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PART 1



(Source: Lean Nation, 2017)

Business Plan Project

Leadership skills in entrepreneurship

EAEE6004

1602331

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Active Zone – what is it?

Active Zone is an innovative idea that promotes an active lifestyle from a young age, giving all children opportunities to participate in activities they may not have encountered before, without the cost of attending a sporting club within the community.

It will be a gated sporting area, with a canopy, that consists of different surface textures, for example, grass, concrete and rubber matting, and sporting resources that will encourage children to get active – footballs, basketball, skateboards, tennis, balance beams, to name a few.

Welsh Government (2015) emphasises in the Foundation Phase Framework that children should be encouraged daily across all areas of learning to develop their physical skills, and given opportunities to explore and investigate with different environments and resources, something Active Zone will offer children. Similarly, NHS (2016) points out that when a child takes part in sporting activities, the chemicals in their brain changes to make them feel happier, allowing them to redirect their emotions in a more creative way, and supporting their wellbeing.

Active Zone will act as an alternative area for physical education (PE) lessons, promoting the development of gross motor skills, and encouraging children to be active from a young age. It will be available for children to use during 'free play', as it provides a safe environment for play. It can also be opened up for the community to use after school, in order to promote active play and the development of sporting skills. It provides children with a place to build positive relationships with others through team work, and will develop turn taking skills.

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How is it innovative?

Even though physical education is done in early years settings, research by Schmidt (2017) suggests that schools are not meeting the recommended amount of time children should be given to develop their physical skills. Department for Education (no date) provides guidance that only two hours a week of PE is required for children. This is one of the reason I believe Active Zone is needed, to encourage practitioners to give children more time to develop their physical abilities. Similarly, research that was conducted by Johnstone et al. (2018), informs us that children are not being as active as they could in schools, and this is down to practitioners not promoting active play enough, and suggests that it is done on a daily basis.

Having done research into this idea, there was nothing similar in the Carmarthenshire area, or the surrounding areas. However, I did come across photographs of the kind of ideas I am proposing (below), but these were from playgrounds, sporting arenas and schools in England. This research has led me to believe that there is a demand for Active Zone in Wales, to promote being active and help tackle the ongoing concerns of obesity (Public Health Wales, 2018a).



(Source: A & S Landscape, no date)



(Source: Soft Surfaces Ltd, 2017)



(Source: Sport and Play, 2018)

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How does Active Zone link to early years?

As mentioned above, Public Health Wales (2018b) documents that child obesity is still on the rise, and is especially higher in areas of deprivation, with 14.9% of children aged 4-5 classed as obese. Rydin-Orwin (2012) documents if a child experiences poverty or deprivation, it has negative affect their development, and support is required to help them meet their needs and give them better chances in later life. This reiterates the need for practitioners to implement further learning experiences for children to be active, and support the Foundation Phase Framework in developing children's physical abilities (Welsh Government, 2015).

There is an emphasis placed on outdoor learning with young children, and Truelove et al. (2017) states that settings need to provide children with plenty of room for unstructured and freely chosen activities to develop their gross motor skills, something 'active zone' will provide. Furthermore, Woolley (2017) places value on open spaces for active play as it supports personal development, wellbeing, and makes children have a more positive attitude to learning. Articles 6 and 27 of the rights of the child states children have the right to develop healthily and a standard of living that meets their physical and mental needs (Unicef, 2016).

Active Zone will provide children from all backgrounds opportunities to learn new skills and try new activities, encouraging their physical development and promoting a healthy lifestyle. NHS (2016) suggest if children engage in physical activities from a young age, it becomes part of their daily routine, and a habit that will stick. Welsh Government (2015) points out that physical education should be across all areas of learning, and not restricted to PE sessions only.

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Benefits of Active Zone to early years development

According to NHS (2016), being active has a positive effect on a child's wellbeing, with Schmidt (2017) agreeing that being active enables a child to maintain and improve their wellbeing. Leggett (2017) and Truelove et al. (2017) document that when children engage in active learning experiences, it develops their creative and imaginative thinking. Active Zone is needed as it will provide children with an alternative area to develop sporting skills, and for children with social, emotional or behavioural concerns, somewhere to redirect feelings and emotions in a safe and healthy way.

I have made sure it has a canopy, so it can be used during all weather conditions, as most children do not go out to play in the rain or snow, and sometimes when temperatures soar. As it offers different surface textures, it will allow children to take appropriate risks and challenge themselves, with McFarland and Laird (2017) stating it is beneficial to their development. (Jennings, 2017) also believes it develops their creative and imaginative skills when they are left to explore different resources and surfaces, as they can interpret it in a way that it was not designed to be used, showing their creativity.

Change for Life Wales (2016) places emphasis on encouraging children to move more, as they need to be active to increase concentration and improve memory, and develop stronger muscles and bones. Similarly, NHS (2015) believes young children should be active for 180 minutes a day, and states that engaging in active play teaches them about collaboration and friendships, turn taking and coordination. It is documented that interacting with other children actually develops creativity and imagination (Anderson, 2018).

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Challenges and barriers of Active Zone

Of course, there will be challenges and barriers to overcome for this idea to take effect, such as the financial side of the project. The idea would have to get government approval, and initially, the expenditure would be substantial. I would rely on grants from the Welsh Government to help cover the cost of getting this into settings, and supplying the resources needed to get children active. I want to work with Local Authorities to incorporate this idea into new plans for school builds, to ensure all schools have an outdoor area that promotes active play.

Something else to consider would be finding early years settings with enough space to accommodate this idea, if it is not being incorporated into a new build plan. Most schools do not have the space to encourage being active and therefore will not be able to provide these opportunities without expansion. Practitioner's confidence and motivation comes into this – if they feel uncomfortable teaching PE, they may not encourage it and it impacts on the child's health and wellbeing. And it means changing planning to include more physical education and active play.

'Active Zone' would be used after school hours to provide children in deprived areas opportunities to participate in sporting activities without the cost of attending clubs. One challenge will be that practitioners will not be supervising this area after school hours, therefore meaning parents will need to be present after school hours for children to use it. This could disadvantage some children as parents may not want to stay while they play. However, this could be overcome by practitioners offering after school clubs or sports ambassadors teaching the children different skills. The downfall to that being there are many clubs in the community that have professionals teaching sporting skills.

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My expertise

I have a background in counselling and education, and understand the importance of supporting a child's wellbeing through being active, as it develops their creativity and improves their concentration. I am constantly encouraging the children in my setting to engage with the outdoors and promoting being active to release energy. It is proven that being active changes the chemicals in your brain to make you happier (NHS, 2016), therefore improving a child's wellbeing, and making them more confident. I have seen this first hand from past experiences of being a positive play worker, where children need to be active in order to redirect their feelings and emotions in a more positive and creative way.

PART 2

According to Change for Life Wales (2016), children spend more time watching or playing sports via the television or games consoles, therefore not having opportunities to engage in sports in person. This could be down to poverty, as many parents cannot afford to send their child to sporting clubs, or they may live in a rural area that is not close to a park. On the other hand, Venning (2015) believes that some children attend too many clubs, and are ricocheted from place to place, not having time to keep active. However, NHS (2016) places emphasis on being active, as it improves wellbeing and can become part of a child's daily routine if they enjoy it, with Virgilio (2006) pointing out that when they engage in active play, they learn to share and respect one another, whilst developing an understanding that being active keeps their heart healthy and strong, and develops their muscles. Similarly, Bruce (2012) documents it develops a child holistically if they have an environment where they can explore, investigate and be creative in their play.

Froebel (cited in Tovey, 2013) puts an emphasis on children learning outdoors, believing that they learn best through play and being active, developing curiosity and exploring what they can and cannot do. However, having open ended resources and engaging in child led activities allows a child to develop creatively (Garrick, 2012), with Maynard and Waters (2014) and Bruce (2004) pointing out that having opportunities for active play contributes to, and benefits their overall development. When a child is engrossed in an activity, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) suggests they are in flow, which means they are fully focused and concentrated on the task or activity, and they persevere when it doesn't go the way they thought it might. They continue to state that time seems to go faster when in a state of flow, and learning depends on the opportunities and experiences they are given. Craft et al. (2014) puts emphasis on children being creative, and the pedagogy schools have in implementing activities that allow children to engage in, and develop their creative skills independently, as it leads to children being more confident and curious in their learning. In the 1967 Plowden Report (cited in Craft, 2003), it places the child at the centre of teaching and learning, but wanted the curriculum to focus on developing a child's creativity, as being practical and using their skills allows children to develop their creativity.

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Knight (2011) documents most young children do not have opportunities to be active at home, therefore, practitioners have a duty to encourage children to move more, as Change for Life Wales (2016) documents it pumps blood and oxygen to their brains, improving their concentration, and builds their self-esteem and confidence. Bilton (2010) continues by pointing out that children need to be active as it develops their coordination, balance and awareness of the way their body moves, with Welsh Government (2015) putting an emphasis on children developing an awareness of how their body moves. However, Larsson et al. (2018) advocates that there is concern over children's health and wellbeing as they are not participating in enough active play, placing an obligation on practitioners to promote and involve children in more physical activities, with Hillman and Biggan (2017) stating it can improve academic outcomes, as it improves brain function and cognitive development.

When young children are left to explore and investigate outdoors, and have access to different resources, it allows them to use their imagination and creativity to change the meaning of the resource, interpreting it in their own way (Bruce, 2004 and Jennings, 2017). Piaget (cited in Johnston and Nahmad-Williams, 2009) believes that children should engage in independent learning, as it develops their problem-solving and creative skills, making them more competent learners. However, Vygotsky (cited Veale, 2012 and Leggett, 2017) disagrees and stresses the need for practitioners to support and guide children when it comes to their creative development, stating that children will grow in confidence when supported. Knight (2011) agrees with this view, stating that practitioners should support children in taking reasonable and appropriate risks when engaging in active play, as it increases their self-awareness. Similarly, Ouvry (2003) suggests practitioners allow children to evaluate and embrace risks, encourages them to assess and manage their own risks, demonstrating that their actions and decisions have consequences. This links to the Te Whariki approach, that children are active participants in their learning, which enables them to become competent learners and make decisions for themselves (Nutbrown, 2006). However, (Garrick, 2012) points out even though practitioners have a duty of care towards the children in their care to keep them safe, they try to eliminate all risks when it comes to children being active and playing by creating boundaries, instead of allowing them to assess the risk themselves. This links to Siraj-Blatchford's Sustained Shared Thinking

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concept (cited in Bruce, 2004), that practitioner's and children need to engage in conversations that explore their interests through problem solving and questioning to further develop their understanding. This will give children the understanding of why they need to keep active and the curiosity to participate in all the different activities.

As with most innovative ideas, there are challenges and barriers that could hinder the development of the idea. In this case, in order to get children to participate in more sporting activities, it would prove costly to get Active Zone into setting, and could be timely getting the idea approved. Woolner et al. (2007) points out that there is not enough evidence to suggest having a physical area in schools would be beneficial for future changes to be made. However, Larsson et al. (2018) stresses that children need opportunities to engage in physical activities in order to improve their health and wellbeing, therefore, having a positive impact on their development. It is also noted by Veitch et al. (2006), that children develop independence when they engage in active play, influencing the way they behave and socialise with others. Welsh Government (2018) suggests children are active for at least three hours a day, and states that active children are healthier and happier as they engage with other children in an exciting and fun way, supporting brain development, reiterating the need for a physical area. However, Ofsted (2012) points out that practitioners are limiting the access children have to PE as they are not teaching it enough, and not enhancing areas they may have that could encourage further exploration of active play. Nonetheless, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) places attention on improving children's lives for a better future, taking into account sustainability, and encouraging children, and adults, to think about the effect their actions will have long term.

Another challenge that faces active zone is being open after school hours. Although this has its benefits – children can use to develop skills, participate in different sporting activities to keep fit, free of charge, it will not be supervised by practitioners, therefore meaning parents will need to accompany children that want to use it. Ofsted (2012) reports that one third of schools are not doing enough to support and encourage children's physical education, whether that be in during or after school hours. Similarly, Morgan and Hanson (2008) point out that some early years practitioners are not confident in delivering quality PE sessions, therefore, discourage children from being

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active. The Children Act 2004 places emphasis on practitioners and parents to promote children's wellbeing, with Bronfenbrenner (cited in Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014), suggesting that those closest to the child have an impact on their development, and if they are not willing to take them somewhere for active play, then they are limiting their physical development, by not allowing them to express themselves in sport or learn new skills. However, research conducted by Demetriou et al. (2017) states that children have better outcomes if they participate in sporting activities in school settings rather than in the community, with Evans (2013) stating in the food and fitness policy that practitioners have more of an influence on children as they can promote a healthy lifestyle by giving them positive experiences for active play. On the other hand, DCELLS (2004) believes that practitioners should build successful partnerships with other professionals in order to appropriately support children's physical education and active play, and develop their own understanding of different sporting activities. Brodie (2012) also believes that working with others, including parents, builds positive relationships between everyone. However, Welsh Government (2009) states in their food and fitness policy that children spend so much time in early years settings that there needs to be a whole school approach to physical activity, helping children to understand the significant role health and well-being play in their lives. This links with the Foundation Phase Framework that supports children to understand that being active impacts on their body and mind, and can be executed across the whole curriculum to develop different skills (Welsh Government, 2015). This will have to be looked at prior to the idea becoming reality, and discussed with staff to ensure they are on board with the changes, and can commit to giving their time after school hours to support the development of children. Risk assessments will also be done daily to ensure that the area and its resources are safe for all children to use.

Upon reflection, there was no consideration for children with disabilities when planning Active Zone, as it was designed with all abilities in mind. Dauncey (2016) states that any child with a disability - physical, sensory, or behavioural, that requires further educational provisions is referred to as having Additional Learning Needs. Morely et al. (2005) stresses that practitioners can feel inadequate if they cannot support a child's needs, with Sit et al. (2017) suggesting that they do not know how to encourage physical development with those who have disabilities. Murphy and Carbone (2008)

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documenting practitioners need to understand that children with physical disabilities are more restricted than others when it comes to active play, and their needs should be considered, and decisions well-informed. However, Morely et al. (2005) points out that children with behavioural concerns are more of a risk than those with physical disabilities during active play, as they have more freedom to express themselves, on the other hand, NHS (2018) believes that children with behavioural concerns benefit from being active as they release energy and focuses their attention elsewhere. The Education Act 1981 places focuses on the child and their needs, without segregating them, while the Equality Act 2010 protects those with a disability against any direct or indirect discrimination, ensuring that all settings promote inclusive practice. Using your senses is the most natural way to learn, therefore children with sensory issues will benefit from using Active Zone, as it sports different textures, aiding brain development and interpret information to their level of understanding (Dowling, 2010).

It is proven beneficial that children need to be more active, as it benefits their overall development, developing them holistically, while improving their wellbeing. Although there are a number of barriers that could hinder this development, it would seem something like Active Zone is needed in schools to encourage active play, and increase staff confidence with physical education.

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