

Introduction

The setting in which I am carrying out this assessment is a county infants school in the reception class. The school is located on the outskirts northwest of the town Ipswich. There are children altogether attending the school and there are twenty-eight children in the reception class.

Inside the classroom there is space on the carpet for all the children to sit, there are tables and chairs but not enough for all of the children. They have regular use of a classroom (that will be used when the next year of children move up at Easter) and also the main hall. Outside there is a large playground with an adventure playground at one end containing climbing apparatus, there is also a medium sized field that is only used in good weather.

The children in the school are all aged between four and seven years. The class I am focusing on has children in the age range of four and five. The class follows the Foundation Stage curriculum.

Aim

The aim of this assessment is to devise a medium term plan and to plan a range of activities and experiences that would benefit development for children aged between four and five years. The activities I will be planning will be closely linked to the six areas of learning from the Foundation Stage curriculum. The areas that I hope the children will be encouraged in will be:

- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Personal, social and emotional
- Communication, language and literacy
- Physical development
- Mathematical development
- Creative development

I aim to help their development in all of these areas by providing a wide range of resources, ideas and experiences.

As part of the planning I aim to implement two activities. The two activities are:

- The train game is where the carriages form a number line. It consists of four train cards, four carriages numbered one, four carriages numbered two, four carriages numbered three, four carriages numbered four and four carriages numbered five. All carriage cards are placed face down on a table and the children take turns to turn over a card, if it is the number they need they add it to their line if it is not they show everyone the card and replace it face down on the table, the winner is the first child to get their line to five.
- Mind map-China this activity involves the whole class, they will all sit down in a large group and the teacher will sit at the front with a large piece of paper and a large pen. The teacher will ask for any ideas they know about the subject (in this case China) and write down any suggestions they have that are relevant to the subject.

Rationale

The curriculum plan I have designed is to be carried out over a six-week period. This plan is what's called a medium term plan, which is in more detail than a long-term plan (often done over a one year period). A short-term plan is more detailed than the medium-term plan and is often based on a daily or weekly basis.

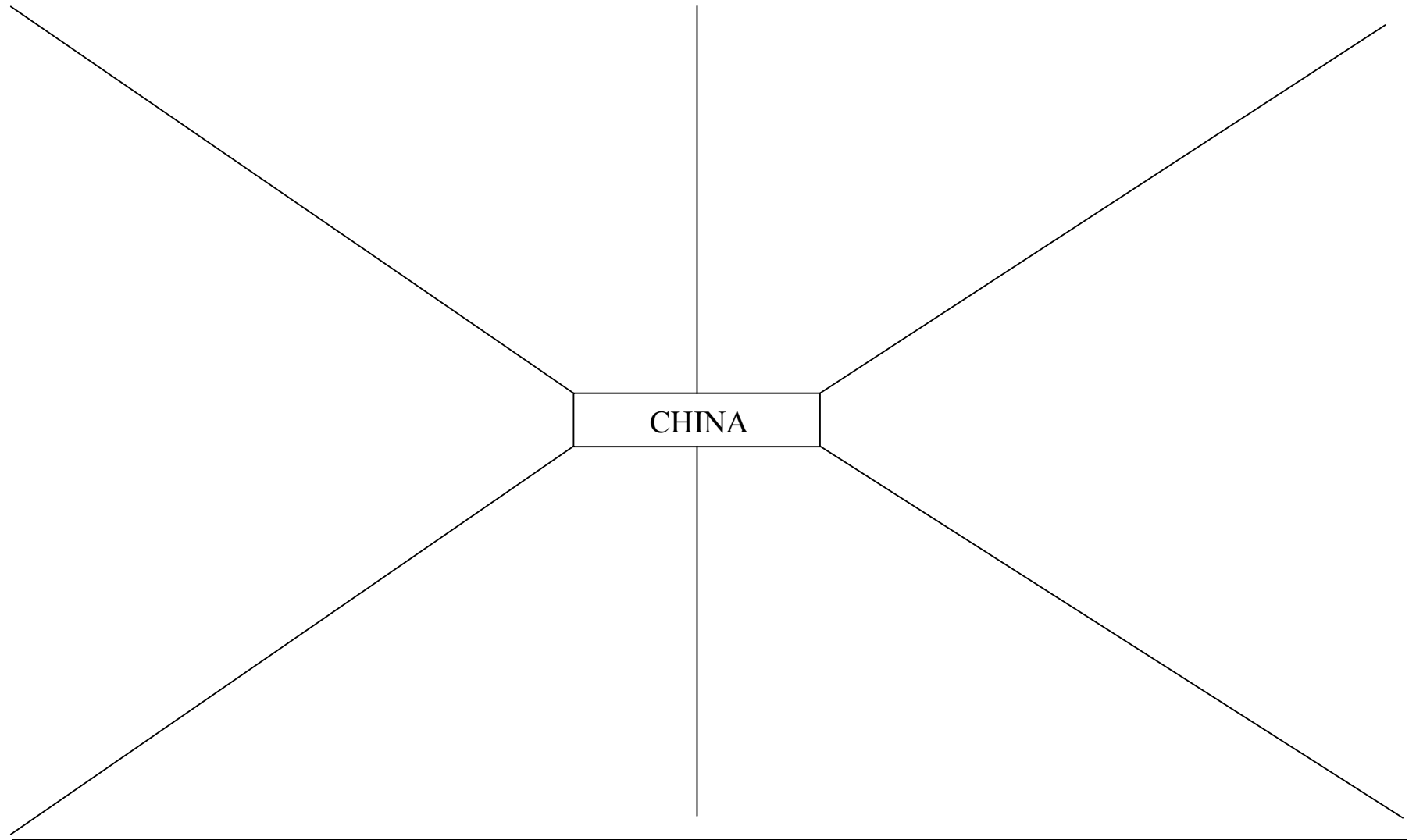
I am preparing this curriculum plan in the best way possible to promote the development in all areas. I have discussed with my placement supervisor about the suitability of my activities and also to have an incite on a curriculum plan already in order.

I believe that children benefit best from having a wide range of activities and experiences, keeping the day interesting and keeping the children's minds active. All of these would prevent boredom, straying minds and lacked concentration. My plan will be arranged around the fact that all children have different, but they all need to be treated fairly. The plan will be relevant to the age range four to five years because all the activities are planned for children just starting school that are working on the Foundation Stage curriculum. I will be making sure that my plan is age and stage appropriate by researching developmental norms/milestones, curriculum planning information and current curriculum plans that are being carried out. This needs to be done because otherwise the children will be under stimulated or they will not fully understand what they are doing or being asked to do.

I decided on my activities by choosing two areas (communication, language and literacy and mathematics) and noting from my placement what the most effective methods of learning are there, then devising my own activities and made resources that are relevant. I will be discussing with my placement supervisor whether there are any changes that can be made or whether anything will be dangerous, biased, discriminative or harmful to the children's health or safety.

My chosen topic for my six-week plan is China (in particular Chinese New Year). The children will hopefully learn about the traditions that they have, presents and gifts they give each other, how they decorate their houses, about Chinese writing and speech and the style their houses and belongings are. They will also be learning the story of the animals, why they were racing and what order they came in. they will learn a new song that is about a Chinese boy and girl (the children can pick their names) and how they greet the greet their family on Chinese New Year day. The children will also be listening to Chinese style music and playing certain bars on the pentatonic scale that resemble said music.

I hope to improve my knowledge of the subject medium-term planning. I will gain an understanding of appropriate activities and experiences that can meet all children's needs and encourage their development. I will understand how to plan and implement the activities and use suitable equipment and resources. I will also be improving myself as a childcare worker in these circumstances. I will understand how I can help children's learning. I will also learn how to relate activities and experiences to the early learning goals (ELG)



The following are brief descriptions of four of the activities out of my curriculum plan:

- Mind map- the main area of learning this links to is knowledge and understanding of the world. For this activity the whole class will be involved, it starts with a large piece of paper (maybe with a picture) and some chunky marker pens. The practitioner asks the children what they know about the subject (in this case China). All of the children's relevant suggestions will be written down leaving space to elaborate at the end of the subject. The practitioner's job is to encourage the children and to write down what they say. This activity is mostly done to see how much the children know so the practitioner should not interfere or influence their answers. The only resources required are a large piece of paper and chunky marker pens. All the children have a fair chance to put across what they know, if some of the children seem to be dominating the activity, the practitioner will ask the quieter children whether they have anything to say.
- Different foods at snack time-noodles-the areas knowledge and understanding of the world and personal, social; and emotional development are the main areas that will be encouraged by the activity. All the children will be participating; they will all have a bowl of noodles and a set of chopsticks. They will all have the choice whether or not to try the noodles if they do chose to try the noodles they will have a choice whether or not to have sauce (sweet and sour). The adults' role will be to supervise the children and to try and persuade the children to try it first before saying they do not like it. The resources required for this activity will be:
 - Enough bowls to go around
 - Enough chopsticks to go around (if not it will have to be done in sittings)
 - Noodles
 - Sauce

For health and safety reasons there will have to be checks for the children's allergies and intolerances. It would also be essential to check with parents to make sure the children are aloud this certain food. To make it fair to all of the children they will all get a chance to try to eat with the chopsticks, but there will be help available if any of the children need it. If any child still finds it difficult they can use a spoon or a fork if they choose. I will also not stereotype between boys and girls they will all get a fair chance and amount of time.

- Retelling and acting out the legend of the animals-this activity is mainly linked to the area of learning communication, language and literacy but is also linked with personal, social and emotional and partly with physical development. The children would have already have been told the story, they will all be allocated a part to play, rat, rooster, donkey etc they will act out the race (maybe with animal masks) and then the order they came in, they will also act out the build up to why the race happened, the role of the adult is to direct the children, reminding them of their lines if they forget or telling them to stop the race when appropriate. Also to provide resources that may be required. Masks or costumes maybe used as a resource. For health and safety reasons costumes will have to be checked for length so the children do not trip over them and also that there is enough space to move around freely without any obstacles or obstructions. If there are more children than there are parts, it may be beneficial to act it out twice this way all the children can act and

watch. If there are any children with mobility difficulties, the area should be made accessible if not so already so that they can join in. also if a child has a hearing or visual impairment one to one guidance/assistance could help so they can join in.

- The train game- is a mathematical game so it is this area that will be encouraged. This is a game for four players each player has the first section of the train on a card, all the other cards are placed face down on the table. Each child takes their turn to pick up a single card, turn it over to try and get the number one. If they get the correct card they try for the next number on their next turn if it is the wrong card the child shows it to the rest of the group and then returns it face down on the table, it is now the next child's turn. The winner is the first child to get their lines up to the number five. The role of the adult is to make sure that they are all taking fair turns and to ask questions such as 'how many more cards do you need?', 'what number do you need next?' and 'is that the right number?' to encourage their thinking on the subject. The only resource required is the game cards. For health and safety reasons the cards must stay on the table, under no circumstances must the children throw them as they catch somebody in the eye. So not to discriminate all children get a fair turn even if they are thinking of their next move for a long period of time the adult should help if the child looks confused, upset or troubled, therefore giving the child a sense of independence. For a child with a visual impairment it may be necessary to guide their hands so they can find the cards and tell them the number on it. For a child with a hearing impairment and adult or even another child who can sign may help.

ACTIVITY: The train game	DATE: 15-03-05
Number of children: four	Age of children: four to five years
The setting: infants school-reception class	
Key learning intentions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ordering numbers ▪ What number comes next ▪ Taking turns ▪ How many more 	
Learning outcomes	
Physical development -developing coordination and control through picking up the cards (fine motor skills)	Creative development - colours and patterns, all cards are brightly coloured, can make a full set of matching colours
Language and literacy - talk about whose turn it is or who has the longest/shortest line, listening to others.	Knowledge and understanding of the world - discovering that everyday objects can be numbered and ordered and also learning a little about trains and carriages
Mathematics -counting how many cards they have, they can decide how many more they need, ordering numbers, thinking of what number comes next. Memory skills, ordinal numbers describing words (bigger, smaller, longer etc)	Personal and social -sharing/turn taking, working together (reminding each other of where the cards are), concentration.
Stimulus	
I will introduce the activity as a game, the children will be encouraged by this and will overlook that it is actually an exercise (learning through play)	
Preparation	
Four of each of the six pictures cut out of paper and backed onto card and coloured in brightly. Space to carry out the activity. Apart from the four starting cards (a train with no numbers on it) all other cards placed face down on the table/floor (carriages numbered one to five)	
Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choose four children from the class/group ▪ Separate from the rest of the class/group e.g. table in corner or outside ▪ Ask them to choose a seat and sit down ▪ Share out the starting cards- a train with no number ▪ Choose one of the children to start ▪ Tell child one to turn over one card ▪ Ask them if it is the card they need ▪ If yes the child adds it to their line ▪ If no the child shows the other players and then returns to the table face down ▪ The next child takes their go and does the same ▪ The aim of the game is to get all the numbers in the correct order and also to improve memory skills (remembering where the cards have been put) ▪ The winner is the first child to get all of the numbers (one to five). ▪ During the game the practitioner could ask questions such as: 'what number do you need next?', 'who has the biggest/smallest/longest/shortest line?', 'how many cards have you got?', 'how many more do you need?' 	

ACTIVITY: mind map- China	DATE: 15-03-05
Number of children: whole class	Age of children: four to five years
The setting: infants school- reception class	
Key learning intentions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To learn from the other children ▪ Confidence to speak in front of the whole class ▪ Listening 	
Learning outcomes	
Physical development-	Mathematics – counting how many suggestions are on the board, calculating for example how many more to make twenty?
Creative development – colours Chinese people decorate in, style of houses, Chinese writing	Language and literacy – discussing what should be put on the mind map, listening to others, speaking out clearly so everyone can hear
Personal and social – taking turns to speak without interrupting, waiting to be asked instead of calling out, personal space sitting down	Knowledge and understanding of the world – discovering certain facts about China traditions, food, celebrations
Stimulus	
I will be introducing it as a mind map and explaining what it is. Tell the children it is away that the teachers can know what the children know.	
Preparation	
One large piece of paper stuck to the board (maybe with a drawn picture in the centre) and large pens. Children to sit as if they were in registration or circle time.	
Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain to the children that a mind map is to help the adults know what the children know ▪ Ask the children to put up their hands if they know anything about China ▪ Write the information on the paper as if to resemble a spider diagram ▪ It may be necessary to explain some of the suggestions if the other children look confused ▪ Do not take all of the answers from the more confident children that have a lot to say. Try to encourage all of the children to join in ▪ Ask questions to encourage the children to elaborate ▪ On the same piece of paper at the end of the subject China it can be repeated in order of seeing what the children have learnt. ▪ Display in a part of the classroom where it may be seen at all times. 	

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This is the resource I made to aid me in the train game. I made it by printing the pictures, colouring them in brightly and backing each individual picture onto card. Unfortunately no activities that can be carried apart from the original game and extensions of that it was originally made for.

Results

The train game-The children could generally handle the cards well although it arose occasionally that the children could not lift up the cards because they were flat on the table. Throughout the game I asked the children questions about their lines such as:

- “What number are you looking for?”
- “How many more do you need to finish?”

Most of the answers off the children were one worded. The children responded well to the brightly coloured card, talking about it. I allowed the children to pick their favourite colour for the starting card although it arose that two of the children had the same favourite I rectified this by playing two games in between which they swapped cards. The children could talk well about whose turn it was, whose turn was coming next and how many people have their turn before they do. All the children listened and watched the person whose turn it was at the time. I occasionally had to prompt the children as to the whereabouts of where the card they needed had been put down; I also came across the children reminding each other where the cards were if they could remember themselves. All the children understood how to play the game and the rules. Most of the children carried out the instructions I gave them easily.

Mind map-China- The children came up with a lot of suggestions, mostly, but not all were to do with China. Nearly all of the children sat quietly and listened to others for the duration of this activity. Occasionally some of the children did call out. All of the children had an opportunity to put forward their suggestion. For this to happen the quieter children were asked whether they had anything to say. Some of the children had a little help in the form of an adult telling them how to work it out when it came to the question “how many more suggestions to make twenty?” The children didn’t make any suggestions about colours or decorations by themselves until an adult brought up the subject. They did however suggest by themselves the types of clothes they wear. One of the first suggestions was Chinese writing which was repeated a number of times as suggestions from the other children. Generally all of the children listened, took turns to speak and waited to be asked (a few didn’t but they were corrected during the activity). There were no suggestions about traditions or celebrations. Chinese food was the most popular suggestion. The children responded well to open ended questions.

Evaluation

The train game-I think that generally there was the correct amount of children for the game. If there were fewer children the game would be too short for me to really ask the children many questions. If there were more children the game would take a lot longer and there would be the chance of the children's minds wandering. I think the reason I only got one-worded answers was my questions, they weren't much opened and also the children were quite involved by the time I asked the questions and could have been concentration. All round I think that the game was a little too easy as all the children grasped it well they did not however become bored so it may have been the right amount of both to keep them stimulated.

Tassoni and Beith (2002 p 400) state that between the ages of four and six years a child should normally be:

- 'Starting to understand simple rules in a games'
- 'Playing co-operatively, taking turns and enjoying table top games'

Nearly all the children could do the above I therefore suggest that the game is appropriate for the age range I planned it for.

Throughout this observation the children have gained developing co-ordination and control over the cards. They have used fine motor skills to lift a turn over the cards, for the first few times the children turned over the cards they had a little difficulty all of the children discovered however that if they slide the card to the edge of the table it was easier to pick up. They have also been learning about sharing and turn taking and how everyone has to have fair turns and not to hurry them along. They have been thinking about ordinal numbers (first second etc) and what number comes next, and also through my open-ended questions, about lengths and sizes of the lines.

B F Skinner's theory of positive and negative reinforcement also fits in here. If a child gets a number and puts it in the correct order, they may be praised, told well done. Their actions have been reinforced (positive reinforcement). On the other hand a child may not come first the first time they play the game, they may not like this feeling which would inspire them to really try the next time, although if they do not come first again they may take a disliking to the game.

I was fully prepared for the activity as all I needed was the game cards, I didn't need any additional resources. I discussed with my placement supervisor the suitability of the game and whether she thought it to be age and stage appropriate to these children. I was mostly completely planned and ready for this activity although it would have been helpful if I could have more time, there was enough time to play quite a few games, but not all the children in the class got a chance to play and not also was that unfair to some of the children I could have benefited from seeing the whole class dealing with the game to support my evaluation more. As I have said the number of children in the group was correct it was easy to manage the situation. I think that I gave clear instructions although it may have made more sense to the children if I had set down some firm ground rules at the start. Again the only thing that did not go to plan was the amount of time I had allocated for the game.

The resources I made was suitable for its purpose it lasted quite well and was quite durable as they were backed onto card I think in future I would laminate the cards so

they were more durable. It did help the children to learn, but I think it would have been more helpful to them if the numbers were higher as most of the children already knew their numbers one to five quite well. I could also have made different versions of the game such as, instead of trains I could do flowers or animals depending on what the subject they were focusing on at the time was.

Mind map-China-I think that including the whole class was suitable because the children all gained feedback off each other. Although it was quite difficult to tell how many of the children could count the suggestions as they all counted at the same time, some of the children could have been following what everyone else was saying. When the children were asked (separately) “how many suggestions to make twenty?” they took a little longer than I had expected to work it out but got it right in the end. Some of the children had a little prompting as how to work it out. As the suggestion about Chinese writing came up a lot I wasn’t sure if the children were copying the first child who suggested it or whether they were going to suggest it in the first place.

Tassoni and Beith (2002 p 400) state that between the ages of four and six years a child should normally be:

- ‘Showing more understanding and using reason based on their experiences’
- ‘Starting to use and understand symbols – e.g. reading and writing’

Again nearly all the children could do the above I suggest therefore that this activity is appropriate for the age and stage of these children.

The children have been learning in the area of knowledge and understanding of the world they have been thinking of past events that they could link with the subject of China (e.g. I had a Chinese last night). The children have expanded in their knowledge of listening, not interrupting and waiting to be asked before speaking. They have also learnt a bit about how to discuss with people. They have also been learning about mathematics by counting how many suggestions are on the board and calculating ‘how many more...’

Again with this activity I can see where B F Skinner’s theory fits in. in a similar way to the first activity – if a child comes up with good suggestions they will get a well done. This will encourage them to think deeper to think of another suggestion to get the same praise (positive reinforcement). B F Skinner also says that by ignoring certain behaviour it may disappear which could be done with the children that interrupt.

Tassoni and Beith (2002 p 223) state that ‘adults need to extend children’s vocabulary and help them to use language as a way of thinking, open questions can be used when working with children. This means asking questions where children have to give more than one worded answers’ during my activity I believe I covered this as I asked a few open ended and the children responded well. ‘Children also need to learn the skills of listening and this means that we must be good role models for them by listening to them’ although the children were good at listening I still believe that I acted as a good role model to them by listening to all of the suggestions and not being dismissive.

I wasn’t prepared for the amount of suggestions that the children gave it may have been helpful if I had a spare piece of paper for such circumstances. I had discussed

with my placement supervisor the suitability of this activity I discussed whether it was age and stage appropriate and whether it was stimulating enough for the children to sit there for a while and pay attention. I think that the time I had allocated for this activity was appropriate; the times were roughly similar when the children started to run out of suggestions and when we had to start the next activity. The activity was a success there was good feedback later on throughout the day and the children were also asking to have other people suggestions explained to them (showing they were interested in the subject). I had extra support from my supervisor to manage all of the children as it was a class of twenty-eight so it was managed quite well. I gave clear instructions about what we were doing but not about how they had to sit or that they had to wait to be asked. I think that it would have been beneficial to explain this before the activity was started to set down the ground rules. Other than this all went to plan with the activity.

Recommendations

The train game – when I asked the children the questions I often got one-word answers, in order to help them expand on the subject more, the adult in the situations asking more open-ended questions about the subject could do this. During the game I had two children with the same favourite colour I dealt with this by playing two games, it may have been easier to ask the children to swap in the middle of the game or to not let the children choose at all I could just deal the cards to them. I could also for future games keep the colours the same (starting cards one colour, number one cards another colour etc). In order for the children to progress, I could make other cards numbered up to ten, if this proved to difficult because of the amount of cards on the table they could be separated into two piles one to five and six to ten. I could also play the game backwards if they had managed it the original way well. I could make the cards colour co-ordinated e.g. either they have to get the whole set of one colour to win or that the aim is to make a pattern. The best way I think to extend this activity would be turning it into a quiz – each child is asked a maths question, if they get the question right they can turn over a card if they get it wrong they will wait until their next turn. In this activity whatever the version an adult would need to be present to make sure the game is being carried out in the way planned, that the children are all taking turns and that the children are being sensible with the cards.

Mind map-China- To expand this activity to a higher level I could use smaller groups so the children could go into more detail on their suggestions. The only problem with this being they will not hear such a wide range of feedback as they would with the whole class. I could also throughout the designated time for the subject, do smaller mind maps of the individual subjects such as:

- Food
- Clothes
- Houses etc

And add them to the larger mind map to resemble a spider diagram. This would be benefiting them because each subject is into more depth and it will be in a visible place in the class so they can view it at all times. To expand this activity even further the child who has made a suggestion could come to the front of the class and attempt to write or copy it onto the paper so they have made a larger contribution. I think this would be the most beneficial way to expand as it has links to language and literacy already (listening and reading) it would bring in other areas (reading more and writing). I think that it would also encourage the other children to make more suggestions. An adult would have to be present at all time as they are the one who would be writing down the children's suggestions and also to encourage the ideas of the children's.

To begin with I viewed curriculum plans that are being implemented already to get an idea about how the curriculum plans are set out and an idea about the information included in them. The second step was to think of a range of activities that could be carried out in the setting and then compare them to developmental norms and milestones for this age range and also the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage to get ideas. I tried to link most of the activities to at least one early learning goal. Activities that were suitable to the subject and could be linked to early learning goals were included in my curriculum plan; however there was a few that are not linked to the early learning goals, which I included anyway because I thought that they were good for learning in certain areas. I decided what to include by the relevance to the early learning goals. For all of the activities I needed to think about the availability of resources, the space that it needed to be carried out, the overall safety of the activity, to make sure it was fair to all the children, not discriminative and that there was enough time allocated. I discussed my overall curriculum plan with my supervisor to get acknowledgment on whether it was suitable to the children or not and to ask whether I had included everything that is normally included in a curriculum plan.

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