

Section 1 – Professional Learning.

This section will discuss the professional learning within the Foundation Phase. There will be critical analyse in the Foundation Phase on the pros and cons and the introduction of the New Curriculum of Wales.

The purpose of professional development is to improve practice and practitioners need to understand the importance of implementing play-based Curriculum within a setting as Taylor *et al.* (2015) explains, pedagogies will be learnt about the different types of play and how they help children's learning development; how to implement play within a setting with different resources and materials and how to create play activities and assessment opportunities.

All Foundation Phase practitioners have different levels of professional development, as Evans (2014) defines professional development as a continuation of education and training of a practitioner team or individual to support them in their career. Practitioners need to improve their professional development through educational training as Luneta (2012) explains, it helps practitioners to gain an understanding of any new guidance, policies, and procedures and to keep them up to date on any previous or new training to implement their development within the setting.

The revisited or new training for practitioners teaches the outcomes of the Foundation Phase curriculum, as Bifuh-Ambe (2013) states, it supports practitioners in their quality of learning towards children and how new guidance can be implement within the early years setting. Practitioners will need to have the skills, knowledge and requirements needed for the Foundation Phase curriculum as Kingston and Siraj (2017) state, they will need to know everything about how the Foundation Phase works within the setting and how to create an early year learning plan, while following the Foundation Phase guidance and outcomes. The Foundation Phase is an educational curriculum that supports children in primary school age three to seven-year-old, which gives children the encouragement in creativity, literacy, and numeracy (Wainwright *et al.*, 2016). The curriculum taught in Wales relates to children being taught the seven areas of learning as Welsh Government (2015) discusses; the seven areas of learning teaches children the life skills to support them for the future and it teaches practitioners on how to implement the curriculum with children's learning, play and experiences. Welsh Government (2015) continues, the curriculum gives children a chance to learn more

about the world around them, as practitioners can introduce children to different cultures and experiences that other races and religions celebrate and to encourage children to learn new things through learning and play. The outcomes of the Foundation Phase are for practitioners to teach the outcomes of each area of learning for each age stage and to ensure all children are at that level of learning to help them progress their development for the future (Taylor *et al.*, 2015a).

The Foundation Phase discusses each area of learning in detail so practitioners can understand each area (Taylor, Rhys and Waldron, 2016). The Foundation Phase has shown the benefits of improvements and investment in practitioners' professional development on children's learning. The seven areas of learning in the Foundation Phase have contributed to a positive attitude to learning. As Kruger, Janse van Rensburg and Witt (2015) explains, adults displaying a positive attitude to learning will enable children to feel more positive towards learning and developing their education. Displaying positivity, support and plenty of praise to the children, boosts their confidence. Baldwin and Beauchamp (2014) explain in their professional learning, practitioners providing positive feedback and praise will boost a child's confidence and develops children's resilience. Baldwin and Beauchamp (2014) continue, the practitioner would encourage the child to accept mistakes in their learning as it would be a learning curve for them, allowing the child to develop their problem-solving skills and to come up with a better solution. The Foundation Phase supports language, literacy, and numeracy skills within the setting as Rhys, Waldron and Taylor (2015) discuss, in the areas of learning children develop their language, literacy and numeracy within the setting from reading from a book, cooking recipes, instructions and telling the time, communicating with other children and staff during play activities. However, children can also learn literacy and numeracy in the outdoor environment, Bilton and Waters (2017) explain, practitioners do not need to give additional literacy and numeracy papers, as children will be developing those skills in the outdoors environment such as, shapes and patterns in the trees and leaves, colours of flowers and grass and understanding on how to take care of the natural environment. Bilton and Waters (2017) continue, in their professional development practitioners need to have that confidence to step back and allow the children to experience the outdoors with their own independent learning. Rhys, Waldron and Taylor (2015) continue, the role of the adult is how practitioners present themselves, as children see practitioners

as role models, learning from the role of the adult. Practitioners would use appropriate language and behaviour as children copy what they hear and see.

However, there are barriers within Foundation Phase, in children's learning and professional learning. Schools are limited to what they can have for a budget as Reed and Economics (2016) explain, every school has a budget that must last for the whole year, so there is the issue of unable to acquire new equipment and resources. Reed and Economics (2016) continue, practitioners are unable to afford to take children on educational trips due to budget, so every child misses out on these new experiences and development. There may be times when schools may never be able to go on trips due to not securing new supplies and resources. Even with the benefit of the Foundation Phase being very detailed, there are too many detailed outcomes of each area of learning to follow (Petersen, 2017). The Foundations Phase expects practitioners to tick every box area of learning outcomes and ensure each child to pass each outcome. This may result in too much stress and pressure for the practitioners who will end up suffering from burn out (Fourie, Sedibe, and Muller, 2018).

Practitioners will also be teaching up to 25 to 30 students at a time as Cishe and Tebekana (2016) explain, the ratios within the classrooms are unfair as practitioners will be under pressure, teaching a lot of children in a classroom and a lot of children who need extra support will be missed. The Foundation Phase does not support the child's choices in play and learning and does not follow article 31 as Unicef (no.date) explains, in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 31 explains every child has the right to choose what they like to play and a choice in what activities they would like to do for themselves, as children will learn more if they are given a choice. There is also the disadvantage of the unique child, as all children are taught at the same level and there will be children who need extra support and unable to learn anything if they are taught at the same level (Mahlo, 2011).

With the issues of the Foundation Phase being too stressful, not meeting the unique child's needs and too much paperwork to tick off to meet the outcomes on the learning areas, the curriculum has been reviewed and reports have been made resulting in a new curriculum to be introduced in to early and professional learning (Titley, Davies, and Atherton, 2020). With the new curriculum being introduced there are huge changes to professional learning and education for settings as Sinnema, Nieveen and

Priestley. (2020) discuss, this curriculum will introduce the four purposes of learning, as practitioners' professional development will be learning about the importance of children learning from hands on experiences, supporting the unique child and allowing them to learn at their own pace, allowing to develop their independences and express more on how they feel during learning and activities (Milton, *et al.*, 2020).

For professional development, practitioners will be learning about the new curriculum as they will be able to create their own lesson plans on whatever areas of learning, without the worry of following outcomes and tick boxes. Milton, *et al.* (2020) continue, practitioners will be learning to support each of the unique child by following a new curriculum chart which will be starting from age of 3 to 16. Each child's learning levels will still be met and supported as they grow. Practitioners will have more of an open mind on how they would like to implement this new curriculum of education within the setting as Baird and Clark (2018) explain, practitioners can set up their setting in which they feel the children will gain better understanding and knowledge for their development and there is the less stress of following a complicated guidance, as they can create their own curriculum of learning and see how things play out and assess what worked and what did not work.

Other learning curriculums can teach different professional development for each practitioner and children's learning. The Scandinavian approach is different from the Foundation Phase as it involved more of environmental outdoor learning, by taking the education outdoors in forest schools and is more child led, as the children learn exploration, independence, risk and challenge (Prøitz and Nordin, 2020). Prøitz and Nordin (2020) continue in professional development, Practitioners will inform the children about what they will be doing day to day and the rules to follow however, they will not be interfering with the child led play and learning as they would encourage independence and learning to take risk, only stepping in if there is support needed. The outcomes are very different from the Foundation Phase as Speldewinde, Kilderry, and Campbe (2020) explain, the Scandinavian approach to professional development is to understand and learn that all children learn at their own pace while outdoors, only to jump in if support is needed, using real objects and materials in learning as it is more realistic and give every child their own free choice in learning and play.

Overall, the new Curriculum of Wales is taking a considerable step in change, on how practitioners take their professional learning and implement it in the setting and with children's learning (Waters, 2016). However, how do practitioners and the education system make sure they do not make the same mistakes within the new curriculum? In the professional development of the practitioner, they will be training to learn all about the new curriculum and the 4 purposes of learning, as practitioners will gain a better understand on how to implement the new curriculum in the setting and in children's learning (Conn and Hutt, 2020). Within the new Curriculum of Wales, learning will be taking a different path, as play is considered as learning from hands on experiences and learning about the world around them (Welsh Government, 2021a).

Section 2 – The Unique child, Foundation Phase profile vs Successful Future.

Within this section, there will be a discussion on the unique child and how the Foundation Phase supports the unique child. There will also be a comparison between two curriculums, to see the differences on how they support the unique child. There will also be a discussion on assessment and testing on children and if each unique child is being supported fairly.

The purpose for practitioners to learn and understand about every child is unique, as all children are not the same and have their own way of learning (Dalton 2018). In early years settings every child has their own unique of learning and playing as, van Gaalen (2011) describes, some children learn from hands on experiences such as learning from the outdoors, doing practical activities, and learning from their own risk and challenges during play. There are some children who like to learn at their own pace as Averett (2021) explain, children need some extra time with their learning also needing extra support from a more experienced peer until they can do it independently. Thus, supporting Vygotsky, Smagorinsky (2018) explains children learn more from an experienced peer, so the practitioner supports the child who is struggling with their learning until the child understands what to do and moves on to the next stage.

For practitioners to understand and support each child they carry out assessments and tests to see what the child can and cannot do, and what they may need to work on within the setting (Ernst, 2012). If practitioners want to assess a child, they will be following the guidance of the Foundation Phase Profiles as Waters (2016) explains, these profiles are defined as a set of areas of learning charts of required outcomes, where by practitioners assess each child to ensure they are reaching their milestones. The purpose of these Foundation Phase profiles are for practitioners to identify any child who may need extra support, such as ALN, SEN or a language delay (Welsh Government 2017b). Practitioners are required to assess all children in the setting as they may need to pass on the information if the child is in transition to a higher educational school, so the school has an idea on what level of development the child is at (Yoon, 2015).

There are some benefits in the Foundation Phase Profiles with assessing the children in the early years setting. The Foundation Phase Profiles are split into 4 charts following the Foundation Phase Framework, categorizing each area of learning to their

own chart so practitioners can find and review on what they need to assess on the child (Maynard *et al.*, 2013). The Foundation Phase Profiles assessment provides practitioners with an idea of how they can plan for the child's next steps in learning and the holistic approach of the child. Dixon and Worrell (2016) explain using a formative assessment approach such as, an observation would support the practitioners understand on how well each child was developing in the classroom. The practitioner would then be able to plan the next steps of their learning. Dixon and Worrell (2016) continue, the Summative assessment supports practitioners understanding of a child's holistic development by gathering evidence of assessment on each child to see where in the outcomes of learning the child is at. Much like the Foundation Phase Curriculum, the profiles contain a lot of detail about each area of learning as Van der Berg (2015) explains, the profiles give details about each area of learning, such as able to hold a pair of scissors and use them or be able to count for 1 to 5. Van der Berg (2015) continues, this gives practitioners an insight on which children are from capable of doing things independently or for children who are struggling and need extra support from the practitioner. The profiles assessment outcomes provide practitioners an insight on how to spot signs of children with communication or learning developmental delay, as there may be children in the setting with learning difficulties or a disability such as, dyslexia or speech impairment. Practitioners will be able to catch it early and provide extra support for the child in learning and play (Hayes, *et al.*, 2019).

However, there are some disadvantages with the Foundation Phase Profiles with representing the unique child and practitioner assessments. The Foundation Phase Profile has far too much detail in each outcome as Ribeiro (2011) discusses, practitioners tend to have a large ratio of children within the setting and assessing each child is a stressful task, as they will need to ensure that each child is reaching each outcome within these profiles. Ribeiro (2011) continues, the disadvantage to practitioners is they may miss out on a lot of learning outcomes from children they are not assessing, causing some children to be missed out in their developmental learning. The profile does not refer to the unique child however, it is good that children with learning difficulties and disabilities are getting support however, this would initiate they are unable to develop their learning and held back, (Condy and Blease, 2014). Condy and Blease, (2014) continue, yet there may be a child who is very independent and a

capable learner, and they may be missed as the practitioner will be supporting the child with difficulties (Condy and Blease, 2014). The profiles are too demanding for every child to reach every outcome at a certain age as Du Plessis and Marais (2015) explain, not all children are the same, all children learn differently and in unique ways. The profiles expect children to be at the same level as each other in preparation for the transition into higher education. There is a lack of imagination and creative development in education and play as Chicken (2020) explains, the profiles are too formal as they expect children to behave and communicate appropriately and how to grasp the basic skills of reading and writing. There is no room for creativity and learning through hands on experiences and exploration in the outdoor environment.

For practitioners to have more knowledge on the child's developmental learning, they would be assessing children's standardized tests which would be SATs where children in KS1 and 2 will have their learning challenged and practitioners assess how well each child has performed (Twinkl, 2018). There are some advantages to the Foundation Phase Standardized test as SATs tests are based on childrens KS1 and 2 learning, so every child who takes the SATs tests will be given the same papers as others, as everyone will be treated fairly as everyone within the class will be learning the same information (Maloney, 2020). Practitioners will be the ones who assess and mark each SATs test as they will have an advantage of comparing and contrasting other tests to see if the children are reaching their outcomes and who may need the extra support (Morris, 2011).

However, there is a disadvantage to the SATs test. There is an underlining pressure for children who may not be at the same learning levels as other children, as Thompson (2017) explains children with additional learning needs may be at a disadvantage as they are not at the same level of learning as other children within the class. For the practitioners, they may have a large ratio of children within their classroom as every child will need to take this test, so it would be very time consuming for a practitioner to go over each test assessing and marking each one ensuring all marked fairly (Hall and Sheehy, 2018).

There are other curricula that assess and teach the unique child in a different way for example, the Successful Future. A report was made called Successful Future and it discusses about the changes in the educational curriculum whereby the curriculum

takes more of a hands-on experience and for play to be a part of children's educational learning (Donaldson, 2015). Donaldson (2015) continues, children will also be learning about life skills for later in life and every child within the setting is given the option to learn at their own pace and not feel the pressure of catching up with everyone else, thus building upon their confidence and resilience. Practitioners would be carrying out assessments differently from the Foundation Phase Profiles as Jones *et al.* (2018) discusses; in the new curriculum practitioners will activity involve children in their assessments to teach them about self-assessment, on how they feel about their learning and to give themselves goals to work on, thus improving their quality of learning through which practitioners learn more about the unique child. Jones *et al.* (2018) continues, the curriculum details the essential and natural use of the formative assessment in settings as it gives practitioners an idea of how each child within their setting learns and who may need any extra support.

The assessment practitioner should be following the Achievement Outcomes and Progress Steps as Hughes, Makara, and Stacey (2020) state, it will be an overall report on the Child's achievements in learning and the unique child's progress in the areas of purpose. Hughes, Makara, and Stacey, (2020) continue, the assessment reports should include more of the unique child's holistic development by focusing on the child's achievements in the learning purposes; to encourage challenges in holistic learning and to build upon their own skills and abilities. Practitioners can learn from assessing the unique child in this curriculum by looking at the importance of the unique child's holistic developments and how every child has their own unique way of developing. by involving the child in the assessment learning goals can be created and achieved to develop the child's confidence in the ability to better their learning (Lemke and Zhu, 2018).

The stocktake has reviewed the issues of the Foundation Phase and a recommended change in the curriculum. With the recommendation assessment points, practitioner should have a much more in-depth understanding of every unique child towards learning, as every child learns and develops differently (Welsh Government, 2014c). Welsh Government (2014c) continue, practitioners should also look more into the holistic approach assessment of every child in the setting, as everyone has different personalities and learning about the child's interest through assessments can be

implemented into their learning to get better engagement and positive attitudes towards learning.

Overall, the changes of assessing the child in the Foundation Phase Profiles needed to be changed, as Welsh Government (2014c) explains in the new curriculum assessments, practitioners will be able to assess children on their unique learning of the four purposes and involve the child in their own self reflected assessments in order to support high-quality learning building confidence in self-reflection. Assessment reports should also involve the parents/carers as Welsh Government (2019d) explains, the child's parents or care giver are able to see how the child is progressing through the steps of their learning and it gives them an idea of how their child is learning within the setting.

Section 3 – The Labelled Children, The impacts of Fixed and Growth Mindset in Early Years.

The Foundation Phase curriculum is based on how all children can succeed and grow from the areas of learning, expanding their development and meet all the expected outcomes to support them in the future. So how come the Foundation Phase fails to follow through with this to students who struggle and fail, and repeatedly set them back, but still teach them at the same levels as other students? (Phajane and Moipone, 2014). The setbacks and comments on a child's inability to develop and grow can have a negative impact on their mindset (Brooks and Brooks, 2014). This topic will discuss the impacts of fixed and growth mindset in early years and can the new curriculum truly improve a child's mindset towards education, giving the child a chance to believe in themselves to change to a growth mindset.

Children learn more from the feedback and experiences they have with peers, parents/carers, this can be positive or negative and depends on the child's mindset (Haimovitz, and Dweck, 2017). There are two different mindsets that a child can have in a lifetime, they can grow and develop the first one being a growth mindset as Williams (2021) defines, a growth mindset is the belief that the child can develop and grow from their own intelligences and abilities, giving them the confidence to try new things and challenges and able to bounce back from failures and mistakes learnt from them, and by accepting feedback on how to improve on their own development. However, there is a second mindset which has a negative impact on a child's learning abilities and development as Haimovitz and Dweck (2017) explain, a fixed mindset is a child's mind fixated on the belief they are unable to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. They are unable to read feedback as they feel it will not help them develop with the belief, they are unable to learn new abilities or skills.

These mindsets all seem to stem from childrens educational learning and experiences for instance, the Foundation Phase Curriculum of Wales (Petersen, 2014) The Foundation Phase curriculum is to develop and support children's learning and progress their development as Makeleni and Sethusha (2014) state, The Foundation Phase Background describes their curriculum as a future flying start for all children's development and growth, allowing all children to learn from risk and challenge. Their own hands-on experiences from activities and play whereby all children can learn and

progress in their development at their own pace in the early years setting, receiving positive feedback through praise of practitioners to support their learning outcomes. It would seem children in a growth mindset would thrive from this curriculum background as Stoycheva and Ruskov (2015) state, the growth mindset children would strive from learning challenges, having the passion to learn and the strive to learn more to improve their development and abilities, working hard to achieve their goals to support them in the future.

However, the Foundation Phase seems not to follow through what they describe in the Curriculum as Pueschel and Tucker (2018), explain, The Foundation Phase states children learn at their own pace to progress their development however, children in early years are being held back and referred to as 'cannot progress, needs more time to work on or unable to achieve at this time', these comments will affect the child's thinking towards learning and will be fixated on resulting in them being unable to progress their development and stay at the same level of learning. Pueschel and Tucker (2018), continue, children will be missing out on potential progressive learning outcomes. This will make the fixed minded child to become envious towards other children who are ahead of them and strive to become like them however, they are held in that self-doubt fixated state which causes mental health issues such as, depression and anxiety. Foundation Phase profiles have learning outcomes practitioner follow for assessments. Growth mindset children are willing to accept feedback on their learning and ask questions on how to improve these qualities however, fixed mindset children will take feedback as if the practitioner is attack them personally, and they will feel more anxious about the feedback rather than accepting it (Dweck, 2016).

Both the Foundation Phase and Profiles are not following the guidances of article 29, the goals of Education as Unicef (nodate) states, every child must have their ability and skills developed to the full in their education and play, respecting the child's rights throughout and learning at their own pace in development and skills. Both Curriculum and Profiles should be following this article for every child in their care to reach their goals however, it seems they both are too demanding on each learning outcomes, as they all must be reached at a certain age not having the time for each child to develop on their own or at their own pace (Nel, C. and Adam, 2014).

Unfortunately, if the fixed mindset is not worked and developed towards a growth mindset, this will continue further in the child's higher education. Young people's exams are a stressful time however, there has been a worrying rise of student's mental health towards exams and their results as Rodway *et al.* (2016) explain, in a report there have been a rise of mental health issue of students during the exam period, this is a result of the constant pressure of achieving all goals in higher education and to achieve good results during their exams. Rodway *et al.* (2016) continues, the strain and anxiety of trying to achieve good results during exams causes students mental state to lower, causing depression of not getting the results they want or the constant anxiety of the unknow of their results. Unfortunately, these mental health issues will be too much for some students and it will result in students committing suicide due to the pressure of higher educations and exams (Rodway *et al.*, 2016).

Health and wellbeing are an important part of a child's growth in learning and there is an organization responsible for everyone's health and wellbeing in the world, as World Health Organizations (2021) explains, this agency is known all over the world and they are responsible for health worldwide. The agency sees mental health as an important issue that needs to be promoted and supported as World Health Organisations (2021a) explains, children and young people's mental health should matter and should be supported more within the Early Years settings, bringing more awareness to mental health, as children and young people should be feeling happy and healthy during learning and play.

We have seen the impacts of growth and fixed mindset of a child, so how does the perspective of a practitioner perceive the growth and fixed mindset within the setting? Practitioners are there to support children to learn and grow as Boylan, Barblett and Knaus (2018) explain, practitioners will be learning about the holistic development of the child and how they perceive their mindset. By understanding this, practitioners will be able to understand growth and fixed mindset children. Boylan, Barblett and Knaus (2018) explain, practitioners have a role to help children prepare for their future, they need support in their cognitive and non-cognitive skills such as, critical thinking, problem solving and solution and feedback to support achievements and goals. However, practitioners need to give extra time to children with a fixed mindset, as they would see feedback as criticism believing their learning cannot be changed and blame themselves for failures.

The Foundation Phase and Profiles assessments need to change in order to support both mindsets, thus the introduction of the New Curriculum of Wales. From the research of the new curriculum, it seems there are going to be many positive changes in learning and supporting children's mindset as Gorrara *et al.* (2020) states, in this curriculum children's learning and play will be implement in their own education, feeding in their enjoyment of learning and developing. Children will be treated equality towards other children by providing plenty of support in learning and supporting children's pace of learning, as this encourages children to be more confident in their own developmental learning. Gorrara *et al.*, (2020) continue, in the assessments of the new Curriculum, practitioners are to encourage children to join in on their assessment, so the child can understand self-reflection and set themselves appropriate goals, so the child feels confident and comfortable about their learning and development.

Overall, The Foundation Phase changes were needed, as it was missing out important parts of children's learning, where children's mindset towards education was more fear based of getting things wrong, a failure or setting their fixated minds on enabling to progress through their development. Hopefully, the changes of the New Curriculum should bring a new light to education and bring back the excitement of learning and developing more, to improve on children's and young people's mental health and in hope of more growth mindset and less fixed mindset.

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