

**A curriculum enhancement proposal for
Cache Level 1 Caring for Children Certificate**

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Abstract

Education for sustainable development is essential in ensuring that the future generations of Early Years Practitioners are well equipped and prepared for employment within society. It is therefore vital that the courses that are being delivered are providing learners with the necessary knowledge and skills that they are then able to apply confidently and competently within the workplace. The purpose of this research was to critically evaluate the current linear curriculum model and its impact on the teaching and learning process of the Cache Level 1 Caring for Children Certificate and to suggest a proposal that will enhance the teaching and learning for post-16 learners. The key findings suggest that by following a spiral curriculum the learners will improve their skills by gaining and retaining a deeper understanding of knowledge.

Introduction

This proposal explores various curriculum theories in order to evaluate and analyse an enhancement that will improve the delivery of the current Cache Level 1 Childcare curriculum and in doing so its ability for community cohesion and education for sustainable development.

Educational systems are seen by many to be an important part in the advancement of individuals being able to build a brighter future within society not only as citizens but as professionals too (Phillips, 2000). Serdyukov (2017) believes that through the involvement with the educational system, each learner's individual potential, abilities and skills should be harnessed and developed further to then be used as a tool for attaining bigger things in life, such as exploration, innovation and progress. Scott (2017) agrees the education systems are of great importance but states that they cannot function effectively and efficiently without curriculum and that the curriculum design, implementation and evaluation is crucial to the teaching and learning process for sustainable development (Mufti and Peace, 2012).

Teachers are often asked to either design or work with a particular curriculum, but rarely get to talk about what curriculum is (Scott, 2017). However to define curriculum in the terms of which includes details about teaching techniques, objectives, content, assessment and evaluation is harder than you may think especially when there is not one set definition (Luke, Woods and Weir, 2013). Kerr (1968) defines curriculum as a guided learning experience that is designed to facilitate learners in establishing quality relationships between what is learnt and what can be implemented outside the classroom. Whereas Young (2014) defines curriculum as being all the different courses of study that are taught in a school or college that provides learners with all the information they are expected to learn in order to achieve identified educational outcomes (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

I am currently teaching on the Caring for Children Level 1 course. There are ten units which the learners have to pass in order to gain the certificate. Ideally all learners must pass all the units however if learners are unable to do so they can pass with four units from group A mandatory units to gain an award. It is a three day course and the learners currently have three different units with three different teachers running at the same time. The learners also have the opportunity to go on block placements for a week during February and two weeks at the beginning of May.

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The learners can only attend placement once they have their DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) in place due to safeguarding children and following the settings policies.

Last year we delivered the Level 1 Introduction to Health and Social Care, Children and Young People's Settings Diploma, but found that it had too many units and the learners found it a real struggle managing the work load. We also found that the learners were not too keen on learning about the care of adults and just wanted to know about the child care aspect. When looking at changing the course to the certificate it made no difference to the funding or the hours and the course is so much more hands on and fun and would suit the learners needs based on the feedback we received from last years course, that we decided to go with it. The awarding body for the course is Cache.

Cache are the Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education. They are the leading specialist awarding body for the care and education sector and are recognised worldwide (Allen, 2003; British Qualifications, 2013).

Cache will either write the syllabus based on the workforce development strategy for the sector or they will develop the syllabus jointly with employers. With the information provided Cache will then develop the assessments for each course (Allen, 2003; Cache, 2016). These assessments are then used to determine if the learners have gained the sufficient knowledge and skills that are required in order for them to achieve the qualification (Allen, 2003; Cache, 2016).

Cache's Mission Statement states their aim is:

To be the awarding organisation of choice in care, health and education for learners and employers. To accomplish this we aim to improve the skills level and professional standards of the childcare, adult care, education and health care workforce and its allied disciplines. We also ensure that our qualifications are cost effective to deliver, provide progression for learners and value for employers

(Cache, 2016).

Cache qualifications are regarded as "gold standard" in the early years professions worldwide, and are seen as the must have qualifications when wanting to work with children from birth to five years (Cache, 2016; NurseryWorld, 2013). Learners are able to progress up to the Level 3 qualification before advancing on to Higher Education. During a review of early years and childcare qualifications, Nutbrown (2012) stated that when courses are taught well and have clear learning routes resulting in the achievement of a reliable qualification, this allows early years practitioners to constantly develop in their roles due to being able to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding, by relating theory into practice.

At times curriculum can be defined as the subjects that are taught, however it is important that the holistic goals of competencies and personal development are not forgotten (Miller and Nigh, 2017). Therefore the curriculum must also be adaptable not only to the learners but to the needs of society and future employers for sustainable education. Hence why a curriculum model is crucial; it helps set the subjects within a holistic context and shows how learning experiences are implemented within the subjects (Hirst and Peters, 2011; Miller and Nigh, 2017).

From an instrumentalism ideology the current Cache Level 1 caring for children is more linear, leading to a desired end product, which ultimately will identify the learner's knowledge regarding childcare units (John, 2016; Tyler, 1949). Units on this course are delivered one at a time and are assigned their own deadlines that learners are encouraged to meet. Units are then assessed as we go along. Once a unit has been completed and submitted by the assigned deadline, the work is then marked and handed

back to the learners with a feedback sheet to show whether they have passed or referred on any of the learning outcomes within the unit and includes any developmental points for learners to improve on for future units. There is no need for myself or the learners to revisit any of the units once they have been taught, unless, a learner has been given a referral for a learning outcome and have to redo it in order for that piece of work to be ready for a resubmission. The learner can look at all the power points from the lessons for that particular unit, which are all uploaded to their course page that they are able to view online using moodle. It is very rare that a learner will need to look through an entire unit again in order to complete any unfinished work, and instead will only use the relevant power points that relate to the particular learning outcome that they have to finish or redo. Within this ideology there are also some elements of the Jigsaw model (Dell'Olio and Donk, 2007; Marsh, 2009) as each unit is worth so many credits that can be collected together to create the end goal. Ideally we are aiming for all the learners to gain the certificate and in order to do so all of the ten units would need to be passed. However if learners were struggling or were unable to complete the course, they would still be able to achieve the award, as long as there were at least four of the compulsory units completed and passed.

With the focus mainly on targets and outcomes of the curriculum, this product model can also be referred to as the behavioural objectives model (Tyler, 1949; Bloom, 1965). The objectives are set by Cache, schemes of work and lesson plans are then drawn up by the teachers who have taken into account the objectives, the lessons are delivered and then the outcomes (product) of the units of work are measured. The outcomes for example could be in the form of posters, leaflets or workbooks, which the learners then use to compile a portfolio of evidence.

Having a syllabus and learning objectives makes this approach the one that is more commonly used. Ross (2003) states that using this model can have a positive effect on the learning process as it provides the learners with a clear aim and allows teachers to assess if learning is taking place. Neary (2003) argues that this type of model can prevent creativity from both the learner and the teacher. Although Cache provides the learning objectives, they do allow the freedom for me to deliver the lesson however I want, and feel is the best way for my learners, allowing me to differentiate for individual needs. When the learners have been assigned a task, for example to produce a leaflet, they will be given the title and a brief overview of what to include, however the ultimate end design is up to each individual learner.

Alongside the product model there are also some elements of the Praxis model (Freire, 1972) which can also be referred to as the humanist approach to education (Welch and Smith, 2014). During each session of delivery there is always the underlying theory to practice included. This is to make sure learners gain a better understanding of the importance behind what we do in our settings with children, to ensure they are better prepared for future employment as Early Years Practitioners within society (Lindon, 2010).

Using the current curriculum model in my opinion seems to be teacher centred and content orientated. The teacher's main intentions and focus are on the planning and delivering of the course syllabus and ensuring that the learners are receiving the appropriate information in order to pass (Garrett, 2008). Biggs and Tang (2011) suggests there is a positive within this approach, as teachers can use the outcomes as an opportunity for the learners to be able to demonstrate the knowledge that they have acquired in detail. These outcomes are then seen as solely the learner's responsibility to produce from their own personal ability and motivation (Biggs and Tang, 2011; Sadler-Smith and Evans, 2006). Motivation being the key factor that will influence the amount of learning that has taken place (Rogers, 2003). Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) argue that by adapting this approach, learners are simply scraping the surface of the information that is being studied and as a result are not being able to carry out any deep processing techniques. Patterson and Gibson (2017) agree that by implementing a

surface learning approach, learners will tend to just accept the information they are given and will memorise only what they need to know in order to pass. Sometimes when teachers are meeting the needs of the awarding body rather than the learners, it ultimately results in the learners purely focusing only on what is required for assessment purposes (Swaffield, 2011).

Education does not always just mean that learners are receiving subject knowledge based purely on what is needed in order to achieve a qualification (Schiro, 2013). Through the education system's hidden curriculum, teachers are able to shape and empower learners' behaviours and beliefs not only as students but as adults in society in order to create a sustainable future (Portelli, 2006). Hidden curriculums are the knowledge, ideas and practices that teachers are able to explore with their learners that are not part of their course, and essentially can help develop a learner's professional and personal skills further (Apple, 2004; Kelly, 2009). Portelli (2006) states that through the hidden curriculum, learners are able to gain knowledge regarding the expected behaviour within the education system, it provides them with an opportunity to discuss any social issues that arises, not just personally but also nationally and globally, and helps them develop an awareness about society regarding beliefs and cultures, with the vision of a better society as global citizens (Apple, 2004; Schiro, 2013). Killick (2016) agrees that through the hidden curriculum, learners are able to take into account expectations within the classroom and provide learners with a greater awareness of individual experiences, not just locally but also on a global scale. Seeing their peers as equals and respecting them as individuals promotes greater equality and community cohesion within the classroom (Chiarelott, 2005).

At the very start of the course I delivered units that were felt to be vital that were not included within the Level 1 Caring for Children course, such as communication and safeguarding. In order for the learners to be as prepared as possible for their block placements it was agreed that these units were important especially when working with young children. It was important that the learners were aware of the importance of safeguarding to ensure the safety of children and themselves (Burton and Reid, 2017). Communication is also vital when working with young children in childcare settings. Not only do the learners need to know how to communicate with children, and know what is and what is not appropriate, they also need to know how to communicate with parents and their fellow colleagues (Lefevre, 2010).

Outside of the curriculum I also cover the British values (Department of Education, 2014) which according to Ofsted (2014) 'fundamental British values' are, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance including those with different faiths and beliefs. Alongside these values the college values are also covered which are progress, inclusion, aspiration, innovation and support (South Devon College, 2017). Both college and British values are at the forefront of every lesson within the classroom, where this could be, for example, a simple reminder to the learners that we listen to others when they are talking. They are also covered within a tutorial lesson, which also provides an opportunity for teachers to talk with the learners about their progress, support and aspirations for now and in the future.

Education systems have only been required to respect these values before, but now they are required to have a clear strategy in place for embedding these values into the curriculum. Implementing these values helps to ensure children become valuable and fully rounded members of society who treat others with respect and tolerance, regardless of their backgrounds or culture (Department of Education, 2014; Equality Act, 2010; OFSTED, 2014).

Wherever possible on the scheme of learning where there has been an opportunity to recognise diversity I have created and delivered units on other areas, for example, multi-cultural festivities. This particular unit was delivered near Christmas and instead of just focusing on what we would be celebrating at that time of year, we looked at what other cultures are celebrating and when they

celebrate them. The learners researched in groups a range of different festivities such as Ramadan, Chinese New Year and Diwali. The learners then all had turns at making activities from each of these festivities that they decorated the childcare classroom with. Units such as these are important during most courses not just childcare as they embed equality and diversity in our learners. It also allows the learners to develop a better understanding of different traditions and cultures, which is extremely important when working with children, so they are made to feel included and their cultures are valued (Equality Act, 2010; Shaeffer, 2009). This also links to one of the four pillars of learning, “learning to live together” (UNESCO, 2017), which states the ability to tolerate, respect and embrace diversity, and celebrate different traditions, values and cultures, enabling individuals to be able to live together in peace and harmony (Shaeffer, 2009).

Following the current curriculum model, I cover set learning outcomes each week, at the beginning of the following weeks’ session I recap the previous lesson and then move on to the next learning outcome. Before a new unit starts I ensure that we recap over the entire previous unit, usually through a game of hot seat. I never recap over the units once they have been delivered and if a learner has passed a unit after the first submission, they have no need to look at the unit again. By the time the learners complete the course next year they will be likely to forget information that they would have learnt from the beginning part of the year due to not revisiting the units (Gathercole, 2013).

My proposal is that we should be recapping units throughout the year to ensure the learners are gaining a full understanding of the content contained within the qualification that they have just achieved, and therefore are more able to apply the knowledge they have required in the work place. The Cache childcare courses should be following a similar model to the City and Guilds (2017) Synoptic Assessment. Learners have three modules that are delivered at the same time, once the modules have finished, the learners then have a mini assessment that relates to what has been taught through the three modules. There is one final assessment at the very end of the course that relates to every single one of the modules covered. Therefore by implementing this change learners are constantly revisiting previous modules in order to recap over previous information and by doing so are developing a deeper learning of the content within the course (Fullen, Quinn and McEachen, 2017) thus being able to retain and recall relevant information (Gathercole, 2013).

Deep learning allows learners to be able to relate new knowledge to existing knowledge and enables them to take what is learned in one situation and apply it to another, a transfer of learning, such as being able to apply theory to practice or vice versa (Freire, 1972; Warburton, 2003). Patterson and Gibson (2017) explain learners are aiming towards an understanding of the information through deeper learning rather than aiming to produce something just to pass. Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) agree that by applying a deeper learning, learners are able to self-direct their own education and they learn to become lifelong learners with an academic mind-set as a result.

Implementing this proposed curriculum change in my opinion seems to imply there would be a switch from the current teacher centred and content orientated approach, to a more learner centred and learner orientated approach. Killen (2006) states the teacher’s main aim will be to guide the learners towards a personal understanding. Tollefson and Osborn (2008) suggest in order for lessons to be more learner centred, teachers must make the learner more aware of what they are doing and why they are doing it, make learners interact more with each other, develop learners’ transferrable skills and make the learner more active in acquiring knowledge and skills (Entwistle and Ramsden, 2015).

A learner centred teaching approach encourages learners to be able to reflect on what they are learning, and how they are learning it, by teachers encouraging learners to take responsibility over their own learning and the decisions that they make (Blackshields *et al*, 2014). Within the current childcare course we are always relating theory to practice to reinforce what learners are doing and

why. When teachers make all the decisions, learners lose motivation in their learning and become dependent, however, giving the learner some control over their learning helps motivate them. Learners cannot always have a say in the content but could be given a say in the classroom rules for example (Blackshields *et al*, 2014).

When using a learner centred approach, the classroom is seen as a community of learners and encourages collaboration where the learners are able to learn from each other and ultimately teaches them important communication skills. By sharing and discussing ideas this can help learners deepen their understanding on a particular subject area (Middleton and Perks, 2014). The teacher is normally seen as the one with all the answers, however the teacher can also learn from their learners too and can create a community of shared learning (Blackshields *et al*, 2014). Within the current childcare course, learners are encouraged to work together either in pairs or group work. The level 1 group are lovely and always make sure no one is left out. This can be especially helpful for those learners who have difficulty with social skills. Holden (2013) states that when the classroom is relaxed and learners feel safe and confident and are made to feel that they belong, it instils community cohesion within the group, all working together with a shared understanding of beliefs and values (Cantle, 2005).

Inclusion plays a huge part on a learner's self-esteem and especially if you are the only boy on the course with a room full of girls (Daniel and King, 2010). Currently enrolled on the level 1 childcare course are 10 girls and 1 boy. A common argument within the childcare course is that it is more a female based society, even taking into consideration that 'gender' is one of the nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act (2010). Regardless of our expectations and values, it is apparent that we still have very clear stereotypes when it comes to certain job roles involving gender, and unfortunately childcare appears to be one of them. In order to achieve gender equality regarding stereotypical job roles, more males should be employed within the childcare sector to advocate as role models, especially for young children who are the future generations in society (Baker, 2012).

Currently on the Cache childcare course it is the teacher that applies theory to practice, however within the enhancement, a learner centred approach would help to develop the learner's transferrable skills by enabling them to take what is learned in one situation and apply it to another (Blackshields *et al*, 2014; Freire, 1972; Warburton, 2003). And therefore as a result would make the learner more active in acquiring the knowledge and skills by engaging them in the hard work of learning. Instead of the teacher providing all of the information, the learners would be encouraged to develop their own learning skills to source the relevant information (Blackshields *et al*, 2014).

Adaption of the proposed enhancement to recap over units would mean a change from the current product curriculum model to a spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960). By applying this new constructivism approach, learners would be able to build new knowledge upon their already existing knowledge (Ebert and Culyer, 2010; Smidt, 2013). Bruner (1960) highlights that this approach to learning is a cumulative process connected with the spiral curriculum. Learners will revisit topics more than once throughout the course, with the complexity increasing with each visit, allowing for new information to be put into context with previous information, resulting in a rich breadth and depth of knowledge (Smidt, 2013).

Introducing this new spiral curriculum model would ensure the information learners are receiving around their topic areas is constantly being reinforced with each visit. It also allows a more logical progression and continual development to challenge the more able learner, whilst at the same time being able to revisit less complex areas of knowledge for the less able learner (Ebert and Culyer, 2010; Smidt, 2013). By allowing for a better understanding and learner's developing the ability to transfer learning, can result in an improvement in the learner's ability to retain and recall information (Freire, 1972; Warburton, 2003).

Implementing the proposed enhancement ensures learners are improving their skills level, currently stated in Cache's mission statement, by being able to transfer what they have learned from their childcare course and apply it within their workplace confidently (Freire, 1972; Warburton, 2003). This is especially important when working with young children as learners will have gained a deeper understanding of why we do what we do. For example learners will have required knowledge of why it is important for children to play and will better understand theories such as Parten (1932) and reasons behind it. This in turn makes the learners more favourable for employment in society.

Education systems have been recognised as a vital part in highlighting the importance of education for sustainable development (ESD) (Hill, Terry and Woodland, 2016). The aim of ESD is to encourage others to think about how they can improve the quality of life without compromising the planet further and combining the values that already exist within sustainable development into all aspects of teaching and learning to ensure promotion of social equity, protection of the environment and encouraging economic sustainability (Cortese, 2003). While the focus is mainly on environmental issues, ESD also addresses other key concerns such as, citizenship, democracy and gender equality (Chalkley, Haigh and Higgitt, 2009). The importance of respect and care for all life forms are apparent within the principles of ESD which includes respect for cultural diversity and for the rights of future generations (UNESCO, 2009). ESD hopes that by creating a link between people locally and those in the developing world, will encourage more thought out actions not just at a local level but at a global scale to ensure future sustainability (Hill, Terry and Woodland, 2016; UNESCO, 2009).

This proposal has explored various curriculum models that the Cache level 1 childcare course is currently following. By following the Linear model it is only allowing the learners to scrape the surface of their learning, resulting in the learners only concentrating on what they need to know in order to pass. However, following a spiral curriculum similar to the City and Guilds (2017) synoptic assessment allows the learners to gain a deeper learning of the information they are receiving due to recapping over the units. This depth of knowledge allows learners to be able to transfer theory into practice within their workplace giving them the best possible chance of gaining employment. Implementing this enhancement will ensure that the learners are improving their skills level which is also a key component within Cache's mission statement. Moving away from the current teacher centred approach to a more learner centred approach is essential in the provision of quality teaching and learning. Embracing this change in curriculum is relevant to the holistic development of all learners and is the most effective means in the quest to achieve education for sustainable development.

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