

ECAD4008

Leading the learning: what, how and why am I  
teaching?

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Targets from previous assignment:

- 1) Referencing is not accurate. Check and follow the appropriate conventions.
- 2) Maintain your critical engagement with Lit. throughout.

In this assignment I will be focusing on the philosophy of Foundation Phase Framework as a whole, and the pedagogical principles within the framework. I will draw on my placement experiences and undertake research to make suggestions to improve my ways of practice. I will also be giving recommendations as to how these suggestions could be put into a practical application. I will be concentrating on the three given pedagogical principles throughout the assignment, explaining the meaning behind them and how they can be seen in action, in the classroom. I will also use different theorists to back up any suggestions I make for my practice, and why some strategies already used in the classroom, are being used.

According to Donaldson (2015), a pedagogy is a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills with accurate judgement regarding what is necessary in order to promote the most effective learning. Entz (2006) says that the word 'Pedagogy,' originates from Ancient Greece where it translates to, 'Paidagogas.' She says that a 'Paidagogas,' was a trusted slave who would accompany a child to their class, made sure that public behaviour was satisfactory, cared for him and tutored him with his work. In my opinion, this has carried through to modern day education, as although it is no longer deemed as a person, it is a principle in which many teachers follow in order to ensure the best outcome for their learners. Entz (2006) agrees with this, stating that like a 'Paidagogas,' the role of a modern early years educator is to lead them, care for them, help them show good behaviour and finally, help and encourage them to learn. I believe that it is important to consider a range of pedagogies when teaching. It allows teachers to be more critical when planning, it gives teachers a better insight into the learner's needs and therefore allows them to teach them in the most effective way. I also believe that it gives teachers the opportunity to reflect and evaluate their lessons properly in order to make amendments and improvements for next time. More specifically, pedagogy can help us to, "be aware of the impact we have on children," "make the 'why' of our practice visible," and, "be reflective educators," (Scotland Education Gov, n.d).

The Foundation Phase Framework was introduced in "September 2010," and is currently the "statutory curriculum for all 3-7-year olds in Wales," (Welsh Government, 2015). The Welsh Government (2015) say that it encourages creativity and imagination in children, making learning more effective and enjoyable. The framework is unique to Wales and consists of 7 areas of learning;

- "Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity Area of Learning.

- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning.
- Mathematical Development Area of Learning.
- Welsh Language Development Area of Learning.
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World Area of Learning.
- Physical Development Area of Learning.
- Creative Development Area of Learning,” (Welsh Government, 2015).

NDNA (2019) states that the foundation phase will support identification of developmental delay in the early stages, special educational needs or ALN, and will apprise the provision of additional support for these children be it necessary. I believe it's important to have the ability to assist in identifying ALN as I would say that early identification will benefit the child in the long run. The earlier they have access to support, the earlier they'll start making progress which will give them more opportunities later in life. Dauncey (2015) agrees, as he says that the importance of the assessment which identifies if a child may have ALN cannot be overemphasised – the child is more likely to be responsive to support, the earlier that action is taken.

The first two pedagogical principles that I will be focusing on are 'Good teaching and learning and learning means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching,' (I will refer to this as PP1 throughout) and 'Good teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and experience,' (I will refer to this as PP2 throughout). The way I interpret PP1 is that the best outcome for teaching and learning is to use a wide range of strategies such as structured group work, whole class, guided learning and individual activities, as well as direct teaching. During my observation week in placement (I was in nursery), I noted that they mostly used whole class teaching for carpet time- teaching counting, Welsh and word soundings etc, but then after carpet time the children would be allowed to go and play. This would mostly be classified as guided learning, or 'enhanced provision,' because the teacher would set up activities around the classroom based on what they'd be learning about on the carpet, or what the current theme was at the time, so they'd be learning through play. Froebel "Considered that children actually learn best through self-activity, rich first-hand experience, problem solving, play and talk," (Tovey, n.d). This was exhibited in my placement class, as they would rotate in colour groups. While one group would be on creative table, another would be on snack, while one would be playing outside and two groups would get to choose what to play with (such as the role play area which would be continuous provision). The groups that get to choose would be classed as 'self-activity,' as they are deciding what they do. The rest of the groups would be classified as guided learning, as they'll be doing what the teacher has set for them. For example, if the

theme is 'space,' they'll be making planets on the creative table, or playing in the sandpit that has toy planets in it, with maybe a laminated activity card saying, "Try and find Saturn." Within these guided learning stations will be learning through problem solving, play, first-hand experience and talk. There may be a space themed jigsaw station which will include problem solving. They also have the role play area to play in which involves learning through talk and play. Pell et al (2007) explains that advocates for certain teaching approaches will make strong claims for said approaches and will be able to specify direct implications of e.g. group work (Husbands and Pearce, 2012). However, Galton and Hargreaves (2009) said that more sophisticated research will suggest that the main factor for success of various pedagogies is not so much their innate influence, but the effectiveness of how they're implicated and the thoroughness of which they're conducted (Husbands and Pearce, 2012). Hattie (2003) would agree, stating that it is not the strategies themselves, but the teacher's utilisation of the strategies that makes a difference (Husbands and Pearce, 2012). This brings me onto the importance of using reflective teaching as a strategy when adopting this pedagogy. To my knowledge, reflective teaching is having the ability to reflect on and self-evaluate lesson plans and lessons to engage in continuous learning in order to improve not only their own practice, but the learners' performances.

*A person who reflects throughout his or her practice is not just looking back on past actions and events, but is taking a conscious look at emotions, experiences, actions, and responses, and using that information to add to his or her existing knowledge base and reach a higher level of understanding (Mathew, Mathew and Peechattu, 2017).*

I would agree that a teacher's utilisation of the strategies is the most important thing- I believe it's like cog work, good planning and creativity with regards to the different strategies and having the ability to use different blends of approaches will complement each other and create an effective outcome. Due to realising the importance of this, I will be making a recommendation for my personal teaching practice. When planning lessons and resources, I need to consider the pedagogical principles and apply them correctly in order to ensure that they directly relate to the purposes of the curriculum. To put this into practice I will be keeping a list of the pedagogical principles on my computer so they're accessible, and I will also be keeping a copy of the curriculum downloaded so I can refer back to it when planning. Along with using a blend of different approaches, there needs to be utilisation of the cross curricular approach, to stay in line with the curriculum. The cross curricular approach "favours the dynamic use of learning topics and themes to be covered and skills/competencies to be developed in a number of AoLe's across the curriculum (IBE, n.d).

This is where PP1 links to PP2. PP2 is, 'Good teaching and learning ranges within and across Areas of Learning and experience.' I believe this means that good teaching and learning takes place when teachers plan lessons taking various AoLe's into consideration as opposed to just focusing on one.

*The Curriculum for Wales guidance promotes collaboration and cross-disciplinary planning, learning and teaching, both within and across Areas. This will enable learners to build connections across their learning and combine different experiences, knowledge and skills (Welsh Government, 2020).*

Barnes (2015) writes about how Csikszentmihalyi (1997) and Sternberg (2003) established links between curriculum subjects and engendering creative thinking, arguing that creative ideas frequently stem from interactions between subjects or cultures. However, Barnes (2015) mentions that educationalist Hirsch (2006) argues for a clarified 'knowledge curriculum,' of continuous subject dissociation. Brualdi (1996) notes that Gardner's theory of 'Multiple Intelligence,' states that there are seven intelligences needed to function in society productively, and that teachers should consider these as equally as important as the other. These seven intelligences are, "Visual-spatial, Bodily-kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, and Logical-mathematical," (Lane, n.d.). As Brualdi (1996) explains, this contrasts traditional educational systems which generally create a strong emphasis on the development and utilisation of verbal and mathematical comprehension. Therefore, the theory implies that educators should acknowledge and teach a wider range of skills and talents. An example of a practical application using the cross curricular approach would be planning a Welsh lesson and incorporating music and P.E by learning a Welsh song and creating some movements/dances to the songs. You could even go further and incorporate some maths into it by making the Welsh song to do with counting, addition or subtraction for example. In my placement school, the children would be engaging with the cross curricular approach whilst playing as they had the option to go on the iPads to do some maths activities, or to go to the creative table to engage with their creative development, or maybe play some Welsh activities on the interactive board. Whilst the children were rotating in their groups, I would call a child up individually and do a focus task with them. This focus task would usually be based on literacy as this is something that they have to be guided with due to the fact they're so young they haven't reached the stage in their literacy development where they can read or write yet. Although it was literacy based, I made sure that I was engaging with the cross curricular approach, by asking them to glue and stick photos in their book or getting them to colour in the picture independently. This

would be engaging their creative development as well as their literacy. To improve my own ways of practice with regards to this pedagogical principle, I will be implementing a stronger cross curricular approach with regards to my focus tasks. During placement I think I used the cross curricular approach well with regards to enhanced provision around the classroom, however I think I could improve how I incorporate the approach within my specific lesson plans. For example, if I'm doing a maths lesson with a focus group, I should incorporate Welsh (where appropriate) into it as this would be a good cross curricula reference based on what they've been learning mostly in carpet sessions. I could also incorporate music into it by making up a song with the children to help them memorise what they've learnt. Although it's important to make sure I'm taking the cross curriculum approach into consideration, I also have to consider what I'm teaching as the main component of the lesson, otherwise the AoLe changes- during placement I became too preoccupied with making sure I was using cross curricula enough that I became distracted from the main AoLe of my lesson.

The last pedagogical principle is, 'Good teaching and learning sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and engage interest.' I interpret this as meaning the best way to set challenges for children is to make sure that they're catered to their abilities - built on previous knowledge. It's also crucial to make sure that tasks are planned around engaging the pupils' interest so that they're motivated to complete them. A strategy that I've seen being used in placement is 'Using more knowledgeable others,' which is based on Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development.' This strategy involves teachers setting differentiated tasks for different comfort zones. They will create three tasks of similar contents but different levels of complexity. The aim of doing this is so pupils can identify where they feel as though they can work with no assistance, where they feel as though they could do it with some assistance, and where they feel as though it's completely out of reach even with the teacher's support – *please see appendix 1*. The 'ZPD,' has been put into practical applications within the classroom, and has been modified as the 'Comfort zone, stretch zone and danger zone,' – *please see appendix 2*. Vygotsky "emphasised the role of the practitioner in matching learning activities to the child's level of development and encouraging progression in a child's thinking," (Welsh Assembly Government, n.d.). The Welsh Assembly Government (n.d.) note how Piaget believes that children are active participants who construct learning by making connections between new experiences and previous learning. I believe that it's important for children to have the opportunity to recognise material that they've done before, so that they feel more comfortable and confident when completing tasks. A strategy that could be used to support this theory would be, 'Scaffolding.' Scaffolding consists of many different strategies under one umbrella term, but there is one particular strategy that could be utilised effectively under this theory. This

strategy would be, “The teacher explicitly describes how the new lesson builds on the knowledge and skills students were taught in a previous lesson,” (Partnership, n.d.). Partnership (n.d.) also say that this doesn’t only have to be used to build on previous knowledge but can also be used to make connections between the lesson and the personal interests to increase engagement and understanding- which links directly to the pedagogical principle in question. Bruner would agree that scaffolding is a useful strategy as he, “stressed the importance of adult intervention to support or ‘scaffold’ learning and enable a child to make progress,” (Welsh Assembly Government, n.d.). I have seen a large utilisation of ‘pupil voice,’ whilst on placement. I’ve seen this in many forms, but the main strategy that I’ve seen being used is called, ‘EPIC,’ which stands for, ‘Everyone Planning in Class.’ This is used to engage the children’s interest, as it consists of the whole class discussing the theme that they’ll be focusing on for the immediate future, and the children give suggestions as to what type of things they’d like to focus on with regards to that theme. This could include questions that they’d like to find out the answers to, or it could include suggestions for certain activities they may want to undertake – *please see appendix 3, 4, and 5*. To improve my own practice, I will be adopting the scaffolding technique more often which will require taking it into consideration when lesson planning. I will however be looking at different strategies within the scaffolding technique. I will be looking at strategies such as, “The teacher describes or illustrates a concept, problem, or process in multiple ways to ensure understanding,” and “The teacher gives students a simplified version of a lesson, assignment, or reading, and then gradually increases the complexity, difficulty, or sophistication over time,” (Partnership, n.d.).

To my mind, the current curriculum definitely has some evidential doubts. In 2013, it was announced that Wales had, “fallen behind the rest of the UK significantly in reading, maths and science for the third time,” (BBC Wales, 2013). I do believe that a new curriculum is mandatory given this information. At the present-day I believe the curriculum is struggling to keep up with fast developing theories and technology that are becoming more widely accepted in education, such as Piaget’s ‘Constructivist,’ theory. His theory “is based on the belief that children are active participants who construct learning,” (Welsh Assembly Government, n.d.). The new ‘Curriculum for Wales’ has been formed around the ‘Successful Futures’ report by Donaldson. Teachers and practitioners across Wales have also come together to assist with configuration of the curriculum. It sets out to focus on four purposes which will conform with the six new areas of learning that are also being introduced. Based on this, I would say that the new curriculum has a similar structure to the current foundation phase framework. The framework has seven areas of learning however and the new curriculum is only planning for six. As Donaldson (2015) states, the curriculum should be

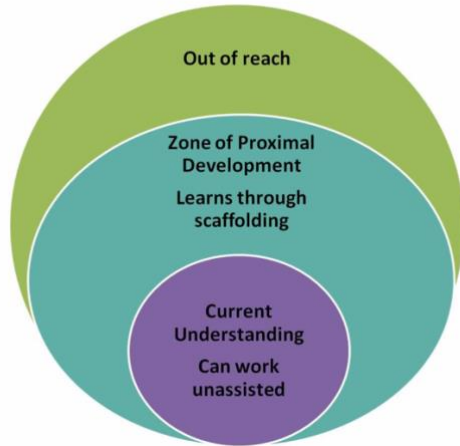
organised into AoLe's that demonstrate the magnitude of the curriculum. He goes on to say that the areas should provide a solid context for the development of the four purposes, they should be coherent, and implement exclusive ways of thinking. Another component of the new curriculum is that schools will get to decide how they interpret it. "Individual schools will design their own ways of making sure their pupils develop the right skills," (BBC News, 2019). I do feel as though there are some limitations to this new curriculum. Due to the fact it's been made subject to interpretation, there's no guide as to how it should be taught which may lead to confusion within the school systems, meaning that consequently, different children are receiving different educations. Anderton (2017) would agree, saying that she doesn't feel as though anyone has the correct idea as to how we're supposed to be teaching or who's intended to have started which components of the new curriculum.

Throughout this module I have come to learn about the importance of having pedagogical principles within education. I've also realised the significance of having personal views on these pedagogies, to ensure that they can be taken into consideration properly and consequently incorporated into lessons in the future.

In conclusion, I will be adopting three new strategies into my teaching practice, hopefully to induce an evidential development to my pedagogies and my practice. Firstly, I will be taking more consideration into utilising the correct application of pedagogical principles when planning lessons and resources, so that they directly relate to the curriculum. Secondly, I will be implanting a stronger cross curricular approach with my focus tasks. Lastly, I'm going to adopt the scaffolding technique more often, using different strategies such as describing a concept or problem in multiple ways to ensure understanding, and giving a simplified version of a lesson to start with and increasing the complexity over time. I will be assessing whether or not I've implemented these strategies effectively by self-reflecting at the end of my next placement and making a comparison between my interim reports.

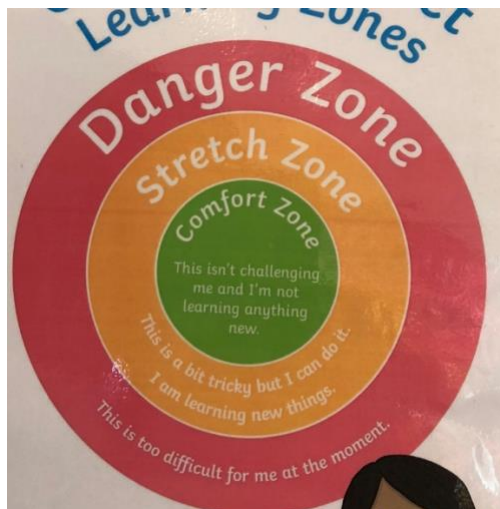
# Appendix

## Zone of Proximal Development



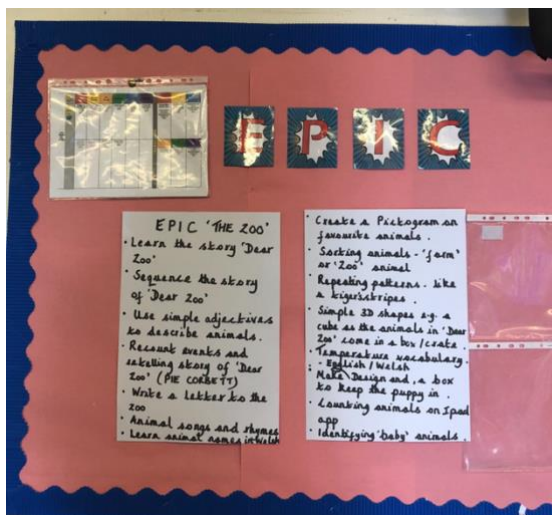
1.

(Kaatmann, n.d.)



2.

(Personal photo, 2020)



3.

(Personal photo, 2020)

### EPIC 'THE ZOO'

- Learn the story 'Dear Zoo'
- Sequence the story of 'Dear Zoo'
- Use simple adjectives to describe animals.
- Recount events and retelling story of 'Dear Zoo' (PIE CORBETT)
- Write a letter to the zoo
- Animal songs and rhymes
- Learn animal names in Welsh

4.

(Personal photo, 2020)

- Create a Pictogram on favourite animals.
- Sorting animals - 'farm' or 'Zoo' animal
- Repeating patterns - like a tiger's stripes.
- Simple 3D shapes e.g. a cube as the animals in 'Dear Zoo' come in a box / crate.
- Temperature vocabulary.
  - English / Welsh
- Make / Design and, a box to keep the puppy in.
- Counting animals on iPad app
- Identifying 'baby' animals.

5.

(Personal photo, 2020)

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