

Report

Curriculum Framework For Children 3 to 5

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who helped at the local nursery.
(See Appendices)

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1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to examine the themes and characteristics of the curriculum framework for children 3 to 5 and evaluate its effectiveness in meeting the needs of children. The first section of this report is the aims and objectives of the curriculum framework and the second section is the content of the curriculum framework, which looks in more detail at the development of children and how to implement the curriculum. The third section is the context of the curriculum and it involves the environmental and interpersonal contexts as well as the hidden curriculum and explains the importance of them. The final section looks at how practitioners plan and implement the curriculum framework into the nursery setting. Each of the sections will now be looked at in turn in more detail.

2. Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5

Aims and Objectives

There are three key words used in the aims for the curriculum framework for children 3 to 5 they are promote, provide and encourage. The curriculum framework aims to create a setting where children feel happy and secure in a safe and stimulating environment and encourage the development of children in all areas of development, which includes physical, intellectual, language, emotional, social and creative development. For staff to promote the welfare of the children in their care. To encourage children to be positive about themselves and their capabilities and to build up their self-confidence. Encourage children to respect; appreciate other people and their environment. Provide opportunities for exploration and to stimulate interest and imagination. Broaden children's abilities to express their ideas and feelings through a variety of mediums. (The Scottish Office, 1999)

To accomplish these aims it is also important to take into account the ways in which staff value each child for their own individual personality and ability in partnership with parents/ carers, an egalitarian society in their community and the importance of life-long learning. To have the best education for each and every child you need to have the best interests of the children at the forefront, to emphasise the importance of interaction with others and take into consideration the different ways in which children learn. (The Scottish Office, 1999)

Content

“ The key aspects of children's development and learning are:

- Emotional, social and personal development
- Communication and language
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Expressive and aesthetic development
- Physical development and movement ” (The Scottish Office, 1999)

The curriculum framework covers all aspects of the development of children, which is vital because early childhood is a time of fast physical and intellectual development. All the areas of development are inter-related so if one is affected they all are this is what makes having a curriculum framework that covers them all so important. Each of these areas of development set a range of learning experiences that all children are entitled to during their pre-school years. Emotional and social well-being are essential to learning because having confidence and feeling in control are strongly related to educational success. The curriculum framework states that the importance of this cannot be over emphasised and that between the ages of three and five a child should learn to develop independence, to form positive relationships with adults and other children, to respect others and the environment and finally to express appropriate feelings, needs and choices. Nurseries and pre-schools can put these into practice through pretend play such as role-play and through encouraging the children to express themselves and praise positive behaviour towards themselves and others. (The Scottish Office, 1999)

Bruner described language as the “tool of thought”. (Whitebread, 2003) By using language children can communicate their thoughts and understanding of the world and gain knowledge from their observations and experiences. For the communication and language aspect of the curriculum framework children should learn to have fun with language by learning things such as nursery rhymes and listening to stories. By talking and listening to adults and other children and using language for different purposes, examples of this would be asking questions or describing an event or object. Another way of communicating ideas would be to use drawings and marks to convey ideas and feelings. Although, language and communication are more important to the knowledge and understanding of the world aspect of development because it helps children to express what they see, do and hear and helps them to recognise and become aware of themselves, different shapes in their environment and the effects of change for example growth and weather change. Having a daily routine helps them to understand the time structures of the day for example morning and night, which will also extend to activities such as, snack time, story time and home time. (The Scottish Office, 1999)

Expressive and aesthetic development and the physical development and movement aspects are very much inter-related because fine motor skills are needed to use a variety of mediums and techniques such as drawing, printing and painting and will lead onto future writing skills too. Balance and coordination are needed as well for children to express themselves through percussion instruments and clapping to music. (The Scottish Office, 1999)

Context

The environmental and interpersonal contexts can shape a child's learning and development. Children need to be able to make their own choices wherever possible Plato said “compulsory physical exercise does no harm to the body but compulsory learning never sticks in the mind”(Whitebread, 2003) therefore an environment that is well planned and enables the child to experiment and do what they want will help them to develop interests, skills and knowledge that will stay with them for life. A nursery should consider health and safety when arranging their layout without compromising the

child's needs for plenty of choice but also so that the child can see clear areas where different activities can be done this can be shown through the use of screens and shelves to help define the areas. Resources, tools and equipment are an important part of the environment too. All resources should reflect positive images and the tools and equipment should be the genuine article where ever possible for example scissors for cutting paper and knives for buttering bread although again the child's health and safety should be considered. ((a) Foster, D.2005)

In the interpersonal context it is important that staff treat children as individuals because every child is unique and each will have a different background that should be respected and valued. Staff need to provide the children with warmth and encouragement, as this will help the child to learn and settle in especially if the nursery environment is new to them. The practitioners need to provide positive support for the children and their own attitudes and values are important too this leads us onto the hidden curriculum. ((a) Foster, D.2005)

The hidden curriculum considers the values and attitudes of staff and the affect that they could have on children in their care especially at such an impressionable age. Staff may feel that they do not project negative attitudes and values but they need to be aware that they could subconsciously be sending messages to the children through their use of language and their behaviour. Therefore staff need to be prepared to examine their own prejudices and distinguish that these could have an influence on their own actions towards others without even realising. Children use other people's attitudes and values to create their own and at this early age they become aware of their sense of identity, self worth and self-esteem so not only are they learning about themselves but they are learning about how they are valued in society and how others are valued also. ((a) Foster, D.2005)

Process of Learning

At a nursery the practitioners who worked there planned and implemented the curriculum framework for children 3 to 5 very effectively they had a general set up which covered all the curriculum's key aspects. Every week the practitioners sit down to discuss changes to lay out and how different themes can be put into practice. They recently had two very different themes one was a local cultural festival and the other looked at children in Africa and their culture which tied in with Red Nose Day. The children may also be discussed during the meeting especially if there is any concerns about a child these concerns would be noted and all staff would be encouraged to keep note of any observations. One practitioner stated that although she felt that they implemented the curriculum framework well she felt that they lacked space for spontaneous physical activities and that she felt that the children would benefit from this.

Several parents were also asked about the curriculum framework when asked what they thought about it one parent stated that there are some very good aspects and that it was quite well balanced but she felt that the curriculum can only be as good as the staffs interpretation and implementation. When asked if they felt that the curriculum framework met the needs of their child, two parents stated that for now it did but as their children

progress through their pre-school year they felt that they might need more challenging activities. One of the practitioners agreed with these statements and said that as a practitioner they have to use their own initiative to create more challenging opportunities for the children in their care to maintain their interest as their development advances. Both the parents and the practitioners felt that the curriculum framework could be improved through more spontaneous activities and outdoor exploration.

(See Appendix A and B)

3. Evaluation

The curriculum framework is a set of guidelines for educators that aim to develop and broaden a child's learning experiences in order to unleash their full learning potential. The curriculum is based on five key aspects, which cover all the areas of a child's development. These aspects look at how a child's developmental needs can be best met and give examples of how they can be implemented. The environmental and interpersonal contexts are extremely important to the future learning capabilities of children. The setting has to be conducive to the task required which means it has to meet all aspects of the curriculum. The relationship between staff and the children in their care is important so that the child feels valued and can gain the confidence to explore their environment. The hidden curriculum is hard to see and control as a practitioner, because your actions could be subliminal. Both practitioners and parents feel that the curriculum meets the needs of their children at the moment but feel that it needs to be improved through more spontaneous activities and outdoor exploration.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Although the curriculum framework is very good it could be argued that it is too structured which means it does not leave enough room for spontaneity. There is also room for improvement in the physical aspect of the curriculum through outdoor play and exploration. One way of making more flexibility in the structure of the curriculum would be to have a free play area where the children can choose what they want to do as oppose to those activities chosen by the staff. Another way that the curriculum could be improved it to recommend access to an outdoor area in which children can nurture things and see them grow as well as being able to have the freedom to run unfettered.

End

Word Count: 1968

5. References

Course notes:

Foster, D. 2005, Introduction to the Early Years Curriculum, Section 1 (a)
http://vle.uhi.ac.uk:8900/SCRIPT/eyc_bacys/scripts/serve_home

Foster, D. 2005, Introduction to the Early Years Curriculum, Section 1 (b)
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Foster, D. 2005, Introduction to the Early Years Curriculum, Section 1 (c)
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Books:

Pugh Gillian, 1996 "Contemporary Issues in Early Years, Working Collaboratively for Children", Paul Chapman Publishing, London.

Whitebread David, 2003 "Teaching and Learning in the Early Years" 2nd Edition, Routledge Falmer.

The Scottish Office, 1999 "Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5".

6. Appendices

Appendix A

Practitioners Questionnaire

What do you think of the curriculum framework for 3-5 year olds?

Do you feel that the curriculum framework meets the developmental needs of the children in your care?

Do you think that the curriculum framework could be improved, if so how?

How do you make a distinction between children's needs?

How do you as a practitioner of this nursery/pre-school plan and implement the curriculum framework?

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Appendix B

Parents Questionnaire

What do you think of the curriculum framework for 3-5 year olds?

Do you feel that the curriculum framework meets the developmental needs of your child?

Do you think that the curriculum framework could be improved, if so how?

Do you feel that the practitioners at this nursery/pre-school have implemented the curriculum framework effectively? If not why?

Have you received a leaflet about the 3-5 curriculum? If not would you have found one useful?