

Early Years Foundation Degree

CI2104

The Foundation Stage Route Specific Module

2) Plan, implement and evaluate at least three activities for children in the foundation stage. You should ensure that across the three plans there are learning goals from each of the 6 areas of learning. Your plans should include strategies for differentiation.

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Introduction

The purpose of this work is to review the nature and content of the foundation stage curriculum and to consider the theoretical underpinning and underlying principles that have assisted in the formation of this early years practice. Through the planning and implementation of three activities, spanning the full spectrum of the foundation stage curriculum, the writer aims to identify and meet the needs of foundation stage children. This work will then evaluate the provisions for these children and investigate further the ways in which differentiation strategies can be implemented to ensure all children, regardless of their abilities, or stage of development, may receive the curriculum, delivered in a style appropriate to them and their own personal requirements.

In 1988 the Conservative government, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, legislated that a National Curriculum be in force for pupils between the ages of 5 and 16, because she believed that

‘a good educational system was essential for the future
success of the nation’ (Ridley, 1992, p92)

Although a curriculum was in place for ages 5 to 16, there was a distinct lack of standardised learning for the early years. Margaret Hodge joined the Department for Education in 1998 and was responsible for reforming pre-school education policy (www.news.bbc.co.uk 12/10/2006). She was actively involved in the implementation of the Foundation Stage Curriculum in September 2000 and the publishing of the guidance to accompany this.

The abilities of children are multifaceted and the foundation stage curriculum gives practitioners a much less rigid approach than the National Curriculum, by following the children’s progress using stepping stones. As the foundation stage curriculum is a government legislated policy, this means that all children should

follow it. As it is flexible in the way in which it is implemented, it means that different types of settings can fashion the teaching methods to follow it in their own way. This means that whether a child attends a pre-school, an LEA nursery, a work-based nursery, or indeed a childminder, they are provided with the same curriculum. This is governed by Ofsted who maintain this proviso through their regular inspections.

Good planning is essential in ensuring that all the practitioners involved can build a picture of the children's development programme. Not only does it provide them with a premeditated programme of learning, but it also gives an opportunity for discussion to take place, where they can think about how they can progress children through the various stages of learning. For the practitioner to ensure all areas of the curriculum are covered, the planning must,

‘entail attention to overall (long-term) planning, medium and short-term planning...for every aspect of every lesson’
(Cohen et al, 2004, p125)

Long term planning ensures that all the areas and aspects of learning within the curriculum are covered throughout the whole year and provides a template for the medium term planning. Correct use of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, together with the knowledge of the practitioners relating to the individual children, means that the children experience new and exciting ways to learn through play.

The long term plans of the settings must be flexible. They should incorporate the schools ethos and provide for an enriched curriculum with scope for differentiation to allow inclusion. Medium term planning then identifies the specific topics of work to be covered over the term, or half term. From these the practitioner then sets out the weekly activity plans, to guarantee full coverage of the learning outcomes within the set topics. It is vital that the plans cover the

whole of the six areas of learning and that the practitioner assesses the progress of the children, in order to make certain that they are all progressing to the best of their capabilities. Recording achievements as stepping stones enables early years practitioners' to carry out assessments whilst the children are involved in activities, thus preventing the child having any knowledge that an appraisal of their skills and understandings is being undertaken. Planning and evaluating the success criteria of an activity allows the practitioner to be certain that every area of the curriculum is covered.

Piaget introduced three principles of cognitive development and these apply to all of the subjects studied in this report. His first principle is assimilation. He says that children do not absorb all the information they encounter. They actively engage in the assimilation process and learn what is relevant to them at their stage of development. The schema stage is next. During this phase the children relate what they know already to their current situation. The third phase is where the child wishes to seek stability cognitively. He utilises the knowledge gained and applies it to make a general logical picture (Oakley, 2004). From this it is clear to see how the children gain the learning and knowledge applicable to them by interpreting activities in their own way.

Learning Experience One

The first learning experience is set outside at the water table. The children are working in pairs, with the practitioner overseeing them to provide assistance if necessary. For the purpose of this report, a boy aged four years and nine months is being observed. This activity aims to cover two areas of the foundation stage; personal, social and emotional development and mathematical development. Within these areas the aspects being covered are dispositions and attitudes and shape, space and measures.

Rationale

The work of Montessori is the influencing factor of this activity. She noted that in providing children with a relaxed, natural environment, they flourished socially, emotionally and cognitively (Boushel, 2000). McMillan also agreed that healthy children, who receive plenty of fresh air, learn and progress better than those who don't experience open air activities (Curtis, 2002).

Piaget suggested that children learn well not only as individuals, but also when they work in groups. The children's learning should be autonomous (Palmer, 2001). The children are not only interacting with themselves, but also with the practitioner. As the children are engaged in water play, the opportunity for many different cross curricula aspects to be covered is available. They communicate with one another whilst engaged in their activity and so the communication, language and literacy area will be covered. As the children become familiar with the equipment, their self-confidence and self-esteem will be nurtured, therefore covering the personal, social and emotional development area. This can also be linked to Vygotsky's scaffolding theory. He advocates that children learn through interacting with others. They mimic the behaviour of others, try it on their own and then build on it for their own development (Palmer, 2001).

Differentiation

This activity has a great scope for differentiation. The less able children will be able to enjoy the experience of watching the water transfer from container to container, whilst the more able children may be able to record their findings. The practitioner here is structuring the child's learning encounter, to lead the child through the processes. Bruner described this as his scaffolding theory (Bee, 2004). If there is a child who is more demanding in the amount of attention they receive, the practitioner may accompany them throughout the activity. Kohlberg theorised that children learn to act in ways in which to gain adults approval

(Lerner, 2002). In order for the children to gain recognition for their work, recording their findings on paper can provide them with a means of sharing their results with the practitioners and their own peers.

Evaluation

This activity was successful with the child it was carried out with, but if performed with other children, problems could arise. The unstructured movement of the water can be both lively and relaxing and the practitioner must be aware of the effects the water may have upon the individual children involved. Applying Bruner's scaffolding theory meant that the practitioner watched from a distance whilst the children were playing and then stepped in to discuss what they were doing and to encourage the use of other containers. Pairing the children up according to abilities could offer a means of further developing their communication and giving them the opportunity to form relationships within planned groups. This learning experience was successful because it was an epistemic activity, which also brought in ludic play with the measuring of the water. The classroom assistant had the balance of free play and guided play just right and the children progressed well and interacted admirably with each other. The children were interested throughout the activity and as suggested by McMillan, as they were outside the classroom environment, the mood stayed calm the whole time.

Learning Experience Two

The second learning experience is carried out in the role play area. It is one of the continuous provisions within the classroom and it has been utilised for the purpose of this lesson. For this activity, the role play area is set up as an Italian take-away. It has been equipped with a small world cooker and microwave, stationary, telephones and some pizzas. The pizzas had been made by the children in a previous activity and they had also made toppings to be added. The

children have the opportunity to place orders, take orders and prepare orders for either collection, or delivery. Two girls are participating in this activity. One is aged four years and two months and the other is aged four years and six months. Communication, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world are the areas of learning this activity is testing. The objectives are to provide children with the opportunity to communicate effectively on a given topic and to stay focused on this subject. Steiner believes that giving children of mixed abilities the opportunity to create self-expression through imaginative play, allows them to develop to their full potential (Palmer, 2001). By participating in this way, the children are learning to use the equipment in a way that enables this interaction and feed their imagination.

The practitioner involved with this activity plays an important role in the children's development. They will interact with the children and give appropriate guidance to them where and when it is required. Bruner theorised that children principally learn through play and that with adult intervention a spiral curriculum comes into force (Mills, 2002). When the children place their orders, the practitioner can build on this to extend the activity, to allow for extension of vocabulary within the topic.

Rationale

Bruner's spiral theory provides the inspiration for this second activity (Olson, 1998). He suggests that children learn well when with either other children, or adults. An excellent way of giving children the opportunity to experience this is to provide an activity where they can play with each other, whilst being guided in their play. Free play in the role play area allows the children to sustain a degree of mastery. They can experiment with the telephones and other equipment and there is the opportunity for at least one child to add some new learning. Each child may develop the various skills required for this activity at his own pace and,

therefore, allowing them this free play, enables the practitioner to observe the various stages the children are currently attaining.

Once the children have been given the time to experience some free play, the practitioner may then step in to direct the play, by encouraging the children to place and take orders. The children can be encouraged to produce these orders using the small world cooker and microwave. Some of the children may need a greater degree of prompting than others and the practitioner, through her familiarity of the children, can judge this directed play according to their needs and requirements. This directed play channels the exploration and learning of the children and takes them on to the next stage of understanding. Bruner likens this to a pebble on a pond, stating that the ripples from exploratory free play, through guided play and back to enhanced play, allows the spiral to spread outwards into other experiences and so gaining knowledge and skills (Moyles, 1989).

The variety of equipment made available to the children in this activity enables the practitioner to shape this learning experience to their own specific developmental requirements. It is imperative to their learning, that for the children to reap the full benefit of this equipment, they need the opportunity to talk about their choices with an adult. They need to be able to link their play to 'real life', to begin to make comparisons between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and non-ICT methods and to begin to justify their thinking (Using ICT to enhance role play, 12/10/2006). This activity will allow for this and mean that the children's learning will be enriched through the use of ICT.

Differentiation

Some children may already have some degree of familiarity with the equipment used within this activity. This learning experience enabled differentiation between the abilities of the children by judging the amount of support they may require from the practitioner. The stepping stones are used as a guide and as the

practitioner already has knowledge of each child's capabilities, she can adapt the situation to personally meet the needs of all the children, on an individual basis. The personal, social and emotional development area of the curriculum also plays a large part in this activity, as the children are developing their conversational and interaction skills. Taking this into consideration, it may be that the expectations of the less able children are to have a positive approach and show confidence, whilst the more able children could be encouraged to display a higher level of involvement and to continue to be interested and motivated.

Evaluation

This activity offers many opportunities for learning and knowledge to be achieved, across both the taught and the hidden curriculum. The children will not only experience the communication goals outlined in the plans, but will also develop skills across other areas of learning. The practitioner could incorporate the use of money into the activity, or perhaps encourage the children to work in a group to produce a simple menu on the computer.

Learning Experience Three

The third learning experience is a music and movement activity. The areas of learning are personal development and creative development. The aspects to be covered within these areas are a sense of space and music. The activity aims to encourage children to show respect for other children's personal space when playing among them and to respond to sound with the body.

The children are all in the school hall and have a warm up section where the teacher explains to the children how music can make different people respond to music in many varieties of ways. It is giving children the opportunity to express themselves in a way they may not have experienced before and provides them with the exercise their bodies require.

Rationale

Isaacs believes that music is beneficial to children. She states that,

“Music, like art, is a form of communication”

(Curtis, 2002, p96)

This third activity was chosen because it provides the children with this means of communication, giving them the opportunity to express themselves freely. Doing this helps them progress emotionally and cognitively in all other areas of their learning. Music falls under Donaldson’s construct mode, under value-sensing. She argues that emotion and thought are frequently related closely to one another (Palmer, 2001).

Neill (1927) also favoured music within the curriculum, as he alleged that it had a therapeutic function, particularly with children with psychological problems. He also acknowledged that it gave the less academically challenged pupils something they may excel at. This activity, therefore, assists in increasing the child’s self esteem, giving them more confidence in other areas of the curriculum too.

Differentiation

The possibilities for differentiation within this lesson are extensive. As it is a relatively free activity, the children can move as much, or as little as they like. Interaction from the practitioner could be by means of praising those who demonstrate effort and capability, or by encouraging the children to express themselves and by giving them the confidence to move as they wish. Those who do not attempt to join in could be partnered with others, to provide further encouragement and enjoyment.

Evaluation

This activity provides the children with the freedom to move their bodies in ways which are normally considered inappropriate within the classroom. There is no specific way in which the children are required to move and so they have the opportunity to truly express themselves without the usual confines and barricades. Skinner (1971) believes that behaviour is not something a child is born with, it is shaped by consequences. The conditioning adopted by the setting determines the catalogue of behaviour the child has at his disposal (cited in Palmer 2001). Skinner recognised that children respond to positive reinforcement.

The practitioner in this activity praises the children, encouraging them to express themselves further. Bandura suggests that adults can gain children's attention and highlight the behaviour patterns they want to encourage (David T et al, 2003). He suggests that the children will mimic the behaviour they see in others. In this activity, if the children see the practitioner praising one child as suggested by Skinner, their behaviour will be reinforced and this should encourage more of this behaviour. As the rest of the children bear witness to this development, Bandura suggests that they will reproduce this behaviour to gain recognition for themselves. This was apparent when watching the behaviour of the whole class. When one child became slightly over-excited and silly, others began to imitate him. The practitioner quickly took control of the situation by praising one of the children who was making slower, more gentle movements and the children responded swiftly by slowing their movements down too.

Conclusion

Each one of these activities proved to be successful. The children enjoyed them and were keen to stay on task throughout. The relevant areas and aspects of learning were adequately covered and the children gained a great deal from

participating. From carrying out this research, it is apparent that it is necessary for practitioners to plan their scheme of work effectively in order to guarantee that the foundation stage curriculum is covered throughout the year. This work has examined the long, medium and short term plans and has explained why they are used. It has researched the emergence of the foundation stage curriculum and the ways it can be adapted and moulded to fit into many different types of early years settings. Using the three activities this work has established the theoretical underpinning of the curriculum and demonstrates the strategies which can be applied to differentiate the experiences effectively.

Word Count 3096

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Appendix

Lesson Plans

Reception Short Term Lesson Plan	
Area of Learning: PSED / CLL / MD / KUW / PD / CD	
Aspect : Shape, space and measures Dispositions and attitudes	Lesson Title: Water play – holding and carrying water
Learning Objectives: Begin to understand that containers hold various amounts of water and some none at all Have a strong exploratory impulse	
Activity: Two children working together at the water table. Transfer water from various containers. Use sheets with pictures of items to show which hold more water – if any.	
Technical Vocabulary: Pour, hold, volume, record, holes	Resources: Water table – and aprons etc Various containers including colander and sieve Sheets containing pictures of each of the containers
Teacher/assistant will: Allow children to play on own then guide the play promoting understanding of volume and the capabilities of the containers to hold the water	Pupils will: Play with the water adding water to containers and transferring it to others
Organisation of activity: If the weather is suitable this activity can be carried out outside, otherwise it is set in the wet play area. This activity begins with children simply playing with water, and then becomes more guided with supervision from assistant. Assistant will promote the examination of the containers to see why they may not hold water and why some hold more than others.	
Differentiation: Assist if required – offering help to pour if needed, Extend the activity by asking if the children can say which is going to hold more before filling and pouring Use picture cues to records date collected	
Plenary: Teacher can hold up containers for children to see and say which has greater volume	
Assessment (outcomes / expectations): An enjoyable activity. The children got a lot out of it and seemed to really grasp the concept well	

Reception Short Term Lesson Plan	
Area of Learning: PSED / CLL / MD / KUW / PD / CD	
Aspect: Language for Communication Cultures and beliefs	Lesson Title: Ordering pizzas
Learning Objectives: Link statements and stick to main theme or intention Gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others	
Activity: Placing orders for take away food	
Technical Vocabulary: Order, deliver, time, number, please, thank you	Resources: Role play area – set up as Italian take away Telephone Mobile telephone Paper and pencils
Teacher/assistant will: Talk to the children and find out familiarity with ordering/receiving take away home delivered food. Discuss how they will answer the phone, place the orders, note down orders etc. Watch without interjection where possible	Pupils will: Take on the roles of shop assistant and customer. Make and receive phone calls using the fixed phone and the mobile phone
Organisation of activity: Two children in the role play area. Children to explore telephone equipment. Allow free play with the teaching assistant observing to keep the children linked to main theme	
Differentiation: Some children will be familiar with the equipment where others may not. More able children may have the ability to write down the orders and read them back. Less able children can be encouraged to attempt to write orders down and more able children could assist	
Plenary: The order could be prepared with other children becoming involved in gathering it together. A cooking activity could involve making pizzas with the children.	
Assessment (outcomes / expectations): Most children will already be familiar with the equipment. Those who are unfamiliar can be introduced and assisted. The children will gain knowledge and confidence of placing orders and arranging deliveries.	

Reception Short Term Lesson Plan	
Area of Learning: PSED / CLL / MD / KUW / PD / CD	
Aspect: A sense of space Music	Lesson Title: Music and Movement
Learning Objectives: Show respect for other children's personal space when playing among them. Respond to sound with body movement	
Activity: Children listen to different types of music and move according to how they interpret the music	
Technical Vocabulary: Body part names, movement descriptions	Resources: Space, PE Kits, CD Player
Teacher/assistant will: Play different bits of music to the children judging when to stop appropriately and assist where necessary	Pupils will: Find a space. Listen to the music and interpret it in their own way and move according to how it makes them feel.
Organisation of activity: This activity is done with a large group of children. This activity could relate to discussions about how the music makes the children feel. It also enables children to exercise and energise themselves, or relax through the physical and emotional aspect of the activity. The activity begins with talking about how music can make us feel. The children will warm up by stretching to get their bodies ready. Pupils showing good examples can be asked to show everyone and also those seeming shy can be assisted by the teacher/assistant to encourage them.	
Differentiation: More support to be given to children who are not familiar with expressing themselves in this way by either teaching assistant, or by pairing children together.	
Plenary: After winding down, the class will sit together on the mat and talk about the different feelings the music gave us and how we each interpreted it in our own ways	
Assessment (outcomes / expectations): Children will learn to express themselves and will build up their confidence.	