive function, by becoming more inquisitive from the more knowledgeable other (Gauvain, 2020 p.446). Thus, the measure of the SSTEWS scale. To assess the quality of provision, of the child's emotional wellbeing and practitioners' engagement, interaction, and knowledge and understanding, the SSTEWS scale can be an effective quality assurance tool suggests Iles, (2019), and Howard, *et al.* (2018), which can provide necessary information in order for settings to improve its quality of care. Nutbrown, (2012) made many recommendations that practitioners working in early years setting need to be qualified, with not just some practitioners, but with all practitioners accounted for in the adult to child ratio. This can improve the quality of care our early years settings offer, therefore, improving the outcomes for the children. The Welsh Government has supported these recommendation, as settings who provide childcare for out of school hours need to have an acceptable amount of qualified staff by September 2022 (Welsh Government, 2022b).

Every child is unique and every child has the right to an education that can develop their full potential according to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef, 2019), the Welsh Government, (2017), concludes this and believes that every child has the right to high quality provision, thus enabling children to have access to an education that can cater for their individual needs in order to strive towards their potential. With a quality assurance scheme or a quality assurance tool, can assist settings to self-evaluate, states, European Education Area, (n.d.), address areas for improvement or sustain and share areas that are effective practice.

Quality assurance, ensures all children can receive high-quality provision which can improve their outcomes.

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