

Research question: To what extent does encouraging learners to immerse themselves independently within continuous provision impact on engagement?

It may be argued that the school environment, and subsequently that of the classroom environment, can have a significant impact on children's learning (Griggs, 2015, p.292). Initial thoughts about what constitutes a positive classroom may link specifically to environmental factors such as the size and layout of the room, along with access to natural light and the outdoors; however, considerations regarding the social and emotional factors that may have an influence within the classroom need to be carefully thought about. Through effective management of the classroom environment, a practitioner has the ability to ensure their environment generates respect and encourages learners to develop their abilities freely (Thompson and Spenceley, 2020, p.18). Estyn (2016) found that in a primary school in Wales, both staff and pupils work collaboratively on creating effective learning zones through the use of 'vibrant wall murals and modern furnishings.' Further to this, it was found that themed areas promoted pupil independence through encouraged use of 'researching, studying and investigating' (Estyn, 2016).

Areas within a classroom that promote learner independence can often be referred to as continuous provision. According to Bryce-Clegg (2015a, p.35) continuous provision can be defined as 'resources linked to current assessment that have been levelled to match the attainment and learning preferences of your current cohort.' Continuous provision within a learning environment can demonstrate key characteristics of effective learning including playing and exploring along with creating and thinking critically. Bryce-Clegg further argues that everything done within the early years- foundation phase environment should be underpinned by those characteristics of effective learning. Through the use of continuous provision, learners are given opportunities to not only develop their physical ability but also their mental capabilities. It has been argued that a learner's engagement with the continuous provision is dependent on the how relevant and interesting the learning opportunity that has been presented to them is (Bryce-Clegg, 2015a, p.3).

When discussing provision in or out of the classroom, a distinction should be made between continuous and enhanced provision. Continuous provision, like previously mentioned refers to resources that are continually within the learning environment. Enhanced provision however refers to the enhancements made that link specifically to a topic or area of learning. Examples of continuous provision may include areas such as a sand pit, water trough or dough; through adding items such as a pirate ship to the water trough or burying treasure within the sand, these areas are then enhanced. Both continuous and enhanced provision have the ability to develop a learner's fine and gross motor skills. Kid Sense (2020) describe the development of fine motor skills to involve the use of smaller muscles within the hands through academic activities such as using a pen or scissors or play skills through manipulating objects such as dough or buttons. The development of fine motor skills ensures seemingly simple tasks such as dressing and eating are achieved effectively, allowing the learner to develop appropriate independence. Gross motor skills refer to the development of whole-body movement, this also includes hand-eye coordination. Continuous provision, especially within the outdoor environment can include equipment such as balls for throwing and catching, along with bikes or scooters. Fine and gross motor skills can become interlinked, an example of this could be a learner's ability to maintain appropriate posture at a table may affect their ability to write and draw.