

Curiosity Case



Image: Murphy (2024).

What is the Curiosity Case?

The Curiosity Case presents children with a fascinating collection of authentic objects all of which are designed to spark their natural curiosity. The authentic resources are simple real-life items that children might or might not have experienced before. These treasures, housed in an antique display case, stimulate investigation and curiosity. Even when closed, the case stimulates young children, generating inquiries and creating anticipation about the items hidden within.

Concept inspiration.

Loose parts inspired the development of the curiosity case, which uses their inherent open-ended nature to encourage inquiry, creativity, and discovery. According to Sardi and Mayar (2023, p.4121) loose parts refer to a wide range of freely available objects presented in the natural environment. These include branches, bark, leaves, stones, and flowers for example.

While loose parts are originally based on natural materials, the curiosity case instead places greater emphasis on authenticity, recognising the importance of authentic objects for encouraging children's exploration and manipulation of textures. As stated in the Curriculum for funded non-maintained settings (2022, p.17), giving children opportunity to apply their learning to everyday life is essential for developing their understanding of the world.

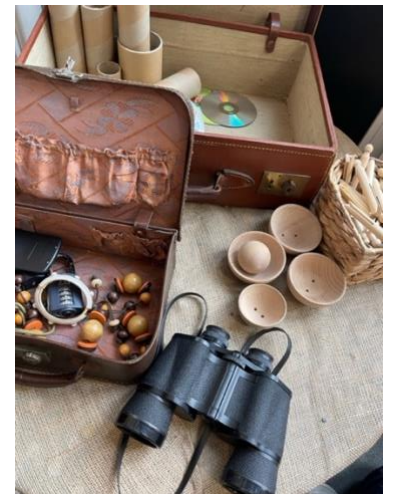
With authentic objects, each item provides a distinct tactile experience stimulating children's curiosity and extending their involvement in learning. Like loose parts the items in the Curiosity Case have no instructions on how they should be played with meaning the children can make their own decisions and can use their imagination suggests Play Scotland (2024, p.1).



Image: Early Impact (2024).

Authentic objects.

Here are some examples of the authentic treasures found in the Curiosity Case in my setting, all of which are household objects no longer needed in the home. According to The Curiosity Approach (2021) authentic resources which vary in shape, size and texture offer children a diverse range of tactile sensations and sensory exploration. Unlike mass-produced toys or standardised educational materials, authentic resources have distinct features that engage children's senses and stimulate inquiry in meaningful ways.



Images: Murphy (2024).



Cost

To keep the costs down, ask parents to donate any unwanted household items. As the saying goes one person's rubbish is another person's treasure, and this saying resonated with the concept of the curiosity case. Alternatively look around your own house and see if you have any unwanted household items, they can be simple like calculators or old games controllers. By utilising donations given by parents in the setting and our own unwanted objects the collection of the items becomes more cost effective.

How the Curiosity Case supports child development.

Exploration and teamwork.

Firstly, the Curiosity Case fosters a child-led approach to learning through the authentic objects. When integrated into the continuous and enhanced provision the curiosity case allows children to embark on explorations either independently or in collaboration with their peers. Children who participate in group exploration with peers not only enhance their learning but also experience the joy of discovering new skills together. This collaborative approach to learning is supported by the Welsh government (2023). This approach creates an environment in which children are empowered to ask questions not only with their peers but also with enabling adults. This allows for meaningful exploration of the world through teachable moments. This point of view aligns with Vygotsky's theory emphasising that children's learning is increased by interactions with those who have greater knowledge and understanding says Abtahi (2017, p.35).



Image: The Curiosity Approach (2021b).

Meaningful learning opportunities.

The authentic treasures in the Curiosity Case provide rich and meaningful learning opportunities. For example, while children may be familiar with using an iPad camera, the addition of an actual camera in the Curiosity Case exposes them to a completely new set of skills. They learn the value of looking through the lens to frame their picture before taking an actual photograph, which improves their understanding of photography and technology. Also, through fragile authentic items children learn the value of respect and care as they are not as durable as plastic toys.



Image: Murphy (2024)

Problem Solving.

The Curiosity Case encourages problem solving by developing children's natural curiosity, critical thinking skills, independence, and teamwork. These skills are developed through the play-based discovery where children can face obstacles as to figuring out how to use the treasures within. For instance, within my setting, children are presented with intriguing locks that require figuring out the combination to unlock them. Additionally, children will be encouraged to think imaginatively as they experiment with the loose parts contained in the Curiosity Case. With no predetermined rules they will have the opportunity to experiment and innovate, developing their imaginative thinking and problem-solving skills as they navigate through the treasures hidden within.



Image: Murphy (2024).

Curiosity.

The Curiosity Case demonstrates flexibility in early childhood education through its adaptability. It is easily integrated into a variety of learning environments and suited to children's developmental needs and interests. The Curiosity Case can be used in the classroom, outdoors or at home. Furthermore, its contents can be updated or cycled on a regular basis to keep children interested. As stated by Shankar and Zum (2020, p.87) children are more curious about objects or topics that have grabbed their interest. Therefore, the flexibility allows practitioners to adapt the Curiosity Case to various themes and interests which keeps children's natural spark to explore and discover new treasures.



Image: Mama's den (2028).

My expertise.

I am confident in my abilities to create this product, given my extensive experience in an environment that is consistent with the Curiosity Approach. My profession has given me an in-depth understanding of child-led learning and the value of learning through play. This first-hand expertise has given me invaluable insights into how to properly create and implement a product that encourages children's curiosity, exploration, and meaningful learning experiences. As a result, I am ideally equipped for developing a product that not only aligns with the concepts of the Curiosity Approach, but is also in line with the Curriculum for Wales (2020). The Curriculum states that children should show curiosity and question how things work and that is the overarching goal of the Curiosity case.

Training sessions for practitioners.

Due to my expertise in the Curiosity approach, I will be delivering training sessions to other practitioners about the need for the Curiosity Case in the continuous and enhanced provision. With this enhanced training service, practitioners will obtain a thorough understanding of the Curiosity Case and its beneficial impact on early childhood education. The practitioners who attend will be motivated and encouraged to create curiosity-driven learning environment from seeing the positive effects the curiosity case has on my setting. The Welsh Government (2022, p.13) says that when practitioners provide opportunities for children to experience awe and wonder, it leads to them having an interest about the world around them, inspires them to solve problems, develops creativity and allows them to think critically. This training session will add invaluable social value by encouraging other practitioners to incorporate the Curiosity Case into their provision (Gerlach, 2021, p.22). . Which will influence the communities' children as they will be able to explore the curiosity case's treasures.

Potential challenges.

Gathering the contents for the Curiosity Case.

Initially, practitioners may face difficulty in obtaining real artefacts or intriguing objects for the Curiosity Case, which may be seen as costly and problematic. This could obstruct practitioners developing a Curiosity Case in their setting.

Sustaining the children's interest in the Curiosity Case.

A further issue that could arise is ensuring that the Curiosity Case remains interesting and fresh over time. Practitioners will need to be creative to keep the case's contents relevant to changing interests and to acquire new knowledge from the items within.



Image: The Curiosity Approach (2021b).

Safety concerns.

Practitioners may have safety concerns about using real-life objects in the Curiosity Case. These concerns may arise from the possible risks connected with specific products, such as sharp or fragile items which could endanger children if they are broken. For example, practitioners may be concerned about using China cups and saucers, as in the case of them breaking they may produce sharp edges.

Unable to attend the training session.

Practitioners may have restrictions that prevent them from attending the training sessions for the Curiosity Case. This could be due to their workload, class ratio and balancing their personal commitments.

“Unlocking curiosity, one treasure at a time!”



Image: Murphy (2024).

Part 2

One strength of the Curiosity Case is the growing market demand for products that promote curiosity. According to Learning Journals (no date), in an era of rapid technology innovation children face limited possibilities for play and discovery. The Curiosity Case addresses the issue by bridging the gap and offering opportunities for children to engage in play-based discovery and develop critical thinking skills through the authentic objects within the case. The Curiosity Case's development is motivated by a belief in curiosity's potential in education settings for children. This passion stems from the benefits of capturing children's curiosity in a world where technology controls much of their time (Cardon, Glauser and Murnieks, 2017, p.29). Engel (2013) adds to this view, stating that children's natural curiosity is a motivator for their learning journey, evident through their natural desire to question, observe others and actively immerse themselves in their surroundings. Even when the Curiosity Case is closed it stimulates children's curiosity creating anticipation about the items hidden within.

Furthermore, the Curiosity Case's adaptability to meeting young children's changing interests highlights its flexibility, while also aligning with the ideas of the VUCA model. As according to Shanker and Zurn (2020, p.87) the attraction of objects or concepts that stimulate a child's interest has a significant effect on their curiosity. This makes them naturally inclined to investigate further, question, and seek explanation. As Kaz (2017, p.11) points out, the Curiosity Case's volatility allows it to remain relevant and engaging in the face of the ever-changing nature of children's interests, symbolising a strategic response to the VUCA framework barriers. This versatility ensures that the Curiosity Case satisfies children's current needs and interests while also anticipating future changes through observations.

However, Nesta and Sage's (2017, p.15) findings reflect that only 14% of small and medium sized businesses participate in the education sector. This statistic highlights the lack of new tools designed specifically for childhood education, despite its vital role in setting the groundwork for lifelong learning. In the education sector in Wales, nurturing curiosity and a love for learning is part of the Curriculum for funded non maintained settings (2022, p.15). This demonstrates how the Curiosity Case is a unique item that it fosters learning through children's explorations of the treasures hidden within. Similarly, Froebel cited by Johnson and Watts (2018, p.23) advocated

for a pedagogy where teachers facilitate children make their own discoveries. The Curiosity Case stands out as a pioneering strategy that is consistent with Froebel's concepts, utilising every-day items to facilitate this discovery process. The Curiosity Case, as Froebel advocated, enables children to create problems as well as solving them, fostering creativity and critical thinking skills (Johnson and Watts, 2018, p.23).

One notable disadvantage of the Curiosity Case is its restriction in replicating the rich and diverse experiences that children have in the outdoors. Such as exploring the garden, delving into ponds, and searching beaches for treasure, children accept muddiness and curiosity as normal aspects of their daily lives in the outdoors says Waite (2011, p.19). However, while the Curiosity Case gives regulated and selected chances for play-based learning, it lacks the natural and unlimited exploration found in the outdoor environment. According to the Curriculum for funded non-maintained settings (2022, p.16) the outdoors is a huge and immersive environment for children providing rich and authentic opportunity to engage their senses in significant ways. For example, the outdoors is infused with natural scents like flowers, and children can hear the natural rhythms of the environment, like birds chirping and leaves rustling. The Curiosity Case, like the diverse and stimulating outdoor environment, offers children multi-sensory experiences that pique their interest, encourage inquiry, and promote holistic development. Although, on rainy days, any outdoor environment becomes a paradise for the discovery of slugs, worms, and snails, enabling possibilities for encouraging rich language development and shared discoveries for example suggests Ouvry and Furtado (2019, p.92).

Another challenge with the Curiosity Case concept is its implementation in educational settings. This is due to children's increased screen time having a variety of negative impacts on their health and well-being. According to DiYanni, Cream, and Diaz (2023, p.4) consequences of this include greater risks of obesity, poorer food habits and an increased possibility of experiencing depression amongst children. These repercussions might influence practitioners to utilising the outdoors to promote curiosity and exploration rather than the Curiosity Case due to the ability for children to be physically active. Similarly, according to the OECD (2016, p.12), teachers have the stress of managing a number of changes in education without appropriate training to enable successful integration. These challenges may lead

practitioners to be less inclined to incorporate the Curiosity Case into their daily routines.

The Curiosity Case had potential for effective marketing through the 4P's of marketing on social media platforms . As Sajid (2016, p.1) points out, social media has emerged as the main corporate trend, providing more than just marketing capabilities. It provides a direct channel for communicating with practitioners, allowing for fast and direct engagement. Furthermore, using social media for marketing allows businesses to quickly convey information and details to a varied population of customers, increasing their reach and engagement suggests Sajid (2016, p.2). In the sense of the Curiosity Case training sessions could be advertised for example.

However, according to Basar (2021, p.3) marketing on social media means that consumers have access to a wide range of brand information and allows for online reviews. While this has provided new opportunities for the Curiosity Case business, it also poses a threat to the brands reputation due to negative publicity. Negative publicity could arise from practitioners' safety concerns over the authentic objects in the Curiosity Case, that could become a hazard if broken. However, as the Health and Safety Executive (no date) states when creating and implementing play opportunities for children, it is important to consider the risks and the advantages. While children's safety is the highest priority, it is equally important for practitioners to recognise that hazards are inherent in play and risk-taking is a component of childhood development says Health and Safety Executive (no date).

To conclude, the Curiosity Case's identified a key gap in the market caused by an increase in children's screen time, which reduces opportunities for play-based discovery. However, it is important to note that the Curiosity Case is unable to recreate the immersive outdoor experiences that children have in their daily life, but can be used alongside. Additionally, while social media platforms present opportunities for promoting the Curiosity Case, they also pose a threat in terms of possible negative publicity. Although, by proactively addressing potential threats by the encouragement for risky play, the Curiosity Case can further establish itself as a valuable tool for fostering holistic development in children.

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