



Scrapbook - The First 1000 Days

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The First 1000 Days



The first 1000 days of a child's life is the period from conception up until their second birthday. According to UNICEF (2013) during this important time the child will go through different stages of health, growth and neurodevelopment. Stated by UNICEF (2013) the most rapid stage of brain growth is during the last trimester of pregnancy and the first two years of life. During the first two years of life, it gives the best opportunity to provide nutrition and ensure development for the child.

The first 1000 days of life are highly important as it can affect a young child's development if not adhered to properly. Stated by Bust and Pedro (2020) the first 1000 days of an infant's life is the period where growth and development occur more rapidly than any other stage of life, meaning the first 1000 days can be a very exposed period for effects of malnutrition. Poor nutrition can cause problems later in life with physical growth, brain development and socio-emotional adjustment, showing that effective care in the first 1000 days is highly important to stop these problems occurring in the future. Bust and Pedro (2020) found that cognitive stimulation in the first 1000 days is linked to language development, problem solving and mathematical solving later in life. Poor cognitive stimulation during this period could lead to problems being able to develop all these skills properly in adulthood.

Complementary to this Brodie (2018, p,16) stated from birth to age three is a vital period to ensure learning and growth is completed correctly to ensure subsequent development for young children.

Stated by Cusick and Georgieff (2016, cited in UNICEF, 2013) the brains growth and development and structure are shaped early in life before the age of three. If the opportunity to optimize brain development early on in life is failed, then it can cause long term problems later in life.

In the first 1000 days of a baby's life the brain develops at a rapid pace due to environment and genes. People's brains will continue to develop into adult hood but in the early years its particularly

complex. For example, by age one the size of a child's brain is already 72% of adult volume and by age two it reached 83%. Lastly, a young child's brain is very advanced that by age two the connections that are being built in the young child's brain are occurring twice as fast compared to an adult. (Save the children,2016).



1 - (source: babycentre.com 2024)

Effective Care Giving

Pikler (1968, cited in Kayir, 2022) believed that physical and emotional health came hand in hand when helping a child develop correctly. According to Pikler (1968) a mother and babies' relationship in the first few months of a baby's life affects the mental development of the baby. Pikler (1968) also believed that motor development had a large effect on a child general development, so the more the motor development would progress the more likely it would lead to healthy psychological development.

In caregiving, routine can be seen as highly important for most families and babies. Pikler (1968, cited in Kayir, 2022) also believed that routines were very important for young children. Pikler (1968) stated that routines and rituals created bonds between the child and caregiver as the child would be able to get used to the routine and understand that the care giver was there to help change, feed and support them, this resulted in the baby feeling more relaxed.

Effective care giving should include proper planning and reflection on physical care such as feeding, changing and sleeping. Effective caregiving should always be respectful and co-operative, the practitioner should be giving care with the child not to the child. This can be achieved by acknowledging body language and emotions, for example if a baby is uncomfortable, they usually cry. To ensure practitioners are giving effective care they should respond to the child social cues, give reassurance and understand what the child's individual needs are. The young child should feel safe and well cared for in their environment as if they were at home with their parents/guardians (Birth to five matters, 2023).

Enabling Environments

According to the Welsh Government (2023) young children leaving home for the first time and going to nursery need to be welcomed into indoor and outdoor environments which offer an authentic and fun opportunities for them to be able to explore and cater to their interests. The Welsh Government (2023) states an enabling environment as an indoor or outdoor space that has been developed to support all children's needs and interests, the enabling environments should be age appropriate and support the children's holistic development.

Similarly, Hodgman (2012, p,16 & 17) stated that enabling environments are so important for early years as it plays a key role in their development. She suggested that an enabling environment should include stimulation, challenges, flexibility and include the children's interests.

In addition to this Read (2014) stated that in order to create an enabling environment it starts with the role of the practitioner. Read (2014) suggested that collaborative problem solving, reflective practice and good supervision is the key to ensuring an enabling environment for the young children.

Reggio Emilia (1860, cited in Haifa, 2020) Stated the aim of this way of learning is to focus on the rights of the child and the importance of the role of a teacher as a professional researcher. Reggio Emilia aims to focus on partnership in education. This way of learning believe that anyone has the right to creativity and that infants and toddlers should be allowed to touch, move, listen and discover the setting around them in a supportive environment. Linking back to the role of a teacher Reggio Emilia (1860) believes that teachers should be professional and knowledgeable researchers who ensure they practice learning and reflecting. The teacher's role includes many different aspects such as listening and scaffolding the child's learning by trying to understand them as an individual. Reggio Emilia (1860) believes that the teachers, children and the parents are all equal participants in the child's academic learning and in Reggio Emilia settings, parents are often involved in the school decision making process.

Reggio Emilia (1860, cited in Hodgman,2012) explains their version of an enabling environment and how its important in Reggio Emilia settings that mirrors, photographs, plants and lots of light are used in an early year setting. This type of environment is designed to help engage the young children and be able to display their work to help the setting feel like a community and shared space for everyone including parents to enjoy.

Enabling Adults



(Source: caring&sharing, 2015)

Parents/Guardians have a vital role in supporting children's learning development. According to Wilson (2016) creating effective partnerships with parents and/or guardians is an important part of early years foundation stage. By obtaining trusting relationships with families the early years practitioners lead to support and information which can help lead to more supportive help for the child and their families.

The enabling adult sets learning goals and creates safe environments to support the child regulate their feelings in positive ways. The enabling adult should show kindness and compassion and support the child during times of change and prepare them during transitions. Enabling adults respond to the child interests and encourage their individuality by supporting their choice to make their own decisions and have their own voice. An enabling adult should help make connections between the child's home and their community. (Wilson,2016).

The Welsh Government (2023) believes that an enabling adult should encourage a joyful learning experience to create "teachable moments". Similarly, to Wilson (2016) the Welsh Government (2023) also believes that enabling adults should be creating a fun and safe environment for the children to be able to develop efficiently. The Welsh Government (2023) suggest the role of the practitioner is to enable connections with family, communities and cross curricular connections to ensure the young children have a balanced and well-rounded education. Having good observation skills and planning resources is another important aspect of the role of the early years' practitioner according to the Welsh Government (2023) and they believe they should be observant of children's interests and encourage these interests into their learning.

Research such as Bronfenbrenner ecological systems (1997 cited in National Library of Medicine, 2015) supports the information from Wilson (2016) and the Welsh Government (2023) by stating that the immediate environment of the baby such as their parents, caregiver, school and daycare have a large effect on how the child will develop. Bronfenbrenner (1997, cited in National Library of Medicine, 2015) stated that the more nurturing and encouraging the environment the better the child would be able to develop and grow.

Linking to Bronfenbrenner ecological theory, The Welsh Government (2023) believes that a supportive environment is very important to help the children develop efficiently. One way of encouraging appropriate development is the pathway of belonging. The Welsh Government (2023) believes the enabling adult should be inclusive and ensure all children's unique needs are cared for. They complete this role by promoting an inclusive ethos that values all cultures, creating strong connections with families and communities, make effective sensory play during learning and providing consistent individual care and respect for every child.

Inclusion is a large aspect of the Welsh curriculum as they believe that the environment should be easily accessible for all people, it should include a diverse and authentic representation of all cultures and religion and should offer appropriate adaptations for any barriers that may affect participation. The role of an early year's practitioner should ensure that their practice has the correct resources to ensure these steps are followed through. (The Welsh Government, 2023).

The Welsh Government (2023) is shaped by 5 pathways these are belonging, communication, exploration, physical development and well-being. The five pathways should ensure that young children learn and develop in a way that is suitable for them.

To describe these five pathways, this attached link will explain what all different pathways provide for the young children. <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/56774946-48aa-4fab-adda-f27508d8dc8f/early-childhood-play-learning-and-care-developmental-pathways-0-to-3.pdf>

Challenges

One main challenge seen often in early years setting is appropriate ratios. To ensure high quality care it's a requirement to ensure that the setting has the correct ratios of staff to children. If the ratio is wrong, it can cause problems and impact the ability of the practitioner to be able to adhere to individual needs of the children. According to Tickell (2011) It is important to have the correct ratio as they believe that if there is not enough staff to support the children it can cause an impact on the children development.

According to Wythe (2022) the Coronavirus pandemic caused big disruption to education due to all schools temporarily closing in 2020. Wythe (2022) followed on to say that the changes to education due to the coronavirus pandemic impacted academic achievement and well-being of young children. Findings from research studies done by Wythe (2022) found that covid-19 created restrictions on planning and provision which resulted in practitioners struggling to gain important information about the children such as individual interests and learning preferences.

Another challenge that can occur when young children first start to visit early years settings is the anxiety of the parents/guardians and the child due to being separated for the first time. According to Elfer, Goldshmied and Selleck (2011) it is all about balance when parents are starting to go back to work and taking their children to nursery.

Similarly National Childbirth Trust (no date) agree that parents getting used to settling their baby into a setting is a tough experience. The National Childbirth Trust (no date) also suggest thinking of the positives that go along with early years settings, such as how they are having the opportunity to experience their learning and development. The National Childbirth Trust (no date) also suggested staying in touch with the early year's settings whilst at work. Many early years settings and practitioners are happy to send updates on your baby throughout the day to keep peace of mind for the parents/guardian. The National Childbirth Trust (no date) also suggested practical tips for parents/guardians dealing with separation for the first time to make it easier and these included a gradual introduction to the new setting, meaning slowly introducing your baby to the new environment and practitioners so they also have a chance to settle into the new setting before the parent/guardian goes back to work.

Activities



Goldshmeid (2009, cited in Froebl Trust, no date) believed that play was the highest form of learning in childhood. Goldshmied (2009) believed that treasure baskets were a good way of including different materials into play. Explained by Froebel Trust (no date) A treasure basket is an assortment of many different variations of natural, household and recycled objects placed in a durable wooden basket that is made available to an infant and/or toddler. Treasure Baskets offer young babies a rich variety of material within reach from which they can choose what to explore in their own way and at their own pace.

Loose parts are a type of activity that can encourage creativity and problem solving. Loose parts can help children think imaginatively and find solutions to complications. Children often prefer playing with natural objects that enhance their curiosity, this is why they may be more interested in the packaging their toys come in rather than the actual toy. Loose parts can help build skills that are valued in adulthood, such as innovation. Loose parts such as rocks, acorns or any other material can be used in many ways during playtime for children. They can create stories, build or redesign with loose parts which all help develop their innovation skills. (Play Wales, 2017)

According to Beloglowsky and Daly (2014) an advantage to loose parts is they are open ended, there is no limit on what they can be used for. If the child is using their creativity, they can use certain loose parts for anything they desire it to be. In agreement to this the National Library of Medicine (2016) also state that loose parts are open ended and can be used in multiple different ways. The National Library of Medicine (2016) had many positive aspects of loose parts as they believe it can build relationships between children as there are more opportunities for inclusion when playing with loose parts. However, they did find some negatives to go against the use of loose parts, they found that the initial introduction of these materials and loose parts intimidated the children as they were unsure on how to use them at first due to being used to typical toys you find in stores. They also witnessed that children could get less engaged with the same materials using used all the time and getting to use to certain materials, but a way to overcome this problem is by constantly finding different materials and objects to introduce into their play so the children don't lose engagement with the loose parts.

According to Nursery World (2024) they stated that parents often want to avoid messy and sensory play due to having to spend time cleaning up afterwards. They found from a survey of 2000 parents that they discourage their children from taking part of messy play such as baking and painting and encourage them to play with toys or an iPad instead.

On the other hand, Gascoyne (2018) believes that messy play is highly important to encourage young children to engage with different materials and explore with different textures to get a sensory experience. Gascoyne (2018) believes that having many different materials such as fabric, paper, water, dough and foam will create a high sensory environment and encourage the young children to explore their environment and expand their curiosity.

In agreement Montessori (1909, cited in Gascoyne, 2018) explains that sensory play and experiences are essential for children to be able to learn later in life. Montessori (1909) believed that the first six years of a child's life is the most important and that during this period the child learns different aspects of life such as social skills.

Montessori (1909, cited in Lillard, 2021) points out that children don't have to be sat still and memorizing information to be able to learn and develop, she believed that children should have the ability and chance to learn through play.

Montessori (1909) believed that children should be provided the freedom to learn and play in an environment with a wide range of materials and resources to help the children direct their own learning. Montessori believed that the environment should be uncluttered and clearly labelled, whilst also being at child-height to give them more independence when choosing their own resources. Montessori also believed in indoor and outdoor learning and that there should be free flow opportunity for the child to choose where they want to explore their independent activity. (Montessori 1909, cited in Hodgman, 2012).

Sensory play is the involvement of different parts of the body to experience the environment surrounding the person, for example using touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing and movement. Sensory play has been known to have therapeutic benefits for young children. Sensory play gives children the opportunity to access their imagination and create the ability to occupy and calm themselves when becoming fully involved playing with different materials. (Kaduson and Schaefer, 2021).

Stated by Kaduson and Schaefer (2021, p,160) sensory play can also help manage stress, it offers opportunities for children to be more independent and have more self-control and freedom. Due to sensory play being an independent activity it encourages children to explore, destroy and build without looking for an end goal. According to Kaduson and Schaefer (2021, p,161) sensory play encourages the children to use different parts of their body and mind to find out what they can and cannot achieve yet, by achieving this it can give the children a feeling of growth and self-worth.

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