

**Space to Learn: An investigation of the Foundation Phase curriculum in early years'
settings.**

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Dedication

As always, Stephen, Graham and Lydia for their love and support, Florence for the much-needed humour and distraction and a special thank you to Damon, for his valued support and constructive advice.

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Summary

Early-years education in Wales is provided through a mixed economy of maintained and non-maintained settings. In 2008, the Foundation Phase curriculum was introduced for children aged 3-7 years. This research draws from Bernstein's (1996, 2000) concept of recontextualisation and the thesis analyses two substantive areas to investigate how the curriculum is: produced, relocated and reproduced. The study occurred between 2012 and 2013 and included a range of methods. First, semi-structured interviews with four early years' advisors who were involved in the initial stage of the pedagogy's production generated insight into the challenges and complexities of knowledge transformation. These accounts introduce the various themes and theories appropriated, as the policy moved from its official domain of the State to be relocated, recontextualised and reproduced by twelve practitioners located across three preschool sites. The two non-maintained settings and one statutory setting provided variation, to investigate the structuration of the curriculum as positioned in the context of space, material culture and pedagogical practice. In view of the localised values and other embedded distinctions, exposed through interviews with the practitioners, the second part of the investigation focuses on the children.

Findings, created through the administration of specially designed instruments, helped to investigate how thirty children interpret the Foundation Phase's material culture and the spaces that they occupy, as part of their everyday preschool experiences. Drawing from research by Ivinson and Duveen (2005, 2006), the instruments included ten pictures, representing artefacts and spatial contexts that the children were already familiar with within their preschools. A series of tasks, administered through one-to-one interviews, helped to explore how children recognised and interpreted the material culture of the setting, as instantiated by the practitioners. The study also included over sixty hours of non-participant observations, to explore the children's movements as they negotiated between the aesthetic, textural and positional layering of the curriculum's indoor and outdoor spaces. Findings from the tasks and observations expose new concepts and contexts of preschool pedagogical experiences that are relevant for further investigation. This research has found that practitioners recontextualise and reproduce the Foundation Phase curriculum in relation to their values and beliefs in what the child's development requires. These intentions become instantiated in the material culture of the setting and become recontextualised by the children, as part of their everyday preschool experience.

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Acronyms

ACCAC	Awdurdod Cymystrau Cwircwllwmac Asesu Cymru: Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales
AWFPA	All Wales Foundation Phase Advisers group
CACHE	<i>Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education.</i>
CSSIW	Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.
DCELLs	Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.
ECERS	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale.
EPPE	Effective Preschool and Primary Education project.
Estyn	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales.
FPDO	Foundation Phase Development Officer, affiliated to funded non-maintained settings
FPTSO	Foundation Phase Training and Support Officer
MEEIFP	Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase, project.
MM	Mudiad Meithrin
NAf W	National Assembly for Wales.
NCMA	National Child Minders Association.
NDNA	National Day Nurseries Association.
PACEY	<i>Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years.</i> Formerly, National Child Minders Association (NCMA).
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government.
WISERD	Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods
WG	Welsh Government.
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee.
WPPA	Wales Preschool Providers Association. Formerly, Wales Preschool Playgroups Association.

Chapter 1.

Space to Learn

1. Introduction

The implementation of a radical and ambitious curriculum that focused on children's active participation, with play as its vehicle, created a distinctive departure from national to sub-national contexts of education reform (Rees 2007; Welsh Government 2015). Designed as a holistic developmental framework for children between the ages of three and seven years, the Foundation Phase is delivered in a range of preschool sites that include non-maintained playgroups, private nurseries, residential child-minders and statutory nurseries. In recognition of the diversity of preschool provision in Wales, this study explores how the spatial contexts and material culture that practitioners' create to deliver the Foundation Phase, affects the child's engagement. Drawing from Bernstein's theory (1996, 2000), the research focuses on the curriculum's production. Interviews with four advisors who were involved in the initial phase of the scheme, inform the study of the Foundation Phase's design and construction. Through the administration of specially designed instruments, created to explore children's understandings of the curriculum, the research examines areas and activities positioned to engage children within three preschool settings. Findings from these tasks, together with field-notes and observations, help to analyse the relationship between the production of Foundation Phase areas and activities and the different forms of engagement that the children recognise as salient.

1.1. Prologue

In February 2011, I attended a short study trip to Norway to gain insight of the country's preschool curriculum for children aged 3-7 years. Working on behalf of the non-maintained sector to support the implementation of the Foundation Phase curriculum within preschool settings across Wales, I anticipated that the trip would provide valuable knowledge and experience.

As the group of fourteen strangers toured each of the kindergartens and schools, they responded to the range of provision on display. In addition to the plethora of outdoor play facilities, the group collectively appraised the various wall-displays, unfamiliar artefacts, storage facilities and the positioning of furnishings contained inside the settings. When the days' visits were over, the women returned to their accommodation and, encouraged by the

party's leader, discussed and evaluated what they had seen and how it might influence their understanding and practice in the future. It was during one of these sessions that the researcher noticed a distinct variation between what the women had observed and what had transpired as salient during the day. As it had emerged that Norway had no parallel regulatory body, the Ofsted inspectors voiced anxieties in relation to standards. The two nursery nurses who had received the trip as a reward from the owner of the private nursery in appreciation for the quality they had produced in a recent inspection, listed resources they wished to order on their return home. For the early years' advisors, who had already achieved status and recognition for the international pedagogical theories and practice they had become associated with, the day's visits were evaluated in the context to their own specialisms and values. Having self-funded the trip with the aim to achieve a broader understanding of outdoor play; the distance between what I had observed and what I had capacity to share in relation to the 287 non-maintained settings was frustratingly wide.

In view of the variety of ideas and intentions that emerged in respect to the various sites observed on the study trip to Norway, questions emerged in response to the implementation of the Foundation Phase in Wales. The material culture and spatial contexts that have been constructed in response to the Foundation Phase guidance documents, training and through direct paraprofessional support created to assist the mediation process, appear to have generated similar versions of pedagogy within preschool settings. This thesis examines how practitioners' instantiation of that pedagogy influences the way the curriculum is reproduced and assesses the impact this has upon children's understanding of the material culture and spaces they engage with, as part of their everyday preschool experiences.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

In recognition of the plurality of the childcare and early years' landscape as it exists within Wales, this chapter provides a description of key influences that have affected the sector and contributed to the subsequent formation of a new curriculum. The chapter includes a short critique of literature, which confirmed the epistemological stance taken by the researcher, to gain an understanding of the pedagogy from those who had first-hand knowledge and experiences.

Bernstein's concept on recontextualisation is used to explore the production, instantiation and different forms of engagement that emerge as salient within the Foundation Phase curriculum. Chapter 2 provides an explanation of the recontextualisation process and

introduces agents and agencies that influence the production of the Foundation Phase curriculum at various levels of negotiation. Bernstein's models of competence and performance modalities are introduced to explore, how strong, visible elements of the curriculum and weak, implicit modes of child-centred learning are interpreted to create a framework that responds to child-initiated and adult-directed forms of engagement.

A detailed explanation of the methodology employed to investigate the Foundation Phase curriculum is provided in Chapter 3. Methods include: Documentary analysis of the Foundation Phase guidance materials; Interviews with four advisors who assisted the design and production of the curriculum; Observations, to identify the production of the Foundation Phase pedagogy, as instantiated by practitioners within three preschool settings; Observations: to understand how children navigate their way across and between the Foundation Phase outdoor and indoor spaces. The chapter also provides a detailed description of the specialised instruments, designed to create insight into the way children recognise and interpret the artefacts and pedagogical spaces that they are already familiar with, as part of their everyday experiences. The chapter also explores issues concerning data, ethical procedures and insider research and the chapter closes with a description of the three preschool sites included in the study.

Interviews with four early years' advisors, who were involved in the initial phase of the Foundation Phase curriculum's production, are detailed in Chapter 4. Their accounts introduce concepts and discourses that were relevant to the construction of the Foundation Phase pedagogy and influenced what they interpreted to be a bottom-up policy production process.

In Chapter 5, findings from informal/formal interviews with twelve practitioners explain how the curriculum is instantiated in each of the three settings. It demonstrates the variations in the practitioners' understanding of the pedagogy and shows how notions of care and education influence the way they instantiate the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Findings produced using specially designed instruments that were created to explore how children recognised the Foundation Phase through an exploration of the material culture and spatial contexts within their preschool settings are presented in Chapter 6. Observations of the children's movements, together with findings from three separate tasks that the children undertake, allow the study to explore: different types of activities, objects and places that the

children recognise to be male or female and spatial contexts and material culture that the children recognise as salient.

Chapter 7 draws together findings that the three empirical chapters investigated. These examined: i) How the Foundation Phase was designed, constructed and produced. ii) How the Foundation Phase guidance was instantiated by practitioners through the material culture and spatial contexts created in the three settings. iii) How children recognise and interpret the artefacts and pedagogical spaces they engage with as part of their everyday preschool experiences. The chapter relates these findings to Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation and literature that exposed the complexity and struggle between fields of care and education. Two competing discourses emerge as salient features that influence the production and instantiation of the Foundation Phase. This study suggests that practitioners produce the curriculum in response to a range of competing discourses and this shapes the different types of pedagogical experiences that children engage in. Policy changes that have influenced the production of the curriculum since the study was conducted, provide an indication of the current Foundation Phase climate. Finally, the chapter identifies a series of policy implications that are relevant for further investigation and debate

1.3. Setting the Scene

In 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government implemented a new curriculum for children between the ages of 3-7 years. The Foundation Phase was designed as a developmental framework with an emphasis on experiential learning and a focus towards the child's active involvement (Welsh Assembly Government 2008). With the publication of the paving document the 'Learning Country' (National Assembly for Wales 2001), there was a clear distinction created between national and subnational pre and primary school education. By removing the statutory preschool framework of desirable outcomes and replacing Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum with the Foundation Phase, the Welsh government opened a new chapter in the development of preschool care and education. This chapter explores how the preschool sector has evolved to accommodate the increasing demands associated with childcare expansion and illustrates how early years' education has become an instrumental part of that growth with the development of the Foundation Phase. Drawing from the twelve pedagogical elements identified by the Foundation Phase Evaluation (Taylor et al. 2015), the chapter defines underlying pedagogical philosophies that are relevant to the preschool sector and emerge within the study. Finally, the chapter provides details of the research questions,

structured to investigate the production, instantiation and forms of engagement that exist within the Foundation Phase.

1.4. Mixed economy of provision

In March 2016, the Education Minister, Huw Lewis, published a statement relating to the publication of the, ‘Ten Year Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce Plan’ (Welsh Government 2016). The statement highlighted that the government recognised childcare¹ provision as an important mechanism for empowering parents and tackling socio/economic disadvantage, by enabling them to access work and training. In addition to the grant funding allocated to the local authorities to expand childcare provision (including before and after school provision) the government also invested £4.3 million to the third sector to help to develop innovative and flexible childcare. This investment contributes to the diversity of the childcare landscape in Wales, which incorporates a mixed economy of private, voluntary and statutory provision. With the inclusion of private day nurseries, private and voluntary playgroups and self-employed child-minders, the non-maintained sector has adapted to respond to paradigms of childcare sufficiency and parental choice. While the third sector’s participation has reinforced an ethos of partnership and inclusion, the breadth of representation also conveys a clear message regarding the multiplicity of childcare as it currently exists in Wales. As the thesis will now explore, this pattern of diversity is well established.

1.5. Mapping the childcare landscape

Following the establishment of the first nursery school by Robert Owen in 1816, the development of child-care provision in the United Kingdom has been perpetually inconsistent. Despite the pace of social change in the nineteenth century, legislation aligned to the welfare and educational needs of the child was slow to progress. Gradually, through the introduction of various safeguarding and protection reforms, the protracted growth of preschool education began to emerge. As a social reformer, Owen’s belief that a, ‘*man’s character was formed by the environment*’ conveyed optimism for the future (Lawson and Silver 1973; Tizard et al. 1976). The publication of the ‘Hadow Report’ in 1933, however, reveals that the preschool system was far from adequate in its range of competence and

¹ Childcare is provided by a third party, to support the needs of the child when the parent/carer is absent. Childcare provision includes: childminders, nannies, au pairs and babysitters, preschool playgroups and statutory and non-statutory nurseries.

provision at the beginning of the twentieth century. Through its evaluation of the Victorian, 'Dame school' system, the consultative committee pronounced teachers as, '*elderly and invalid*' and the environments they occupied as, '*ill ventilated, ill kept and unhygienic*', recommending that:

'Where practical, teachers should be certified and have special instructions in nursery care' and that, '*the nursery school should provide an environment in which the physical, mental and moral health of the young child can be safeguarded*'. Consultative Committee on Infant and Nursery Schools (1933).

While patterns of expansion improved in the 1950s with the introduction of part-time nursery education, the commitment to increase availability was short-lived. The publication of Circular 8/60 in 1960 placed a restriction on the expansion of maintained or grant funded nursery education (Austin 1976). At a time of significant urban growth, the migration from traditional kinship support networks had a direct effect on family life. The response to these restrictions reveals the growing tensions between social change and the traditional approach to nursery provision. Patterns of employment were also changing and as the development of part-time paid work began to increase, women were able to earn money outside of the home (Roberts 1995). This increased autonomy and enabled women to take a stance towards the advancement of childcare provision. In response to circular 8/60, Belle Tuteav wrote a letter to the Guardian newspaper on the 25th of August 1961, appealing for signatures for a national petition for more nursery schools and play facilities for children under five (Pre-school Learning Alliance 2012; Bray et al. 2008). This article prompted the formation of the playgroup movement in 1961, which strived to create childcare provision, encourage parental involvement and stimulate debate around child development and the philosophy of play. By 1966, 20,000 children had enrolled into 600 playgroups and the landscape of private, voluntary and statutory childcare settings, steadily became established (Austin 1976). As the instigator behind the 'Do it yourself nurseries', Belle Tuteav's initial appeal was directed towards mothers who had teaching experience. This self-help mobility conveyed a notion of cultural capital and the playgroup movement was perceived as provision principally designed to address the requirements of the middle classes. Over time, however, the organisation emerged and developed beyond economically advantaged domains, by promoting an ethos of inclusion and parental empowerment (Austin 1976; Henderson and Lucas 1981; Crowe 1977, Bray et al. 2008). While the childcare landscape in England and Wales was beginning to evolve in response to social change, the diversity of the provision that was beginning to emerge also reflected uneven distribution and investment.

1.6. A framework for expansion

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, when Margaret MacMillan established the first nursery school in London in 1908 and campaigned for the growth of nursery education to accommodate children affected by poverty, reforms on preschool expansion have been focused towards the needs of the most vulnerable in society (Wheeler and Earl 1939). With the publication of the Plowden report in 1967, the Department for Education and Science reinforced a commitment to tackle social disadvantage, first by defining ‘Priority Areas’ by accommodating underprivileged children in grant funded nursery places (Department of Education and Science 1967). The concentration of statutory funding in deprived areas bolstered the mixed economy landscape and subsequently reinforced patterns of access, choice and diversity. By the 1970s, the impact of social change had created increased demand from working mothers and generated political endorsement of the expansion of nursery education. In 1972, a government White Paper supported recommendations previously set out by Plowden that provision for all three and four year olds could be met on a part-time basis. The document sounded a note of caution, however, that the scheme would take time to implement and that places would be allocated at variable rates according to the child’s age. There was also an emphasis on location, as the government stressed a preference for nursery settings to be contained within schools (Tizard et al. 1976).

Through the increased demands for childcare that extended beyond the limitations of statutory care, playgroup, child-minder and day nursery provision also experienced consistent rates of growth. With the removal of funding streams from local authority control, the Conservative government encouraged marketization and created a voucher scheme in 1992. By issuing funds directly through the provision of childcare vouchers, parents were granted the capacity to choose provision in the non-maintained and statutory sectors, thereby stimulating competition. When the Labour government came into power in 1997 the voucher scheme was removed, but the element of free-market choice and participation remained. In 1998, ‘Schools Standard and Framework Act’ (SSFA) placed a statutory duty on all local authorities (LAs), to secure sufficient early years’ educational provision (United Kingdom Parliament July 1998). As part of the SSFA duty, all children are entitled to a free part-time Foundation Phase place after their third birthday. In view of the diversity of the childcare landscape, provision for early years’ education exists within a mixed economy of funded non-maintained and statutory preschool settings.

The introduction of the Sure Start scheme in 1998 once again directed the focus of nursery expansion towards underprivileged priority areas. The publication of the National Childcare Strategy in both England and Wales, however, also outlined a commitment to confront the failings of previous approaches and address the lack of provision (Department for Education and Employment 1998). Influenced by changing patterns of work, the document placed a statutory duty on local authorities to improve rates of access, increase quality and support parental preferences by offering a diversity of childcare. The Welsh document also asserted a sub-national distinction in the wake of the government of Wales Act 1998 and the impending transfer of power to the Welsh Assembly Government, by investing over 14 million pounds to create new out-of-school childcare places. In response to the findings of Lord Laming's inquiry (Laming 2003) which highlighted the need to increase protective reforms, the national government proposed a range of policies to improve children's care. The publication of 'Every Child Matters 2002' emphasised the significance of providing children with a strong foundation on which to flourish (Department for Education and Skills 2003). In 2003, the Foundation Stage curriculum was drafted as a pilot scheme for children between the ages of 0-5 years. A year later, the Welsh Assembly Government piloted its own new scheme, the Foundation Phase, but asserted a clear deviation from the national framework by including an age span of 3-7 years, as endorsed by international pedagogical models, such as those produced in Scandinavia.

1.7. Cultural distinction

With the devolvement of power from national to sub-national locations, the Welsh Assembly Government was able to establish a clear distinction and has achieved prominence for the ambition and radicalism its education reforms have portrayed (Rees 2004, 2007). In response to the deficiencies identified within the National Curriculum and the perceived desirable outcomes that existed in early years' education at that time, the Welsh Assembly Government outlined an intention to create a new pedagogical framework. With the publication of the paving document the, '*Learning Country*', the Welsh Minister for Education, Jane Davidson stated that, '*Wales should become internationally renowned as a learning country, a place which puts learners interests first*' (National Assembly for Wales 2001, p1) and outlined the following intentions:

That the early years sector...

- *offers a development curriculum in harmony with each child's particular need and interests;*

- *provides scope for all children to reach their potential and take their full place in society on the basis of equal educational opportunities;*
- *build partnerships with parents, families, carers, childminders, nurseries, playgroups and schools in both maintained and non-maintained sectors to develop ‘wrap around care; and*
- *is guided and nurtured by suitably qualified practitioners able to improve standards progressively and integrate education and care effectively.* (National Assembly for Wales 2001, p15).

The introduction of the Foundation Phase curriculum charted a new course of action within the early years ²sector. Placing emphasis on experiential learning that included the following seven Areas of Learning (AoL’s), the transference from traditional sedentary teaching within schools and the promotion of a more structured pedagogical intention within traditionally play based settings, generated wider consultation. Areas of Learning:

- personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity
- language, literacy and communication skills
- mathematical development
- Welsh language development
- knowledge and understanding of the world
- physical development
- creative development. (Welsh Government 2008, p2)

The Welsh Government promoted an ethos of partnership and inclusion, by extending an invitation to stakeholders to influence the design and development of the curriculum. With consideration to the childcare landscape and the breadth of agents available to assist, the formation of the curriculum transpired through bottom-up fields of negotiation.

Following the roll out of the pilot scheme in 2004, the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase project (MEEIFP) recommended that the number of local education authorities that currently existed in Wales should be reduced, to create greater synergy in the context of implementing the reform. The Welsh Assembly Government rejected the proposal, but responded to the issue of collaboration and consistency by appointing twenty-two Foundation Phase Training and Support Officers (FPTSOs) to represent each of the LEAs (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2006). This additional para-professional tier was employed to deliver the Foundation Phase training modules as they emerged and support the implementation of the scheme at local level. In addition to the

² The Welsh Government (2013) defines ‘early years’ as, the period of life from pre-birth to the end of the Foundation Phase or 0-7 years.

FPTSOs, the Welsh Assembly Government also appointed four Foundation Phase Development Officers to represent non-maintained childcare organisations and support the curriculum's roll out nationally within their affiliated sector's settings. The four organisations included the Child-minder Association, the National Day-care Association, the Mudiad Meithrin (who support and represent Welsh medium settings) and Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association. By establishing these new tiers of policy production, the process of influence and mediation significantly increased. In the pursuit of creating a new pedagogical framework, however, the Welsh Assembly Government was also keen to establish a coherent and shared ideal.

1.8. Establishing a shared ideal

In contrast to the child-centred pedagogy advocated by Plowden in the 1960s, the Foundation Phase's framework contained a more structured approach to the experiential notion of learning by doing. Placing the context of the curriculum within seven areas of learning, with specific desirable outcomes attached, the content focused on the fulfilment of underlying developmental objectives. The environment, resources and artefacts also had to reflect the curriculum's intent in the context of continuous, enhanced and focused provision (Welsh Assembly Government 2008). These three modes of delivery were designed to assist planning and support the child's progression through the scheme. By setting out a clear directive, the Welsh Assembly Government aimed to establish a coherent basis from which the twenty-two local authorities and over two-thousand primary schools and preschool settings included in the scheme could function. Due to the diverse childcare landscape, however, the ambition to achieve coherence through a collective pedagogic ideology appeared problematic. This was reflected in the MEEIFP report, which identified variations of perceptions and fulfilment across the scheme (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2006).

Following the publication of the Rumbold report in 1990, which focused on the education of under-fives, there has been an on-going investment towards the improvement of quality and outcomes (Rumbold 1990). With the introduction of the FPTSO paraprofessional tier, the Welsh Assembly Government extended the pedagogic (link-teacher) support that was already available to non-maintained settings. The provision of link-teachers, who provide onsite support and guidance to practitioners working within the non-maintained and statutory sectors, had been established in response to New Labour's education strategy in 1997. Having endorsed mediation and training through the employment of paraprofessional

educators prior to the election (Barber 1996), the onus on improving standards was nationally and sub-nationally disseminated. With the appointment of the additional FPTSO paraprofessional tier, the Welsh Assembly Government increased the level of training and regulation to maintain control of the transfer of knowledge and understanding at all levels of negotiation.

Attitudes towards the professionalisation of childcare developed in conjunction with the growth of demand. Of the 2,707 early years and childcare workforce that were surveyed in Wales in 2012, sixty-nine percent of practitioners held a relevant childcare qualification (Care Council for Wales 2012). The introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) enabled practitioners to achieve accreditation through their work and provision to encourage Continued Professional Development (CPD) at all levels of entry, continues to expand. While the childcare landscape has significantly evolved in range of aptitude and delivery, the context of provision remains diverse.

1.9. A focus towards improvement

It is clear that the childcare sector has experienced tremendous growth and improvement, particularly at the beginning of the 21st century (Pugh 2010). Longitudinal research to assess the effects of preschool education and care through the Effective Preschool and Primary Education (EPPE 3-11) project demonstrates something of the commitment to improve standards of provision. Through the application of the revised Early Childhood Rating Scale ECERS-R, quality is measured in respect to: space and furnishing, personal care routines, language and reasoning, activities, social interactions organisation and routine (Sylva et al. 2006). Estyn has also produced guidelines and case studies to improve and/or enhance childcare. In 2010, Estyn introduced a new inspection framework in response to the Foundation Phase and placed specific emphasis on self-evaluation; placing the onus on practitioners to be objective about the settings they occupy and the standards they maintain (Estyn 2010). In 2011, the Welsh Government commissioned Cardiff University and the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) to achieve the following four aims:

- *To evaluate how well the Foundation Phase is being implemented and highlight ways in which improvement can be made*
- *To evaluate what impact the Foundation Phase has had to date*

- *To assess the value for money of the Foundation Phase*
- *To put in place an evaluation framework for the future tracking of outputs and outcomes of the Foundation Phase.* (Taylor et al. June 2015: Aims and objectives p14).

The Foundation Phase Evaluation was conducted over three-year period, between 2011 and 2014. Using a multimethod approach, the evaluation offers comprehensive coverage of the curriculum, achieved through: content analysis of the Foundation Phase guidance documents, parent/ carer and Year 2 pupil surveys, Year 2 pupil focus groups, systematic observations, pupil classroom tours and problem solving tasks. It also included interviews with 41 Head teachers, 118 teachers, 37 Lead Foundation Phase practitioners, 14 Non-maintained Teaching and Learning Assistants, 10 Non- maintained Leaders and 121 School Teaching and Learning Assistants. The Foundation Phase Evaluation identified twelve pedagogical elements within the curriculum to be:

- Child-choice/participation;
- Children learning through exploration;
- Learning through first hand and direct experiences;
- Practical hands-on activities;
- Children should be challenged and supported according to stage (not age) of learning;
- Balance of continuous/enhanced/focused activities;
- Questions to children invite discursive not closed responses;
- Children are prompted to think (reflect) on their learning experiences;
- Physical activity;
- Outdoor learning;
- Children's learning is monitored through observations;
- The learning environment offers different learning zones.

(Taylor et al. 2015 pp 22-23).

These twelve pedagogical elements signal the Foundation Phase's intention to create a balance between structured learning, directed by practitioners and through child-initiated activities. The Foundation Phase Framework (Welsh Government 2008, p6 and 2015 p4) states that the curriculum should encompass the developmental needs of the child, building upon their previous learning experiences, so that they move to the next stage of learning at their own pace. The Framework identifies the child as an active agent who requires structured

opportunities for discovery and interactions that promote shared and sustained thinking. In view of the balance between child-initiated and adult-guided provision, the Foundation Phase pedagogy appears to be influenced by both constructivism and concepts derived from Piaget's work and social constructivism drawn from the work of Vygotsky.

1.1.0. Constructivist and Social Constructivist philosophies

Discourse derived from constructivism (rooted in Piagetian theory) and social constructivism (developed through Vygotsky's theory) have been influential in shaping early years' philosophy and practice.

Constructivism draws on the work of Piaget, who believed that children construct knowledge through self-directed action. Positioning the child as an autonomous enquirer, Piaget proposed that intellectual development is constructed through processes of equilibrium, assimilation and accommodation. As the child encounters new objects and experiences, a phase of adjustment occurs that enables the child to build upon knowledge (schema) constructed, so that the child develops qualitatively, new concepts of cognitive learning over time (Wadsworth 1996). Piaget identified a progression from simple concrete cognitive categories to more complex abstract thinking that developed through discrete stages. Piaget's theory that the active child learns through discovery has been highly influential for pedagogical approaches that promote experiential learning. Here, the role of the practitioner is to provide stimuli within the environment that will support the child's learning. Social constructivist theorists place emphasis on the influence of language, cultural tools and more knowledgeable others to support children's development. Vygotsky stated that,

'Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on a social level and later on an individual level, first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)'. (Vygotsky 1978, p 57).

Vygotsky theorised that through the child's acquisition and internalisation of the culture (language, signs, symbols and concepts) she/he is able to achieve autonomy and self-regulation (Karpov 2005). Within the Zone of Actual Development (ZAD) the child can be seen to have internalised cultural tools enabling them to problem-solve independently. Vygotsky reasoned that the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) required the additional influence of a more knowledgeable other to structure and/or model cultural tools for the construction process to progress. Recognising the adult's role in guiding the child's learning, Bruner defined this method as scaffolding (Woods et al. 1976).

Practitioners who adopt a social constructivist stance, structure provision to assist the child's progression, to enable the child to enhance competencies achieved and introduce new concepts and experiences. The Foundation Phase guidance materials provide a framework in which the adult moves the child's learning forward through adult initiated/modelled practice, that has been informed by observations of the child as she undertakes her everyday activities in the classroom or setting. Laevers (2005) suggests that early years' curricula have developed an 'open framework' approach, where children and practitioners co-construct learning. Pedagogical interlocutors that the Welsh Government identified as salient exemplars for the development of the Foundation Phase, can be seen to illustrate various forms of co-construction between what the adult produces (constructs) in response to what the child identifies (through their actions), as relevant for his/her developmental needs. International pedagogical discourses that include High/Scope, Reggio Emilia, Te Whariki and Forest Schools convey elements of both Piaget's and Vygotsky's theoretical stances (see Table 1.1.0. p15).

High/Scope encompasses a preschool programme and longitudinal research that began in Ypsilanti, Michigan USA in the 1960's. The aim of the programme was to measure the benefits of high quality preschool care on social disadvantage and children at risk. Influenced by Piaget, the curriculum encourages the child's active engagement by creating ease of access to resources and enabling them to make choices. High/Scope also places value on the role of the adult to influence the child's development by scaffolding provision and support (Hohmann et al. 1979)..

Learning, through the **Te Whariki** pedagogy of New Zealand is envisaged as, '*Whariki*', the Maori term for woven mat. The principles laced through the mat include: empowerment, holistic development, family and community, relationships that are intertwined with strands of: Wellbeing, belonging, contribution, communication and exploration. The interwoven strands and principles of the curriculum enable children to develop their own pattern of learning, with no stepped measurable outcome to achieve (Carr and May 2000).

The pedagogy of **Reggio Emilia** emerged in the 1940's from the city where it originated in Northern Italy. A holistic, creative and interactive approach, Reggio Emilia places emphasis on listening to the multiplicity of language that children are predisposed to communicate through: words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play, music and more (Edwards et al. 1998, p7; Rinaldi 2005).

Forest Schools originated in the pedagogies of Scandinavia and produced by Bridgewater College's 'Early Years' Centre of Excellence in the United Kingdom in 1995 (Maynard 2007). Forest Schools promote regular outdoor sessions in a woodland, or natural environment and are learner centred. Forest School trained practitioners, create opportunities for children to be active and autonomous learners and experience supported risks (Forest Schools Wales 2016).

Table 1.1.0. Four pedagogical models.

1.1.1. Investigating Foundation Phase settings

The study intended to examine children's engagement with the Foundation Phase curriculum within the pedagogical setting that the practitioners had created. First, an exploration of the spatial contexts and material culture was carried out. Literature, detailing the design and impact of pedagogical spaces on children's behaviour (Gallagher 2013. Holloway and Valentine 2000. McNamee 2000) suggested that there would be patterns of negotiation, segregation, discipline and control (Harden 2012; Pike 2008; Fielding, 2000). Reflecting on Massey's (2005) notion, that space is constructed in relation to objects, interaction,

relationships and expression, the intention of this study was to explore how the pedagogical relays contained within the three settings, would be recognised by the children. Consequently, the spatial contexts and material culture produced in response to the Foundation Phase guidance, became a central focus in this study.

In light of the expansion of the preschool landscape, as detailed in the earlier sections of this chapter, a body of literature has emerged, highlighting the need to generate improvements in early years' education. In addition, to the longitudinal research conducted by the Effective Preschool and Primary Education (EPPE 3-11) project and other independent reviews that have contributed to the assessment and evaluation of preschool care and education (Nutbrown 2012. Siraj, 2014. Siraj and Kingstom 2015. Maynard et al 2013) a range of literature has also been produced to support and challenge concepts and contexts of quality and performativity. This study has been able to draw from literature relating to: the production of quality by practitioners (Dahlberg et al. 1999; Alexander 2010; Brolin et al 2015), the professionalisation of the childcare worker (Moss 2006; McGillvray 2010; Osgood 2006) and the effective impact of preschools on children (Pascal and Bertram 1997; Melhuish 2004).

In June 2015, Taylor et al. published the final Foundation Phase evaluation report and listed the following key findings:

- Schools with greater use of Foundation Phase pedagogies have greater levels of observed pupil involvement and pupil wellbeing during learning.
- Pupils in the Foundation Phase are more likely to achieve Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 English (based on the first three cohorts of over 1,500 pupils in Pilot schools who have since reached the end of Key Stage 2).
- The Foundation Phase is associated with improved attainment for pupils eligible for free school meals but the evaluation has found no evidence to suggest it has made any observable impact so far on reducing inequalities in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (based on the first three cohorts of over 1,500 pupils in Pilot schools who have since reached the end of Key Stage 2).
- The Foundation Phase is associated with improvements in overall school attendance
- The majority of practitioners and key stakeholders interviewed and surveyed think that the Foundation Phase is having a positive impact on children and learning (behaviour, wellbeing and attitudes to learning).

- The majority of practitioners believe that the Foundation Phase has led to improvements in literacy (both English and Welsh) and numeracy.

(Taylor et al. May 2015, pp3-4).

In addition to these findings, the evaluation also put forward a series of twenty-nine recommendations. These included, the provision of clear guidance to clarify the importance of developmentally appropriate practice, practical advice for practitioners to assist the implementation of the literacy and numeracy framework within the Foundation Phase and that practitioners should use a variety of learning zones both indoors and outdoors more frequently. Also cited was that specific support should be provided for schools and funded non-maintained settings to assist the with the redesign and/or restructuring their classrooms and outdoor space with more attention given to the role of parents/carers and families in the delivery of the Foundation Phase.(Taylor et al. 2015, pp4, 7-8).

Throughout the research process, it was important to maintain pace with the Foundation Phase evaluation teams' findings, by reading regularly published reports and attending seminars that comprehensively detailed what the investigation had identified. As the researcher had prior knowledge and experience, working within the field of enquiry, it had been important to establish a different perspective by adopting the role of researcher (see Insider research 3.2.1.). Rather than simply explore concepts and contexts through the gaze of an informed and knowledgeable professional stance, or adopt a more personalised perspective and talk about emerging findings through first person ('I') encounters, the researcher's intention was to maintain some distance between different roles and responsibilities, so that competing interests and domains would not collide. The aim of this small-scale research was to gain an understanding of the pedagogy as experienced by those involved in its production, instantiation and as part of their everyday preschool engagements. Informed by Bernstein's theory of recontextualisation (as detailed in chapter 2) the following questions were identified:

1. What were some of the influences and discourses that the advisors brought to the creation of the Foundation Phase?
2. How do practitioners' recontextualise the Foundation Phase?
3. How is the Foundation Phase instantiated in the material culture of three preschool settings?

4. How do children in each setting recognise the Foundation Phase and what are the consequences for learning?

1.1.2. Summary

This chapter has identified how the preschool sector has evolved in response to contexts of childcare sufficiency and early years' education. Through the production of various policy reforms and self-help initiatives, the chapter has illustrated that the preschool landscape is diverse in range of provision. With the introduction of the Foundation Phase, historical traditions that transcend from the statutory and non-maintained sectors have been reshaped with the intention to integrate trajectories of care and education more succinctly. The chapter has illustrated how the Welsh Government has sought to devise a progressive child-centred and structured curriculum that also encompasses populations responding to both childcare demands and later phases of primary school education. Concepts and contexts that this chapter has identified will be explored in relation to findings from the three empirical chapters, where the production, instantiation and forms of engagement with the pedagogy are fully investigated.

Chapter 2

The Theoretical Framework

2. Introduction

This chapter introduces concepts and contexts that are relevant to understand how the Foundation Phase pedagogy was first produced, then relocated and reproduced within three preschool settings. The chapter draws from relevant sources of research, to illustrate how traditions of care and education produced tension and affect the different forms of preschool provision produced. Bernstein's (1996, 2000) concept of recontextualisation serves to explore the complexities of transmission, as the pedagogy moves between and within various sites of production. Bernstein's model of pedagogical modalities provided the basis for describing weak and strong classroom discourses, which serve to investigate the reproduction of the pedagogy and how it was instantiated in classrooms by practitioners in three different preschools. Finally, the chapter explains how the research was designed to capture the way children recontextualise the Foundation Phase curriculum as it was made available to them in the three settings.

2.1. Bernstein's pedagogical theory

In this thesis, Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation is used to explore how the Foundation Phase curriculum is mediated by the interests of advisors, practitioners and children. In particular, the study examines how the process of recontextualisation, shapes the curriculum instantiated in the material culture of the classroom or nursery settings. Drawing from the experiences of those who helped to produce the Foundation Phase curriculum and practitioners who instantiated the pedagogy within the three preschool settings, Bernstein's theory creates insight of the mediation processes that influence different forms of children's engagement.

2.2. Recontextualisation

Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation helps to explain how education policy, initiated by the State, enters a complex process of transformation as it moves between sites within the education system. Bernstein (2000, p33) defines recontextualisation as a, *'principle which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourses to constitute its own order'*. This process of refocusing and relocation of the pedagogic discourse is illustrated

through the National Assembly for Wales' (NAfW) intention to create a new pedagogical framework. With the process of devolution, the segregation of national and sub-national power created conditions that enabled the Welsh Government to develop the Foundation Phase. Global interlocutors from Italy, New Zealand and Scandinavia were recognised as legitimate sources to influence the new pedagogy's design (Taylor et al. 2015). Rather than reproduce exacting replicas of these models, the process of selecting and refocusing created a special relationship, which created new discourses.

Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation informed the study of how agents and agencies mediated the Foundation Phase policy as it moved across sites to be reshaped and reproduced, within settings and schools. The National Assembly for Wales initiated the production of a new curriculum in response to the devolvement of power from national to sub-national terrains. According to Bernstein, the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) of the State works to maintain control of the discourse and achieve overriding objectives, such as tackling social disadvantage. Agents and agencies positioned between the ORF and the Pedagogical Recontextualising Field (PRF), have capacity to assist the recontextualisation process on behalf of the State. By appointing independent agents and agencies to evaluate the progression of the Foundation Phase and conduct a Stocktake (Taylor 2015; Siraj 2014.), the Welsh Government identified specialists it recognised as legitimate to mediate and assist the transformation of the Foundation Phase pedagogy. Bernstein argues that as the discourse moves, it creates a gap, which allows for other ideas and intentions to fall into play and produce new meanings. As the Foundation Phase Evaluation and the Foundation Phase Stocktake consulted widely to review the progression of the pedagogy's implementation across Wales, alternative discourses emerged. Although it might be assumed that the State has capacity to maintain control of the pedagogical discourse produced, this thesis will show in chapters 4 and 6, that the recontextualisation process across sites within the PRF, was far from linear.

2.3. Pedagogical Recontextualising Field of the Foundation Phase Curriculum

The Pedagogic Recontextualising Fields (PRF) refers to the appropriation, relocation and refocusing of the Foundation Phase discourse by the multi layering of players such as head teachers, school governors, teachers, local authority representatives, non-maintained organisations and settings, positioned to recontextualise the pedagogy throughout the PRF (Bernstein 2000, p33). Although specialised and legitimate agents and agencies work to

maintain control over what is produced, to assist the implementation of the Foundation Phase, other ideologies and interests reshaped the discourse as it moved across various sites within the PRF. Following the devolution of power in 1999, there has been a clear intention by the Welsh Government to widen civil participation and strengthen democratic social inclusion (Chaney and Fevre 2001). Partnership bonds, such as those generated between organisations within the third-sector, function to empower communities by strengthening their status and legitimisation (Cohen and Arato 1994). According to Carmel and Harlock (2008), this political endorsement has created new forms of efficacy within the voluntary sector and generated greater capacity to contribute to the policy process. From this stance, partnership ties operate to encourage reciprocal relationships and moral alliances, which signal equal representation.

With the integration of the non-maintained sector into early years' education, various umbrella organisations that represent voluntary and private non-maintained settings also recontextualised the Foundation Phase curriculum. Each of the voluntary (umbrella) agencies responded to the specific contexts of childcare that distinguishes them as separate organisations. The Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY), Wales Preschool Providers Association (WPPA), Mudiad Meithrin (MM), National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), also convey similar objectives to the ones projected by the government, through the communication of shared ideals and intentions responding to:

- The rights of the child.
- Improving quality and access to childcare.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- Welsh language development.
- Assisting family/community support and more...

(Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years 2016; Wales Preschool Providers Association 2016; Mudiad Meithrin 2016; National Day Nurseries Association 2016).

These various organisations can be viewed as intermediaries that recontextualised knowledge between the ORF and within the PRF. As each organisation worked to maintain a clear distinction from the next by responding to different, yet interrelated contexts of childcare, they also had the capacity to influence the recontextualisation process according to their own interests and those of the communities they represented. For example, the Mydiad Meithrin maintains a strong focus on sustaining the Welsh language within their preschools. This distinguishes the agency from the other voluntary organisations that support childcare and

early education, but not the immersion of the Welsh language. As the Foundation Phase is structured to promote bilingualism and identifies Welsh language development as a specific Area of Learning (AoL), the capacity for the Mydiad Meithrin to maintain a clear distinction from the other organisations might be seen to strengthen their function within the PRF. Each of the four voluntary sector organisations operates to support and promote the funded (and non-funded) non-maintained settings. This generates capacity for the voluntary sector to mediate and influence the recontextualisation process, from the positions they maintained within the PRF (as illustrated by their hierarchal positioning in Figure 2.3). These organisations were driven to lobby on behalf of the interests of their members (Anning and Edwards 1999) and inevitably, they articulated the ideological positions they hold. They were also responding to the changing childcare market. For example, the voluntary organisations have responded to the ongoing expansion of the childcare, as detailed in chapter 1, by creating more generic and inclusive discourses. Wales Preschool Playgroups Association interchanged ‘Playgroups’ with ‘Providers’ within its title, while NCMA widened its remit from childminders with the rebrand, ‘PACEY’ (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years). Figure 2.3 illustrates how the recontextualising sites contained within the ORF and the PRF are positioned to assist the production of the pedagogy within settings and schools.

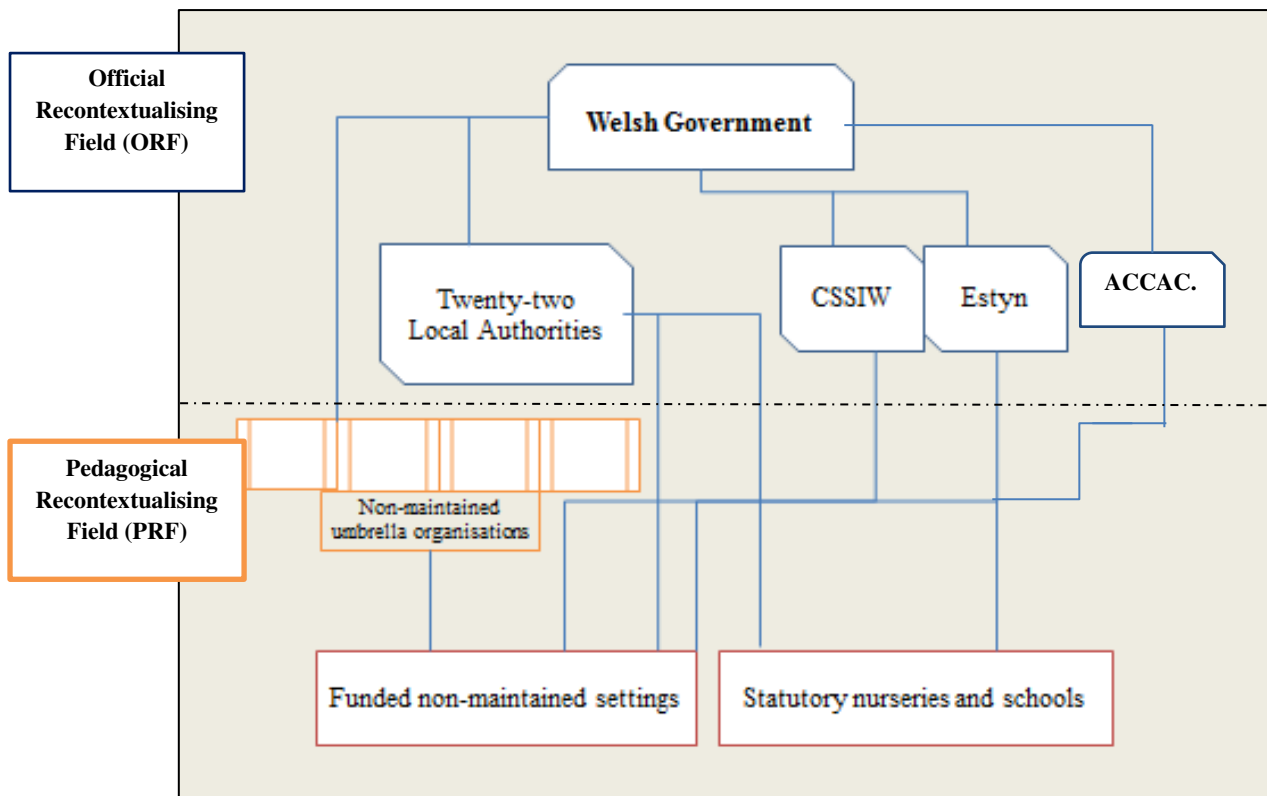


Figure 2.3. Foundation Phase recontextualising sites.

Patterns of change within the child-care landscape mark the variation of demand from the initial emancipation phase in the 1960's, where women gained access to work by developing childcare through the process of self-help initiatives. The mixed economy of provision that exists today is a response to political and parental demands for childcare sufficiency. As the childcare landscape diversified, the voluntary sector also adapted and came to influence and reshape the Foundation Phase curriculum, as players within the PRF.

The regulatory and semi-independent bodies Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales Estyn are positioned between the ORF and the PRF (Figure 2.3). Preschool settings within the non-maintained sector that are registered to deliver childcare, are regulated by CSSIW and must be seen to fulfil basic standards of care in relation to: the welfare and development of children, the maintenance of adult-child ratios, the suitability of practitioners to look after children, training and qualifications, and the safety of premises and equipment. Estyn is responsible for inspecting nursery schools and funded non-maintained settings, responding to: standards and well-being, learning experiences, teaching, care and support guidance, the

learning environment and leadership and management. As each organisation has a remit to regulate and inspect they also have capacity to influence what the funded non-maintained settings produce.

2.4. Levels of regulation

The publication of the '*Foundation Phase Action Plan*' by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in 2006, detailed how workforce development across both the non-maintained and statutory sectors would be achieved. This investment signifies a variation between traditional non-maintained settings and those funded to deliver the Foundation Phase, where qualifications are set at a higher level (Care Council of Wales 2013). Anning and Edwards (1999) suggested that the integration of care into education made previously hidden and tacit skills to become visible. With the integration of the non-maintained sector into the field of early years education, investment has been made to transform previously hidden tacit skills. By creating a divide between non-funded settings and those funded to deliver the Foundation Phase, the perceived need to upskill only the funded non-maintained sector appears to exacerbate an already existing division. The Foundation Phase created an explicit and legitimate trajectory of progression for one strand of the sector, while the other remained framed within a linear of invisible, pragmatic, care discourse. This variation of standards was confirmed by the way regulatory bodies inspected the non-maintained sector. The Care and Social Services Inspectorate of Wales (CSSIW) inspect the non-maintained settings and in addition to regulating minimum standards, place an onus on the preschool setting to ensure child's development, health and well-being. Funded non-maintained settings meanwhile, are regulated by both CSSIW and Estyn and adhere to the additional requirements relating to '*outcomes, provision and leadership*' and a focus towards '*teaching, learning experiences and the learning environment*' (Estyn 2010, 2016). Within a six-year period, funded non-maintained settings can expect to receive at least one inspection by Estyn and a further three inspections by CSSIW (CSSIW 2016).

By observing the requirements of both regulatory bodies, it would appear that funded non-maintained settings are situated within two discourses of care and education. While there is some similarity in the range of regulation objectives responding to care and wellbeing, the embedded traditions between the non-maintained and statutory sector remain distinct. Bernstein's theory helps illuminate how relationships between agencies can affect the way knowledge within the Foundation Phase is transmitted and controlled. Since the two separate

inspectorates of Estyn and CSSIW regulate funded non-maintained settings, it would seem that the surveillance of care is greater than that of education. However, the struggle between pedagogical discourses in each sector is not equal. The education discourse is recognised as having higher status than the care discourse. This is because the education discourse is recognised as legitimate, since it is supported by official regulative bodies such as Estyn and does not have to conform to the requirements of the regulative body that upholds the standards of care (CSSIW). The CSSIW pulls the Foundation Phase discourse towards an even more child-centred discourse than the one required by Estyn.

Although it would seem that the multi-layering of players contained within the PRF contributed to the development of the Foundation Phase, the twenty-two local authorities maintain a hierarchal position. Each authority is required to offer all children aged three years, a free part-time place in early years education for ten hours per week and for thirty-eight weeks of the year. In addition to these funded places, each non-maintained setting receives the support of a qualified advisory teacher, who the local authority provides for ten percent of the time. Settings that provide Flying Start provision in tandem to the Foundation Phase also receive support from an advisory teacher. Findings from research by Estyn (2015) suggest that the lack of close working partnerships between the advisory teachers and the voluntary sector created confusion for practitioners. Estyn advised that the ten percent of advisory teacher's time should reflect greater consistency and that funded voluntary organisations should be held to account for the quality of their advice and guidance (Estyn2015, p43). While inclusive discourses of efficacy, partnership and neutrality (Carmel and Harlock 2008) are projected by the appointment of maintained and statutory advisors selected to assist the development of the Foundation Phase, the regulatory bodies contained within the ORF worked to maintain control over the production of the pedagogy. It is important to stress that while practitioners and advisors had autonomy to contribute to the production of guidance materials to support the delivery of the Foundation Phase, the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (ACCAC) oversaw the publication of what was produced (NAfW 2003). Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation suggests how competing ideas and intentions, which emerge within the PRF, came to influence how the pedagogy was imagined. The discourse and agencies that influenced the preschool landscape provides glimpses of the tensions and competing struggles that took place as the State attempted to integrate the non-maintained and statutory early years' sectors, while allowing for some diversity. The multiple

agencies and competing tension between care and education discourse have, arguably introduced new players in early years' provision.

2.5. New fields of practice

Moss (2006) used the term, '*pedagogue*' to describe the upskilling of practitioners and the integration of child-care and education sectors to create greater transferability across and within new fields of practice. With the introduction of the Foundation Phase, the government set a target to reduce classroom sizes in schools to under thirty and maintain a staff to child ratio of 1:8 in preschool settings, nurseries and reception classes. This change of ratio generated the demand to achieve, '*a sufficient supply of appropriately trained classroom assistants and childcare assistants for deployment in maintained and non-maintained settings*' (DELLs 2006 p4). In view of the disparities between the two sectors in relation to occupational status, work-conditions and pay, the upward mobility of the pedagogue would be duly rewarded. As McGillivray suggested, the historical and embedded distinctions between the two sectors have been further exposed through the growth of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

'Tensions may exist between early years practitioners who made career choices to join a workforce whose prerequisites were maternal and caring personal qualities and those who more recently have aspirations into management and leadership articulated through new discourses' (Mc Gillivray 2010, p120).

In 2003, the Welsh Government reinstated the demand for a larger workforce and confirmed that teachers who worked within the Foundation Phase should have studied and obtained an appropriate degree. The government also proposed that the amount of professional, onsite support for staff working within the non-maintained sector that local authorities provide with the deployment of qualified link teachers', should be raised from ten percent to twenty percent a week (NAfW, p9, 2003). Research into the High Scope curriculum in America found a variation between teachers with general education and those who specialised in childcare practice. Drawing reference to the Training of Teachers (ToT) evaluation in America (Edwards 1993) which included interviews and observations of 244 qualified teachers in High/ Scope and 122 in non-High/Scope settings, Bredekamp points to the variation between teachers with early childhood degrees and those with general education degrees. Teachers who had college degrees implemented better quality programmes (better physical, social, emotional and cognitive environments) than teachers without degrees, while

those who had early childhood degrees, were found to be better at supporting creative and social skills (Bredekamp 1998, p30). The High Scope research also revealed that highly organised and consistent provision of in-service training for teachers produced positive effects on children's development (Bredekamp, 1998). Data produced for the EPPE project that included a cohort of fifty childminders from four regions in England, found that ongoing training and professional qualifications improved the childminders' understandings and practice (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002).

In Wales, the MEEIFP project found that the range of qualifications held by staff working in the 41 pilot settings across the 22 local authorities, varied greatly. The study reported that settings with a higher proportion of qualified teachers scored significantly higher on the ECERS-E (the curricular and pedagogical quality assessment) and the CIS (the 'emotional climate' assessment) (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2005, p 4). Over the course of the roll out of the Foundation Phase, the qualification required for non-maintained setting leaders has risen from a Level 3 Diploma in Care to a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership (Care Council of Wales 2013). In view of the re-visioning of the childcare practitioner, Bernstein's theory will be used to analyse how practitioners instantiate the pedagogy in relation to what they recognise as salient knowledge to reproduce and in respect to different modes of pedagogical practice (Bernstein 1996, 2000).

2.6 Curriculum and Assessment

With the introduction of the Foundation Phase curriculum, a new framework which had been designed by the Early Excellence Centre in England, was implemented to enable practitioners to develop provision in the context of their own settings and, more specifically, to respond to the interests and needs of children in attendance. Spaces and the material culture recommended to support learning are produced in three modes of structuration labelled, *'Continuous, Enhanced and Focused* provision.

Continuous provision represents the Foundation Phase's long-term plan and includes materials/activities (both indoors and outdoors), routines and adult ratios that are available every session.

Enhanced provision represents additional resources, displays, visitors and challenges that are available to extend learning according to the interests and needs of the child, as the following example illustrates:

‘Visitors might be asked to talk about their own childhood or school days with the children. This will enable children to develop their knowledge and understanding of ways of life in different times, to engage in two-way conversations as well as examine photographs and artefacts and listen to stories’ (WAG, 2008, p10).

Focused provision represents adult initiated and directed tasks that are informed by what the practitioner has observed with each child and that have to be structured around individual needs.

The continuous provision created by the setting represents spatial contexts, material culture and routines that form the main part (85 percent) of the child’s everyday preschool experience. Under the sub-heading, *‘Areas in Your Setting’*, the training module published by the Welsh Assembly Government to assist the implementation curriculum, provides examples of the artefacts and spatial contexts to include in the preschool environment (WAG 2008). As these spaces are not defined explicitly, the practitioners have autonomy to decide how to label and structure the different areas and activities within their settings. The training module (see reference below) provides examples to illustrate the type of artefacts and objects that should be included as part of the continuous provision. The examples include: *‘A book-nook, role-play/imaginative play, music, paint, design and make, table top games, writing station, sand, water, construction, small-world (imaginative play), malleable and movement’* (WAG Foundation Phase Module 4 2008). Since the guidance provided examples for illustrative purposes, the signposting of these pedagogical classroom spaces was open for interpretation, thus encouraging practitioners to develop their practice with a degree of autonomy from State control.

With the introduction of the Foundation Phase, the Welsh Government made a clear distinction between the non-doing child and the busy child. Criticising what it saw as ‘traditional’ classroom practice that was sedentary, non-productive, non-interactive desk-based learning, the government promoted a more flexible, child centred pedagogy (NAfW 2003, p5). Traditional pedagogies can be defined in terms of Bernstein’s performance modalities (Bernstein 1996, p57). Performance modes of pedagogy have clear subject areas that are strongly insulated from each other. In the case of the Foundation Phase, these might include strongly defined areas of the curriculum such as literacy and numeracy where teachers’ instruction is explicit. The government chose to steer the new framework towards competence-based pedagogies.

Competence modes reposition the learner, as a relatively more active and autonomous enquirer. In contrast to the performance mode, where the curriculum is set to produce specific criteria and where progression is often determined by what the acquirer omits, the context of the competence model places significant onus on the quality of the teacher or practitioner to relay instruction to children. As competence modes have broad theoretical concepts and contexts from which to draw, practitioners have to develop a strong understanding about the curriculum. Because the practitioners' pedagogical intention is not easily available to children through texts and explicit criteria, the way they design the pedagogical provision within their settings creates implicit messages that influence what children learn (Iverson and Duveen 2005, 2006).

Bernstein claimed that performance pedagogies were easier to administer and assess in contrast to competence, or child-centred pedagogies. Bernstein (1975, pp 120-121) uses the example of a child learning to read a book to illustrate how more traditional styles of teaching and media (text) produce visible (strong) classifications of progression. In contrast, assessment of the child's ability in the competence mode is recognised in terms of the child's behaviour and therefore the practitioner has to be skilled to recognise the range of ability (invisible) produced by the busy/non-busy child. Bernstein argued that the greater the child exteriorises himself by engaging with a wide range of activities, the more there is to be screened by the practitioner. Rogers and Lapping (2012, p252) argue that children's spontaneous play offers an exteriorisation of many different forms of learning, but the range of observation and assessment, as governed by England's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessment mechanism, narrows the range of what can be observed by the practitioner. The Foundation Phase guidance documents placed emphasis on the value of the practitioners' observation and assessment of the child, with the aim to scaffold learning (Woods et al. 1976) appropriately and enhance areas according to the child's needs and interests (WAG 2008). Practitioners would therefore require a high level of knowledge and proficiency, in order to glean and constructively utilise what the child exteriorises through a holistic, child-centred pedagogy.

2.7. Pedagogical modalities of care and education

Anning and Edwards (1999) explored some of the tensions between the voluntary and statutory sectors. This three-year evaluation of two, Early Excellence centres, identified tensions between the voluntary and statutory sectors, as they integrated newly formed service

deliveries. The two centres represented a combined total of forty-seven staff and included four teachers and twenty-one nursery officers/workers (Anning 2005, pp 27-28) exposed a struggle between the legacies of Care and Education. Anning (2001) suggests that the integration of the childcare sector into early years education also disclosed previously hidden, tacit skills. Practitioners who worked in the care sector exhibited competencies such as, *'having control of the agenda for babies and toddlers'* (Anning 2001, p4), but appeared less confident about the integration of educational provision for three year olds. Anning argued that practitioners working within the field of care recognised their practice as pragmatic and tended not to fully articulate the codified knowledge they had achieved through their various childcare qualifications. Anning's study also identified that practitioners from the education sector found the transition into what they recognised as informal care, to be equally difficult. These practitioners felt that informal care compromised their specialised knowledge and diluted their status (Anning 2001. p6). The concepts and contexts that Anning identified in relation to the integration of formal and informal modes of education and care, carried variations of pedagogical intention. These practical, tacit skills and the, *'control of the agenda for babies and toddlers'* have also been identified as an attachment pedagogy, where practitioners adopt the role of a substitute family member (Moss, 2006). The diverse trajectories of childcare and early years' education extend further, as teachers were empowered to assert more autonomy by gaining professional qualifications, increased pay and better working conditions (Moss 2006). Even so, while provision in the non-maintained sector grew, the status of the provision remained lower than that in the statutory sector. Penn (2000) argued that the narrow career mobility and low paid working conditions within the early years' sector required increased social policy intervention.

'Many if not most, child-care workers are likely to have been recruited from low achieving and often disadvantaged backgrounds, and neither the level or content of training, nor the work itself, much of it home-based or in small private-sector workplaces is likely to change their status very much' Penn (2000).

Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation helps to explain, how changing discourses of care and education can to influence practitioners' understandings of the Foundation Phase curriculum and this in turn influenced how they designed their preschool settings. We might refer to the non-maintained and statutory sectors as carrying competing versions of pedagogic modalities. The study sets out to investigate first, how practitioners in the non-maintained and statutory settings instantiated the Foundation Phase in their everyday practice and second, if

any differences reflect the tensions between the two competing interpretation of the Foundation Phase curriculum within the Care and Education sectors as described above.

2.8. Children's recontextualisation of the pedagogy

Bernstein's theory of recontextualisation helps to inform the study of how the Foundation Phase was produced and then instantiated in preschool classrooms. In order to explore how children recognise and interpret the pedagogy that the practitioners have produced, the research draws on Ivinson and Duveen's study of variation in primary school settings (2005 and 2006). Ivinson and Duveen (2006, p118) investigated how children aged 5/6 and 9/10 years, interpreted the semiotic field of the classroom in performance and competence pedagogies. The research drew from a cohort of 229 children and found that rather than simply reproduce the imaginary subjects, as instantiated by the teachers, children constructed social representations of the curriculum within the twelve classrooms. Ivinson and Duveen (2006, p111) found that children placed in competence or mixed modes of curriculum were less likely to recognise disciplinary categories than children positioned within performance classrooms. Ivinson and Duveen argue that autonomy and restriction of movement for younger children were salient features of their everyday classroom experiences.

Since the organisation of the Foundation Phase in preschool settings is firmly situated within a competence, child-centred pedagogy, this study seeks to understand how the material culture and spatial contexts produced by the practitioners is recognised and interpreted by young children. Given that child's first pedagogical encounters are experienced through the regulation of the body (Ivinson and Duveen 2006, p119), this study sets out to explore how children recognise the spatial and material cultures of their preschool settings.

2.9. Summary

Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation helps to inform how knowledge initiated by the State, is reshaped and reproduced at various stages of the Foundation Phase's production. In view of the multi-layering of players and the complexities of a diverse and expanding childcare landscape, the study set out to investigate which discourses and intentions came to dominate the Foundation Phase policy process. Three preschool settings were selected to represent the sector's diversity. The Foundation Phase policy advocated a specific kind of competence, of child-centred provision. The study sets out to investigate if practitioners' pedagogic intentions would remain invisible as Bernstein's work suggested. The following chapter describes the specially designed instruments that were used to investigate how the

Foundation Phase curriculum was recontextualised and came to be instantiated in the three preschool settings. The instruments created an opportunity to explore, how children recontextualised the curriculum with a focus on spaces, artefacts and the material culture of each setting.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

3. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology and methods used to investigate the research questions. It also offers insight into the material culture and spatial contexts of the three settings.

3.1. Research questions

Four strands of enquiry guided the study in response to the following questions:

1. What were some of the influences and discourses that the advisors brought to the creation of the Foundation Phase?
2. How do practitioners recontextualise the Foundation Phase?
3. How is the Foundation Phase instantiated in the material culture of three preschool settings?
4. How do children in each setting recognise the Foundation Phase and what are the consequences for learning?

Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation requires analysis at multiple levels. From policy creation to implementation, the study investigates those who helped create the curriculum, the practitioners' who recontextualised and instantiated the Foundation Phase in their settings and how children, in different preschools, experienced the pedagogy produced.

Different methods were required to respond to four strands of the enquiry and investigate: how the Foundation Phase was developed; how practitioners recontextualised the Foundation Phase; how practitioners instantiated the Foundation Phase in their everyday practice with a focus on the material culture of the classroom; and how children recontextualised the curriculum. Interviews, observations and documentary analysis generated qualitative data and opened up concepts and contexts of the Foundation Phase that were relevant to explore. Semi-structured interviews with four advisors who assisted the initial development and implementation of the curriculum, created flexibility that enabled respondents to elaborate or explore the subject in a broader context than structured interviews or questionnaires would allow. To investigate how children recontextualise the curriculum required specially designed instruments that the practitioners also used. In recognition of research by Ivinson and Duveen (2005, 2006), which investigated social representations of the classroom and incorporated

visual methods to elicit children's talk, three tasks were devised to explore the child's interpretation of the Foundation Phase curriculum. These instruments also served to achieve the unobservable recontextualisation of the pedagogy by practitioners and thereby generated greater depth of meaning and validity to the study overall.

3.2. Philosophical discussion of methodologies

The researcher's initial intention was to explore how the pedagogical spaces contained within the Foundation Phase setting influenced the child's engagement. Although this objective appeared equivocal, it served as an effective starting point from which to base empirical enquiry. By adopting an interpretivist stance, the researcher was able to gain insight of the construction of each setting's social world (Blaikie 2007), through the practitioners' reproduction of the pedagogy and the children's corporeality. As there was no opportunity to adopt what Cresswell (1998, 2014) and (Pink 2011) define as a classic ethnographic position, the selected mixed methods were identified as appropriate for a small-scale research project.

In line with the expectations of a Professional Doctorate, the researcher was already familiar with the field of enquiry and had a very good depth of understanding of the Foundation Phase. Working as an Advisor to support funded non-maintained settings, a positivist approach would be seen, as an effective means of creating distance from any potential influences or biases. A quantitative approach might also have been considered appropriate, to assist the demands of successfully maintaining full-time work commitments. For example, the distribution of questionnaires to advisors who had assisted the production of the curriculum would have increased the range of informants able to participate in the study and create capacity to quantify responses easily. Although positivism would have served as an effective means to test theories and discover factors that cause phenomena, it does not, as Sapsford and Jupp (1996, p 337) suggest, yield an understanding of people's lives.

By adopting a qualitative, interpretivist approach, the researcher was able to gain insight of the three preschool settings as experienced through the practitioners' and children's interpretations. Rather than assume that knowledge the researcher had acquired would be detrimental to the investigation, it served as an effective device to assist the enquiry. Instead of having to undertake complex forms of negotiation to gain entry to the field, or spend long periods immersed within the culture, to gain an understanding, the process was relatively straightforward. Knowledge and understanding helped to interpret localised meanings (Denscombe 2010) and generated explanations about the production of the pedagogy and

practice. Specially designed instruments that included quantitative analysis, narrowed the range of what was observed and assisted the management of time, so that specific areas and aspects could be explored in depth. Interviews with the four advisors were fruitful in generating concepts and contexts that required further exploration through documentary analysis of the Foundation Phase guidance materials. By adopting an interpretative stance aspects of the preschool sector could be empirically explored and analysed in depth.

3.2.1. Insider research

In view of the researcher's previous concurrent role, working as an advisor to assist the implementation of the Foundation Phase in non-maintained settings, it was important to recognise this dual outsider/insider status in respect of being both an '*object and subject*' within the text (Laborie 2002, p109). Delamont and Atkinson (1995, pp 9-10) identify five strategies to assist the research process when the subject of enquiry is all too familiar. Within the field of education, these strategies include researching different classrooms, studying other cultures, selecting non-educational settings and focusing on gender. The final strategy, ethnomethodological manifesto, aims to affirm rather than negate the researcher's sense of familiarity. First, by recognising and using membership knowledge and secondly, to pose the shared members knowledge as problematic and explicate resources throughout the process. Mannay (2016, p29) argues that the researcher's awareness and disclosure of proximity to the field of enquiry is important, as it places the researcher at the centre of the production of knowledge. Working within the preschool sector, supporting non-maintained settings with the implementation and delivery of the Foundation Phase, it was important to remain aware of proximity, so that roles and responsibilities as professional and researcher, would not collide.

Rather than infer paradigms of distance and objectivity, the intention was to remain self-aware and reflexive so that assumptions could be disclosed, assessed and evaluated throughout the research process (Delamont and Atkinson 1995; Delamont 2001; Denzin and Lincoln 2002, 2011). By acknowledging '*the complexities of identity and multiplicity of insider views*' (Hodkinson 2005, p131) the concept of maintaining moral and political self-awareness also contributed to the development of establishing relationships and gaining trust. The ability of the researcher as a white, middle-aged woman to establish relations within a sector whose employment and emotional capital has been identified as homogenously feminised (Coffey and Delamont 2000; Skelton, 2002; Newman and Yarrow 2012; Yarrow 2015) might be assumed as positive in terms of access and negotiation. As Mercer (2007)

predicts, however, positive attributes can also be perceived as problematic. In respect of the researcher's dual status as Foundation Phase advisor, the potential of practitioners refraining to disclose for fear of being judged also had to be considered in terms of the study's ultimate validity.

By making these negotiations explicit, the researcher's insider credibility and gender status are also exposed. Since the research was structured to include authentic accounts, negotiations had to be made explicit and while there was no intention to exclude, the study became predisposed to the voices of women. These accounts generate an understanding of how the Foundation Phase curriculum is recognised and interpreted within and across sites of construction/implementation and in respect to existing paradigms of care and education (Pugh and Duffy 2010; Moss 2013; O'Connor et al. 2014). Placing emphasis on authenticity and trustworthiness, the study acknowledges Cavanagh's (2012) argument that objectivity and lack of bias, no longer applies to ensure that typical events are not overlooked or taken for granted (Cohen et al. 2011; MacPhail 2004). The immediate disclosure of the researcher's dual identity and sense of, 'situatedness' also communicates 'real world' experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 2002).

3.3. Methods

This section provides details of the methods employed to assist the research at various phases of investigation.

3.3.1. Interviewing advisors

In view of the small scale of research and the restriction of time and costs, one to one semi-structured interviews were identified as an effective means of gaining insight of themes and discourses that influenced the development of the Foundation Phase. Semi-structured interviews created flexibility, to enable respondents to elaborate and explore the subject in a broader context than structured interviews or questionnaires would allow. The questions were designed to achieve an understanding of the four advisors' contribution to the development of the Foundation Phase are presented as follows:

Questions for Early-Years Advisors:

- *How did you become involved with the Foundation Phase?*
- *What were the main influences on the curriculum at that time?*
- *What were the main objectives?*

- *How did you set out to achieve them?*
- *How would you describe the ethos of the Foundation Phase at that time?*

Although the questions were designed to create an opportunity for participants to speak widely, the list ensured that the same areas were covered, so that any overarching themes or inconsistencies could be explored more fully. As the advisors had occupied different roles in relation to the development of the Foundation Phase, they each had an opportunity to explore issues that were particularly pertinent to their experiences. The questions served as a guide, but were open-ended, so that the advisors could elaborate where necessary. A further advantage of one-to-one interviews was the ability to probe more fully when the advisors disclosed anything that was relevant for further enquiry (Denscombe 2014). Themes and discourses, that the advisors recognised as relevant influences on the development of the pedagogy were also explored through documentary analysis of the guidance materials.

The interviews were designed, in part, to generate some distance for the researcher, who had acquired knowledge of the Foundation Phase working as an early years advisor. Since each interviewee had contributed to the development of the curriculum prior to the researcher's involvement, their accounts would offer insight into the themes and concepts that influenced the pedagogy's initial design. In view of the argument that mutual interest and prior knowledge can create an effective starting point from which to build trust (Hodkinson 2005; Grek 2011; Mercer 2007; Labaree 2002), the shared context of the Foundation Phase assisted negotiations for access. Rather than infer that the researcher and respondents' mutual gendered status positively affected rates of rapport, as Oakley (1981) purports, the subject generated an imbalance of power. The participants' capacity to share a particular phase of time and space, therefore, placed the interviews within the context of a more stratified relationship between a knowledgeable informant and a novice enquirer. Guided by each respondent's referrals, the researcher was able to establish contact with key agents who voluntarily contributed their knowledge and experience of the policy process, so that no single account emerged as prevalent. The researcher guaranteed that pseudonyms would be used to ensure that the participants remained anonymous and questions were forwarded in advance of the interviews, to allow for reflection and encourage depth of response. As the four advisors were representative of a cross-section of agents and agencies (these included: lead practitioners representing the statutory and non-maintained sectors and local authority education advisors) who had contributed to the development of the Foundation Phase, themes

and discourses that they disclosed could be generalised more fully, in relation to the production of the curriculum within preschool settings.

Three of the interviews occurred face-to-face and venues were selected with consideration to the participant's time and personal/occupational commitments. The fourth interview was conducted over the telephone, as a mutual venue could not be confirmed due to geographical distance, which also had implications for costs (Stephens 2007). Introductions with each of the four respondents also occurred by telephone in way of preparation and to achieve initial consent. Audio recordings were made of each interview and the researcher wrote notes to illustrate any gaps and/or insights that the interviewees disclosed. In light, of the absence of valuable visual cues that face-to-face interviews create, there appeared to be no variation between the telephone and the direct one-to one interviews in range of achieving the respondents' experiences (Sturges and Hanrahan 2004). By establishing negotiation by telephone with each of the four advisors in advance of the interviews, the researcher was able to clarify her interest and intentions. In addition, as the questions were sent out in advance, the advisors had time to consider what they felt was relevant information to share. In view of what Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) suggest, telephone interviews also put the respondent at ease in the privacy of their own surroundings. Consequently, each of the four participants appeared extremely happy to recall and share their knowledge and experiences of a particular phase of the Foundation Phase's construction.

3.3.2. Investigating preschool settings

Methods, Observations

As visits to the three settings were restricted to a period of only two weeks each, there was no opportunity to devote considerable time to fieldwork (Atkinson et al. 2003; Denscombe 2010). Having already achieved good knowledge of preschool settings and the production of the Foundation Phase curriculum, the researcher was already aware that empirical methods such as observation would serve as an effective means to understand how children engaged with the curriculum. Participant observation created an opportunity to examine children's corporeality in relation to the context of the setting. When undertaking observations in classrooms and settings the intention was to remain unobtrusive (Cavanagh 2012). While the use of video recordings would have been an effective means of capturing actions and events as they occurred, it was assumed that any perceived dilemmas regarding trust would be increased if the participants recognised filming to be overt and intrusive. On each visit to the

settings, the researcher made rough sketches to represent the various themed spaces and artefacts that the practitioners had produced and created floor plans, to illustrate how the layout of the setting was organised.

Field-notes were recorded throughout each visit, which assisted aspects of the research that were pertinent to explore. As Denscombe (2010) suggests they were also useful for documenting passing thoughts and memory lapses, particularly when the notes were transcribed and used later for analysis. Observation methods were adapted to capture moments and events and by mapping children's movements at various intervals during the preschool session. Rather than pertain to a more formalised systematic recording of observed data, the mapping of children's movements, to record segments of transient and sustained actions, was adapted from models put forward by Sylva (1980) Sharman et al. (2000) and Thompson (1999). The objective to observe each of the thirty children for a period of approximately 20 minutes alternated with interludes of observing whole and part group, or individual actions and events. In line with the free-flow of movement generated through child-initiated learning and access to both outdoor and indoor environments, which the Foundation Phase curriculum endorses (Welsh Government 2014), the mapping of children's movements proved insightful. By passively surveying the production of the curriculum in each of the three preschool settings, knowledge could be gleaned in relation to the physicality of space, cultural practice and modes of engagement. Findings, including those that appeared at times to be contradictory, were transcribed in preparation for reporting and continued analysis.

3.3.3. Interviewing practitioners

Interviews, with the twelve practitioners who worked across the three settings evolved after the pilot study, when practitioners at Meadow Rise expressed an interest to see the instruments produced for the children's tasks. These tasks were presented within a one-to-one interview context, which the practitioners were willing to undertake. During the interviews, practitioners were asked to look at ten pictures of the artefacts, objects and spatial contexts, as representative of the indoor and outdoor provision contained within each of their own particular settings. Having gained knowledge of the production of the Foundation Phase curriculum, working as an advisor to support funded non-maintained settings, the researcher was able to understand concepts and contexts that the practitioners' voiced in response to the sorting tasks (Grek 2011). As the fixed images were representative of common features

contained within the continuous provision, the practitioners were able to freely interpret and reflect on their own experiences. This visual stimulus served to initiate opinions, which were guided by the researcher probing questions to elicit their justifications. First, the practitioners were asked to create groups using the pictures, to illustrate things that they recognised as similar, or that went together. In a further part of the interview, practitioners were asked to place the ten pictures in rank order, placing those they felt were most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. Next, practitioners were asked to place the pictures in rank order according to what they recognised to be the children's preferences. Finally, they were explicitly asked to talk about which of the pictures were most important for the delivery of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The practitioners' justifications were recorded both digitally and in writing, for transcribing later.

3.3.4. Investigating with children

In recognition of the challenges and complexities of capturing young children's talk (Flewitt 2005; Einarsdottir 2007; Renold and Mellor 2014) alternative methods were employed to gain an understanding of each child's recontextualisation of the pedagogy. Rather than employ visual methods as a participatory technique whereby children as agents identify and collect images independently for photographic elicitation (Clark and Moss 2001; Clark 2004; Einarsdottir 2005), pictures were used as a means to engage respondents (Cappello 2005). A total of ten photographs emerged as relevant for inclusion in the sorting task (see pilot study 3.3.6), because they represented common features of the curriculum's continuous provision, as detailed in the Foundation Phase's training module 4 (Welsh Government Module 4. 2008). Each of the ten images were designed to reflect spatial elements and objects that had been produced for the Foundation Phase curriculum within a particular phase of time. The pictures were effective in stimulating both verbal and non-verbal responses as part of the specially designed sorting tasks and as a means for young children to interpret the community in which they were developing (Duveen and Lloyd 1990; Ivinson and Duveen 2005, 2006). This method also enabled the researcher to suspend any preconceptions previously held (Mannay 2010; Delamont and Atkinson 1995) by placing assumption on what these artefacts and spatial contexts represented professionally, working as an advisor to support the delivery of the curriculum. Drawing from Kress et al's. (2001, p17) notion that the production of the curriculum by the practitioner represents a, '*communicative event*', the study placed emphasis on the semiotic reading of the preschool setting. Objects, artefacts, gestures and bodily movements all contribute to a system of interwoven sign-making modes that represent

meanings about the pedagogy created within the classroom. To understand how children recognised and recontextualised the semiotic clues that they encountered during their everyday preschool experience, two instruments were designed, to investigate the children's interpretation of the pedagogy. Research by Ivinson and Duveen (2005, 2006) suggests that children come to know the curriculum first through their bodies, as they recognise where they can go and how they can move within the classroom. In view of the child's corporeality across and within the indoor/outdoor Foundation Phase setting, these instruments were designed to explore what children recognised as pedagogical modes of work or play.

3.3.5. Designing the research instruments to investigate with children

Photographic images of ten spaces and artefacts collectively available in each of the three settings were used to represent areas and activities that the children in the pilot recognised as salient for inclusion in two specially designed tasks. Ten pictures were designed for each of the three settings so that children would be able to recognise the spaces, objects and artefacts from their setting.

3.3.6. Pilot study

Meadow Rise was selected for the pilot study, because it shared some characteristics with the two other settings and was reflective of maintained/non-maintained preschool sector. Although Meadow Rise had achieved some measure of permanence in terms of accommodation, it contained many of the features that existed within Quarry Lane, such as setting out and packing away the main areas and activities each day. As the children had free-flow access to both outdoor and indoor provision, Meadow Rise's practice corresponded closely with Riverbank and the 34 per cent of settings in Wales who reported using the outside space every day (Rhys et al. 2014, p3). The practitioners' qualifications were representative of both the settings and the sector, since the majority of staff at Meadow Rise had achieved a level 3 in child-care and the playgroup leader was a former primary school teacher. The three settings also contained areas/activities that were representative of preschool provision within the Foundation Phase.

The playgroup leader selected four children, who had not been identified to participate in the main study and gained consent from their parents. These children assisted the trial and subsequent design of the research tasks. First, sixteen photographs, depicting images of setting were shown to each child and they provided a description of what they saw. First, the

children participated in the two sorting tasks, in order to identify pedagogical spaces they recognised as salient and then, second, they selected images and placed them in hierarchal order of preference as described previously. During the pilot, pictures which frequently appeared to be difficult to match and/or ambiguous to the child were gradually eliminated. If the content appeared too similar to other images the children had already identified, or simultaneously rejected, such as the passage to the outdoor area, which included images of the toilets, these were also gradually eliminated. Finally, ten images emerged as salient and this selection was confirmed by an independent assessor and coded as previously explained. With consideration to the practicalities of interviewing younger children, the design of the sorting tasks focused on the range of images to be included and the type of prompts/cues required to promote rates of engagement (Brooker 2001). The pilot study proved to be an extremely effective means to pre-test the research instruments, to practice and modify questions to reduce potential ambiguity, to practise observations and map children's movements and to gain an understanding of the setting's practice and routine.

3.3.7. The children's sorting task

Designing the Sorting Task

Photographs depicting each of the following areas as they appeared within each of the three locations were numerically coded to assist data analysis.

Home-corner

Writing area

Construction

Book-corner

Painting

Outdoor picture 1

Outdoor picture 2

Outdoor picture 3

Puzzles

Small-world

Small-world paraphernalia consisted of, various models and figurines such as doll's houses, farms, garages, trainsets and dinosaurs.

Task 1- A Sorting Task

The first sorting task was designed to investigate preschool children's recontextualisations of the Foundation Phase curriculum by presenting ten activities in a visual form as part of a sorting task. The task was based on a design by Ivinson and Duveen (2006). Children were instructed to sort the pictures into as few or as many groups as they wished and to base their selections on, *'things that went together'*. On completion of the task, each of the groups that the child had created was numbered in order of compilation as follows: For example, the child selects three pictures (painting, puzzles and construction) which are then considered a group and labelled Group 1. The child goes on to create another group and the sequence of numbering groups continues until all the pictures are used, or until the child is satisfied by what they have produced and decides to stop making selections. Digital recordings of each child's justifications were recorded together with hand written notes.

Task 2 –The favourites task

The favourites task was designed to explore children's preferences in relation to areas of the foundation phase curriculum. The task involved the ten pictures of areas/activities contained within their preschool settings that had been designed for the sorting task. The task required children to rank the ten pictures in order from their most favourite to their least favourite. The task was administered in a one to one interview.

The ten pictures were arranged in no particular order on the table. The child was asked to look carefully at the spread of pictures and to find the one they liked the most. When the first one was selected, the number listed on the back of the photograph was recorded and the child was asked, *'Why do you like the (painting) the most?'* Questions were also rephrased according to the child's description of the picture, *'Why/What, do you like about the train-set?'* (small-world). When the first picture was selected it was placed at the furthest distance (at the top of the table) to reflect its ranking in terms of hierarchal placement. Then the child was asked if they could identify a picture that they liked the least. As the child confirmed his /her selection, the image was placed at the nearest (bottom) end of the table. This sequence of placing images (with highest preferences descending and lowest ranking pictures ascending, to reflect the order of placement) was followed until all ten pictures were ranked in numerical order, with 10 representing the highest and 1 the lowest.

Task 3 - Gender Task

During the pilot, a third sorting task was introduced to engage children who appeared distracted or unresponsive. The additional stimuli proved an effective means of support and generated some depth of insight regarding the pedagogy in the context of gender when the task was employed within the main study (chapter 6). Three hand-drawn characters labelled as, Sian (girl), Joe (boy) and Robin (ambiguous) were introduced to encourage levels of involvement and/or elicit description as required. The object of this task would provide insight into the children's perceptions of the characters in respect to the spaces they selected on their behalf.

3.3.8. The practitioners' hierarchal ranking task

The practitioners were asked to rank the ten images from their setting in order of the following classifications. These three selections would represent; i) what the practitioner recognised as important from a personal perspective; ii) what they recognised as the children's preference and finally; iii) what they recognised as relevant for the delivery of the Foundation Phase. As with the previous tasks, all selections were coded, data recorded and justifications transcribed together with ongoing analysis.

3.4. Access

This section details how the settings and advisors were selected for inclusion in the study and how access was negotiated.

3.4.1. Settings

In view of the multiplicity of the preschool sector, as identified in chapter 1, it was important to provide some variation in range of sample, to illustrate this diversity in part. The two non-maintained playgroups and the statutory nursery school provided some variance in terms of their localities and although the sample is small, it created insight of the diversity of settings that are registered to deliver the Foundation Phase across Wales. Estyn had inspected each of the three settings since the roll out of the Foundation Phase in 2008 and each had been awarded the second highest ranking and achieved a, 'Good' inspection outcome in the subsequent year/s (Estyn 2008, 2009, 2012 and 2014). Meadow Rise and Quarry Lane playgroups had temporary use of their accommodation, which required practitioners to install and pack away the various thematic spaces, artefacts and activities they used to deliver the

Foundation Phase, at the beginning and end of each session. Riverbank nursery occupied a building that was purpose built, so large equipment and themed rooms functioned to maintain consistency. This continuum of provision at Riverbank would also assist the practitioners' capacity to plan and organise the curriculum in relation to short and long-range objectives.

Access to the three settings had to be scheduled around the researcher's own work commitments and times that were convenient for the settings to accommodate the research. The three preschools were selected from three separate regional authorities and the researcher approached each setting in person, to enquire if they would be willing to participate in the study. Letters were then forwarded to the settings leaders, to request formal consent (see Appendix 1). While the two non-maintained settings were known to the researcher, having visited them on an annual basis in her professional capacity as advisor, their inclusion in the study was established on the basis that they were representative of the sector and not because they were familiar. Access to the statutory setting also emerged from a previous visit when the researcher had been invited to see an initiative the setting had adopted to support creative play. While negotiations towards access were no doubt enhanced through situated knowledge, it would be misleading to assume that access might be deemed unproblematic. For the settings, the position of advisor (particularly in the two non-maintained settings where an occupational association had already been established) conveyed both 'outsider' and 'insider' status, so the role of novice researcher might have been perceived as a less intrusive and judgemental construct to accommodate. On a few occasions, practitioners tried to impart thoughts and experiences in relation to the children's dispositions, which they recognised as pertinent to share, but these were not used or recorded in the study. The primary objective, to explore spatial contexts, served as an effective means to maintain focus within the field, while the abstract concept of '*space*' generated more compatible, less formalised insider/outsider relationships.

3.4.2. Participants

Four practitioners from each of the three settings volunteered to participate in the interviews during the second series of visits in the spring/summer term. The majority of the practitioners at Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise had been awarded a level 3, vocational child-care diplomas to supervise children aged 0-5 years. Elaine, at Quarry Lane was intending to enrol on a childcare course the following term and Jen was currently studying towards a level 5 diploma

in leadership and management. Gill, from Meadow Rise and the four practitioners at Riverbank were all qualified early years teachers, as summarised in Table 3.4.2.

Quarry Lane		Meadow Rise		Riverbank	
Non-maintained setting		Non-maintained setting.		Statutory setting.	
Practitioner. (pseudonyms)	Qualification.	Practitioner. (psuedonmys)	Qualification.	Practitioner. (pseudonyms)	Qualification.
Jen,	Lead practitoner, Working towards level 5.	Gill.	Teacher and lead practitioner.	Miss Price.	Deputy Head teacher.
Linda.	Level 3.	Teresa.	Level 3	Miss Ellis.	Teacher
Pam.	Level 3.	Michelle.	Level 3.	Miss Thomas.	Teacher
Elaine.	Not currently qualified.	Sandra.	Level 3	Mrs Drew.	Teacher

Table 3.4.2. Names (pseudonyms) and qualifications of the practitioners

3.4.3. Children

Having confirmed agreement to accommodate the study, each setting’s leader identified a cohort of ten children, aged between 3 and 4 years and contacted parents on behalf of the researcher, to gain consent. Unfortunately, due to their absence on the days the sorting tasks were administered, two of the children from Riverbank were unable to participate in the tasks. While their contribution to these activities would have been particularly valued, they were included as part of the cohort who contributed to observations and field-notes. Ten children from each of the settings included in the study were identified with pseudonyms, as illustrated in Table 3.4.3.

Quarry Lane		Meadow Rise		Riverbank	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Nathan	Molly	Oscar	Freya	Henry	Eva
Archie	Lucy	Kai	Abi	Jake	Safa
Sammy	Cerys	Miles	Josie	Mason	Truda
Lewis		Ethan	Jess	Ahmed	Olivia
Aidan		Rhodri	Lily		Jasmine
Braydon					Aisha
Luke					

Table 3.4.3. Names (pseudonyms) of the three cohorts of ten children per setting.

3.4.4. Advisors

Interviews with the four practitioners were designed to create a sense of unfamiliarity for the researcher, so that themes and discourses that might have been taken for granted, could be explored. Each of the four advisors had been involved with the initial phase of the curriculum's development, so each had achieved a very different insight to the researcher's own experience. While the practitioner knew the first contact, in a professional yet distant capacity there had been no direct contact. Each advisor recommended referrals of people that they felt were useful for the researcher to contact. With the exception of Dawn, these referrals were selected without prior introduction, but in order of recommendation. The contacts were also selected to achieve a geographical picture of the development of the Foundation Phase as it emerged across Wales. Once selected each advisor was contacted, by telephone, to arrange a one-to one meeting. Letters, requesting consent, together with the list of questions, were forwarded in advance of the meeting.

Foundation Phase Advisors.			
All pseudonyms			
Catherine.	Celia.	Mary.	Dawn.
Early-Years Advisor and regional representative for the 'All Wales Advisors'	Retired, senior university lecturer specialising in early year's education and Foundation Phase advisor to the Welsh Government.	Retired, nursery-school head-teacher and Foundation Phase advisor to the Welsh Government	Playgroup supervisor and former primary school teacher.

Table 3.4.4. Names (pseudonyms) and roles of the four advisors.

Grek (2011) argues that a good knowledge of the subject enables the researcher to follow the narrative and understand its construction. While the initial objective to interview the advisors was designed in part to achieve a sense of distance, it would be unwise to assume that a shared understanding of the pedagogy had not been influential in achieving positive rates of access and rapport. Placing the subject in the context of a specific phase of time, when the curriculum was initially developed, created an opportunity for the respondents to reflect on their own individual experiences. It also enabled them to enlighten the researcher rather than co-construct the pedagogical narratives that emerged (Grek 2011). In view of these reflexive accounts, which illustrate how specialised agents had worked collectively to produce the curriculum and generate materials to support its implementation, the study focused on a content analysis of the Foundation Phase's guidance documents.

3.5. Analysis

To produce explanations in response to the four strands of enquiry designed to investigate: how the Foundation Phase was developed; how practitioners recontextualised the Foundation Phase; how practitioners instantiated the Foundation Phase in their everyday practice with a focus on the material culture of the classroom and how children recontextualised the curriculum; data created through content analysis, interviews, observations and the specially designed instruments was analysed repeatedly and in depth.

3.5.1. Documents

Content analysis Foundation Phase guidance documents

Following the publication of the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) '*paving document*': '*The Learning Country*' (NAfW 2001) which describes the Assembly's intention to develop a statutory curriculum for children aged 3-7 years, there has been a consistent production of literature to support the progression of the pedagogy. Guidance documents that spanned this initial phase of construction to the most recent focus of pedagogical ideals and intent, extended insight of the terrain and the breadth of the intended recipients (see Table 3.5.1.). Analysis of the Foundation Phase guidance materials confirmed the thematic discourses that influenced the design of the curriculum at various stages of development. Pedagogical concepts and ideals which emerged as salient, informed the focus of the study so that other haphazard subjectivities could remain isolated (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). These documents enabled the researcher to reflect on actions and events in respect to the curriculum's official dialogue, overarching themes that emerged from the advisors and practitioners and formal/informal modes of engagement within the three settings. While there has been a concerted effort to maintain the pace of the progression of the Foundation Phase implementation, as conveyed through the ongoing production of guidance and report documents, the main publications considered relevant for inclusion are those, which span the period of enquiry from 2001-2013. This includes materials reflecting the four strands of enquiry, aligned to phases of curriculum production, the practitioners' instantiation and children's recognition and engagement with the spatial contexts and material culture produced.

Sample of guidance documents included in the content analysis.

Publication	Intended audience	Subject
Final Report for the Pre 16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee (2000)	Welsh Assembly Government.	Report, outlining recommendations for early years education in Wales
Laying the Foundation: Early years provision for three year olds. (Education and Life-Long Learning Committee, 2001)	Welsh Assembly Government	Report, outlining recommendations for early years' education in Wales
Building the Foundation Phase Action Plan. (WAG,2006)	Headteachers, teachers, practitioners and governing bodies of maintained schools, and practitioners and management committees in the non-maintained sector, in Wales	Action Plan, introducing the Foundation Phase (2006)
Framework for Children's Learning for 3-7year olds. (WAG, 2008)		Foundation Phase curriculum framework.
Play and Active Learning (WAG, 2008)		Developmental stages in play and types of learning.
Observing Children (WAG, 2008)		Purpose and methods of observation.
Outdoor Learning experiences (WAG, 2009)		Report on outdoor learning initiatives
Curriculum for Wales. (Welsh Government, 2015).		Foundation Phase revised framework

Table 3.5.1. Sample of guidance documents

3.5.2. Analysis of Advisors' Interviews

Interviews with the advisors and practitioners were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed in depth, to identify themes and discourses. Concepts and contexts, which emerged as salient for those involved during the initial phase of the curriculum's development were analysed in relation to the official guidance documents, to identify key themes. The advisors retrospective accounts also identified key stands of enquiry, which served to analyse the layering of the pedagogy within the three settings and draw comparisons against competing discourses in the wider social sphere. Parental influences, social disadvantage, the appropriation of global pedagogical interlocutors, disparities between the non-maintained and statutory sectors and

the division of labour between care and education were all identified (chapter 4), as relevant to analyse and explore further.

The mapping of the spatial contexts and material culture within the three settings, helped to analyse the instantiation of the pedagogy by the practitioners. Justifications created by practitioners and the children in response to interviews and the tasks created greater depth of meaning, when analysed in context to observations and recorded field-notes. By revisiting, re-reading and re-analysing the data recorded, taken for granted assumptions could be problematized, so that, the ritual and routine, the positioning and layering of artefacts, forms of interaction, noise-levels and enhanced or restricted patterns of movement could be broadly considered. The gathering of floorplans and mapping children's movements were also analysed in relation to findings from the other settings, so that comparisons could be made both within and across the three sites.

3.5.3. Analysis of the Sorting Task

The ten pictures created a data set and each one was allocated a separate column as they were input into an SPSS spreadsheet. Each group of pictures that the child created were listed in order of placement and compilations of each group recorded. If a child created a first group using pictures of the home-corner and small-world, this would represent group 1 and the number 1 was entered in home-corner, and small-world columns. If there were 10 children in the class, then there would be 10 rows given group numbers under columns. A cluster analysis was undertaken and results were presented as dendograms. Dendograms were created for each of the three settings and are reported in chapter 7. The dendograms show which pictures were regularly grouped together by children in the same setting. An example is given below. Using the rescaled distance of 5, on the cluster identifies a group containing pictures number 7 and 8 (which referred to Outdoor 1 and 2).

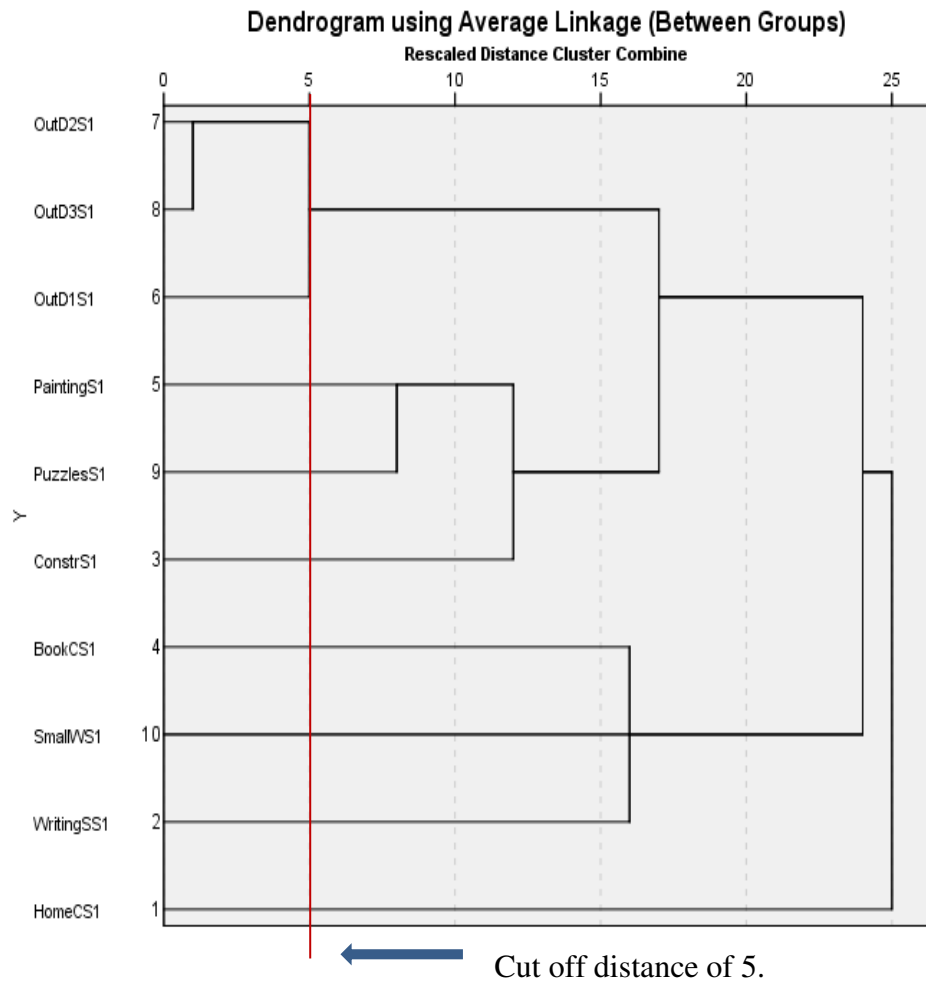


Figure 3.5.3. Dendrogram example.

3.5.4. Analysis of favourites task.

Each of the ten photographs depicting the areas in the setting, were numbered on the reverse side to assist the recording process of the selections made as follows:

Picture	Numbers
Home-corner	1
Writing area	2
Construction	3
Book-corner	4
Painting	5
Outdoor 1	6
Outdoor 2	7
Outdoor 3	8
Puzzles	9
Small-world	10

The numbers on each picture was recorded as each child made her or his selections. The results for each child's selection were combined to form an overall score for each area with a maximum score of 10 multiplied by the number of children from each setting. This allows comparison of the scores of a child who ranks all of the areas, with a child who ranked some, or none of the areas. If a child selected all ten areas as their favourite, the average score of 5.5 was applied to each image, to ensure the sum of all 10 rankings summed to 55. The picture that achieved the highest score in terms of frequency tally was identified as the most popular and the one with the lowest score recognised as the least.

3.5.5. Analysis of Gender Task

Numbers on the reverse of each picture that has been allocated by the child to the three characters, Joe, Sian and Robin, were recorded to identify which ones the children recognised as relevant for inclusion in each sort. Each allocation that the child made was analysed in relation to digital recordings of his or her justifications and notes the researcher made detailing selections as they occurred and any non-verbal behaviour that was relevant to record. The total sum of allocations awarded to each character within each setting was calculated, so that any emerging themes and inconsistencies could be analysed and recorded.

3.6. Ethical considerations

In accordance with the principles and guidance of the Schools Research Ethics Committee (SREC) and guidelines published by the British Education Research Association (BERA 2011), ethical responsibility was integral to the design of the research and subsequent processes.

Although Wales PPA were supportive of the researcher's intention to undertake the research and created time for the study to proceed, the research remained independent from the researcher's employment. Consequently, the three settings, practitioners, children and advisors were not identified, or discussed at any time, to ensure that the study remained independent and confidentiality was not breached.

Letters detailing the aim of the study and nature of the interviews, observations and sorting tasks were forwarded in advance of the study. Written consent was confirmed by each of the three settings who mediated and achieved parental consent for the ten children they identified as part of the cohort of thirty participants selected. The inclusion of the gatekeeper to achieve consent was recognised as preferable, as it generated a more holistic rather than less personable form of negotiation (Alderson and Morrow 2011). The four advisors and twelve practitioners who voluntarily consented to be included in the study also provided written confirmation. Assurances were made to protect each person's anonymity and any data achieved was treated as confidential and only made visible in respect to discussions with Supervisors, who advised to ensure correct procedures were maintained. Each setting was given the fictitious names of Quarry Lane, Meadow Rise and Riverbank and pseudonyms (sourced from popular baby names that approximate to the subject's birth and ethnicity) were used to represent the children, advisors and practitioners named within the study. Although it would have been useful to include the photographic images (used within the specialised tasks) in the body of the thesis, their inclusion would also be open to wider surveillance and perhaps recognition (Wiles et al. 2011; Mannay, 2016). Having gained informed consent from the participants (see Appendixes 1-3), the publication of the images would be deemed inappropriate as it would comprise both agreements and each of the setting's anonymity.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork within the settings and with particular regard towards working with children, the researcher gained approval from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to confirm safeguarding status, as appropriate for the duration of the visits between 2012-2013. The researcher also adhered to the procedures each of the three settings

employed to accommodate the activities and working with children on a one-to-one basis. As the study had been designed to include task-based methods, provision had been made to create a quiet area in each of the three settings. Due to the restriction of space within the Meadow Rise and Quarry Lane playgroups, the tasks were accommodated in a large walk-in cupboard, but children had immediate access to the main hall. Quarry Lane also offered the additional provision of the Parent and Toddler (PT) room on the days that it was available. At Riverbank two small rooms (which were included in the sample as the skills/puzzles and the home-corner peripheral rooms) were made available by the head-teacher, who requested that each child should also be accompanied by a member of staff for the duration of the sorting tasks.

For Dalli and Te One (2012) the restriction of time for those unable to build experiences by establishing relationships with parents, teachers and children before entering the field can be problematic, so other means must be considered in order to create an 'ecology of trust'. Due to the time constraints and the distance between visits in the autumn and spring/summer terms, the formation of relationships and the occupation of the quiet space were relevant issues to consider and prepare for. During the first series of visits to each of the three settings, time was made to establish relationships. The researcher invited small groups of children to participate in an activity called, 'Kim's game'. While the inclusion of the game was not designed to achieve any depth of insight in relation to the main research objective, it created an opportunity for children to become familiar with the quiet space in the company of their peers and express themselves freely.

Darbyshire et al. (2005) questions children's capacity to object to aspects of research they do not like. With particular consideration to the young age range of the children included in the study, the researcher was attentive to ensure that each child was comfortable and happy to participate with the tasks. If children appeared to become disengaged with the activity, or expressed an interest not to participate, they were granted permission to leave.

3.7. Descriptions of the three preschool sites

This section provides descriptions of each of the preschool settings with a focus on how the Foundation Phase curriculum was instantiated in the material culture of each. The reason for this detailed focus on the material cultures is twofold. Exploration of the spaces and material culture provide insight: First, into how the practitioners understood the Foundation Phase

policy documents and guidance and second, the spaces and material cultures of the preschool settings that provide young children with important clues about what was expected of them.

3.7.1. Three preschool settings

The two non-maintained playgroups and the statutory nursery school were chosen to provide some variance in the range of localities. Although small in number, the three institutions provided insights into the diversity of settings registered to deliver the Foundation Phase within the preschool sector. Quarry Lane playgroup, Meadow Rise playgroup and Riverbank nursery, are all fictitious names. Pseudonyms have also been used for the thirty children and twelve practitioners who participated in the study.

3.7.2. Quarry Lane Playgroup

Located in the main hall of a community centre in the former industrial village of Quarry Lane, the playgroup is open for five morning and three afternoon sessions per week. Prior to the commencement of the study, Quarry Lane had recently been included as part of the Welsh Government's Flying Start child-care expansion. Designed to support families with children under the age of four years, living in income benefit households in areas local authorities identified as lower super output areas (LSOA) Flying Start was created to assist the socio/economically vulnerable (Welsh Government, 15th October 2015). The setting is registered for thirty children to attend each session and offers the addition of 'Wrap-around' afternoon sessions for children who attend the local school's nursery during the morning. The majority of the children are from White British backgrounds and attend the playgroup on a part-time basis. Those funded for the Foundation Phase are granted a maximum of five sessions per week. The playgroup's leader is currently working to achieve a level 5 child-care qualification that is recognised as relevant for Flying Start leadership. Three of the remaining practitioners are qualified to level three and one is without a child-care qualification. As the setting only has temporary use of the hall, all of the equipment and resources used to support the curriculum have to be set out and packed away at the start and the close of each day. The children and parents address the practitioners by their first names and precede it with the familial title, '*Aunty*'.

Figure 3.7.2. Quarry Lane floorplan

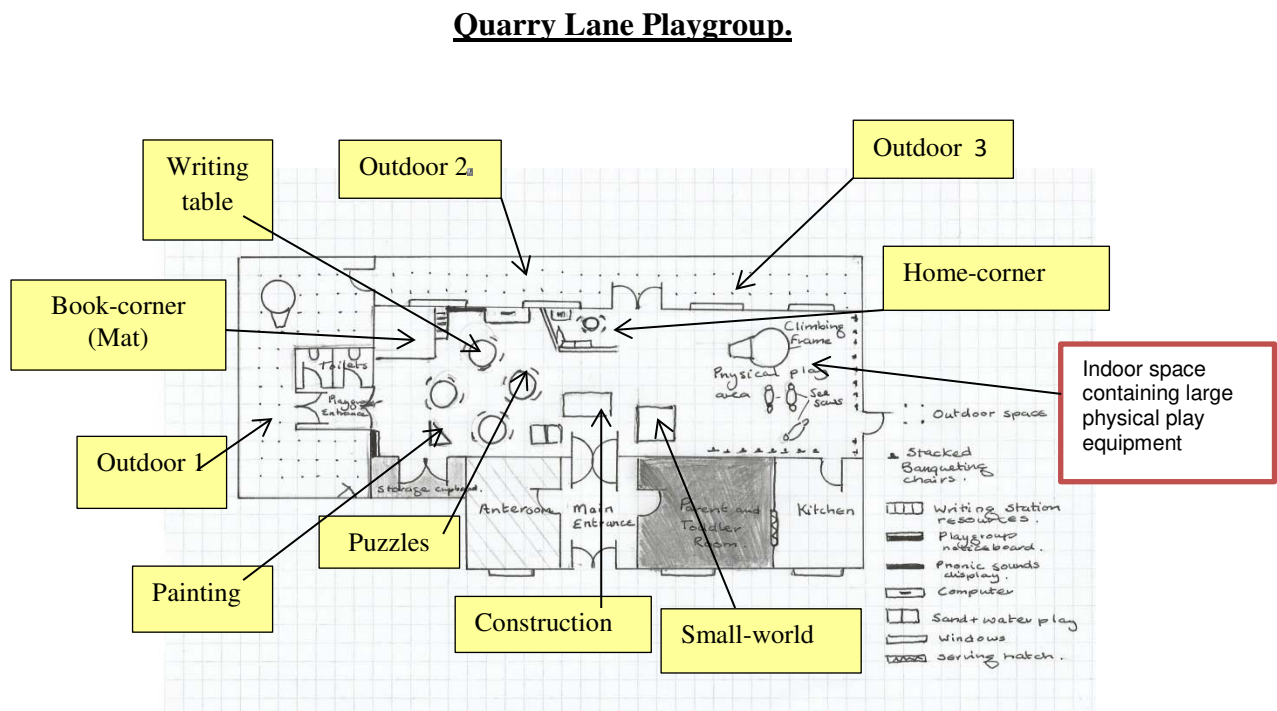


Figure 3.7.2. Quarry Lane Playgroup: Interior/Exterior floorplans and labels marking the positioning of the ten pictures included in the specialised tasks.

Quarry Lane’s outside play area is clearly defined by the positioning of a large plastic slide that dominates the small yard (Outdoor 1) at the front of this modern community hall (see Figure 3.7.2. Quarry Lane floorplan). Iron railings conceal the setting’s alternative outdoor space/s (Outdoor 2 and 3); a narrow passageway that runs the length of the building and lined intermittently with car tyres, lengths of hose, blocks of wood and a few plastic toys. Inside, the large well-illuminated hall that accommodates the playgroup, the space is divided into two sections. At the far end of the room, there is a climbing frame and a small number of ride-on toys. This relatively spacious area, is reserved for physical play and contrasts with the rest of the room that is furnished more compactly, to include both themed areas and activities. Here, small groups of child-sized tables and chairs are neatly organised across the room to accommodate various child initiated/adult guided pursuits. Playdough, rolling pins and a variety of shaped cutters are positioned on one table, while wooden puzzles are displayed on the next. Another group configuration is sited next to a storage unit containing stationary materials and confirmed as the writing area. The storage unit also functions as a divide

between the writing area and the book-corner that both the practitioners and children refer to as, '*the mat*'.

Tightly framed within one corner of the room, the mat regularly functions as a place where the children come together for shared activities, such as singing, storytelling and registration. At other times, this space is organised as a book-corner and is simply furnished with a box of books and a few brightly coloured scatter cushions. On the opposite side of the room, provision had been made for painting and this area accommodates sand and water trays. Next, two small floor mats (one contains a doll's house, a toy garage with cars and there is a train set on the other) are spread on the floor, only to be interrupted by large foam construction blocks which create an informal divide between the two ends of the hall. A wooden screen partially conceals the home-corner and furniture that is organised to represent a kitchen and includes various props such as dolls and pushchairs, to enhance the domestic scene.

Although children are able to access and engage with the areas/activities, their movement between the tables and themed areas has to be skilfully navigated. Access to the outside space/s at Quarry Lane also appears constrained. Rather than engage in the free-flow of movement between outdoor and indoor areas, provision at Quarry Lane was restricted to specific periods on the timetable. As noted later in the thesis, no provision of access to the outdoor areas occurred during the study. As all the pedagogical areas/activities were contained within the main hall, there appeared to be greater flexibility in the practitioners' general deployment if they were not engaged with specific focused tasks (chapter 2) or activities, such as the painting or the playdough. Consequently, the practitioners were readily at hand to observe and support children, or intervene.

3.7.3. Meadow Rise Playgroup

Meadow Rise is a popular semi-rural suburb with a competitive school catchment. The playgroup is set within the large hall of the adjoining mid-nineteenth century church. The accommodation has been modified to make the interior/exterior areas child friendly but many of its traditional ecclesiastical features remain. Although the majority of the equipment/artefacts are packed away at the end of the day, certain fixtures and fittings remain in place to suggest some perpetuity of location. Meadow Rise is registered for twenty-six children and is privately owned and managed by a former primary school teacher. The remaining four staff in attendance each possess a level three qualification in child-care and

the children address them all by their first names. Most of the children are from White British backgrounds.

Figure 3.7.3. Meadow Rise floorplan

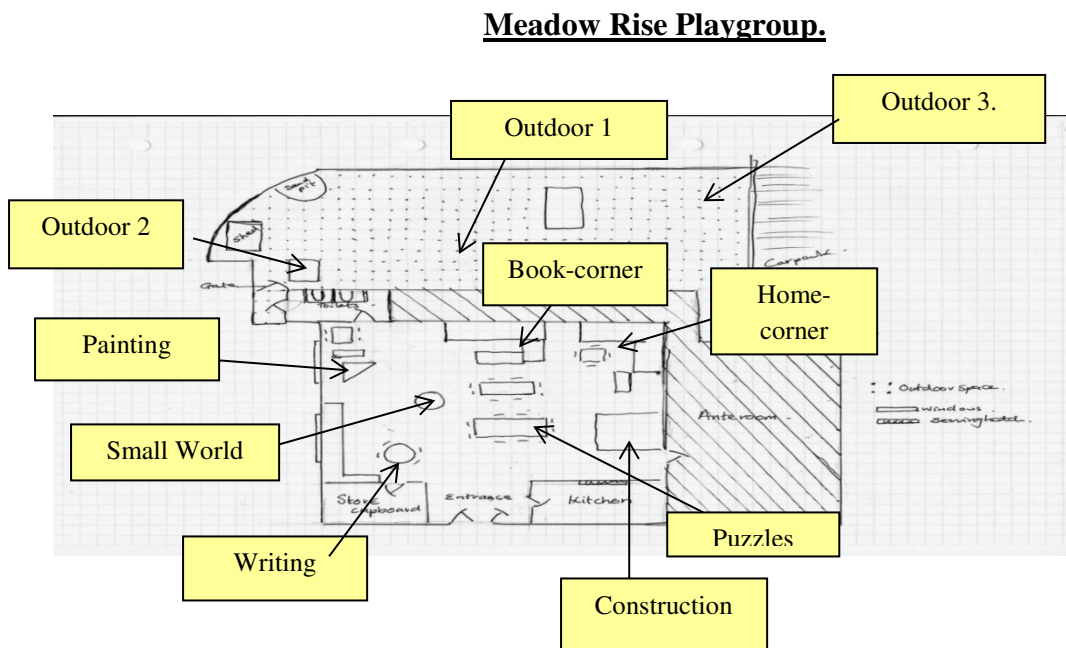


Figure 3.7.3. Meadow Rise Playgroup: Interior/Exterior floorplans and labels marking the positioning of the ten pictures included in the specialised tasks.

The hall's pastel coloured walls are decorated with displays of the children's artwork and there is clearly detailed signage to affirm the positioning of pedagogical areas and artefacts. A table which includes a display of different sized vessels, weighing scales and abacus sit beneath the sign labelled, '*Mathematics*' while another notice confirms the space reserved for creative play. The painting easel and playdough table are in the creative corner and a short distance away from the two sofas that have been positioned to frame a large wall-rack on the rear wall of the room, which is filled with books (Figure 3.7.3. Meadow Rise Floorplan). In the adjacent corner stands the home-corner, which is structured around a kitchen/domestic scene and extends to include a large rail complete with dressing up clothes and the recently added, grocer's shop. Two small tables in the centre of the room contain puzzles and a sorting task activity, while a third table, positioned next to the stationary resources, serves as the writing area. A large mat, which also functions as a place for the group to gather collectively, is covered with construction blocks. The small-world area is also positioned on the floor and

the content alternates regularly between cars, trains, dinosaurs and farm paraphernalia. The door at the rear of the hall leads into a narrow passageway and exits towards the setting's sizable outside space. The area includes a large climbing frame, slide, playhouse (Outdoor 2) and sandpit and various small ride-on vehicles. Artefacts that make-up the continuous indoor provision, as described in chapter 2, such as the dressing-up clothes, construction and writing materials were also available as part of the outdoor provision. As the children were able to engage in free-flow movement between the outdoor and indoor environments, the practitioners worked simultaneously across the two sites.

3.7.4. Riverbank Nursery

Riverbank is a district on the perimeter of a large cosmopolitan city and the statutory run nursery school has served its diverse community for over fifty years. The largest of the three settings, Riverbank has places for 80 children on a part-time/full-time basis and operates for five morning and afternoon sessions per week. The nursery team includes a head-teacher, five qualified primary school teachers, five teaching assistants/nursery nurses and the setting has the addition of supply and other ancillary staff. Lead practitioners (teachers) have responsibility for key-groups of children and have regular timeslots to prepare planning and learning objectives. Over sixty percent of the children come from ethnic minority backgrounds and many have English as a second language. The nursery school, which is purpose built, is contained within a large plot of ground which has been landscaped to support children's play (Chapter 6). Both the interior and exterior areas are generously furnished and resourced with preschool materials and there are many examples of the children's work on display.

3.7.4. Riverbank floorplan

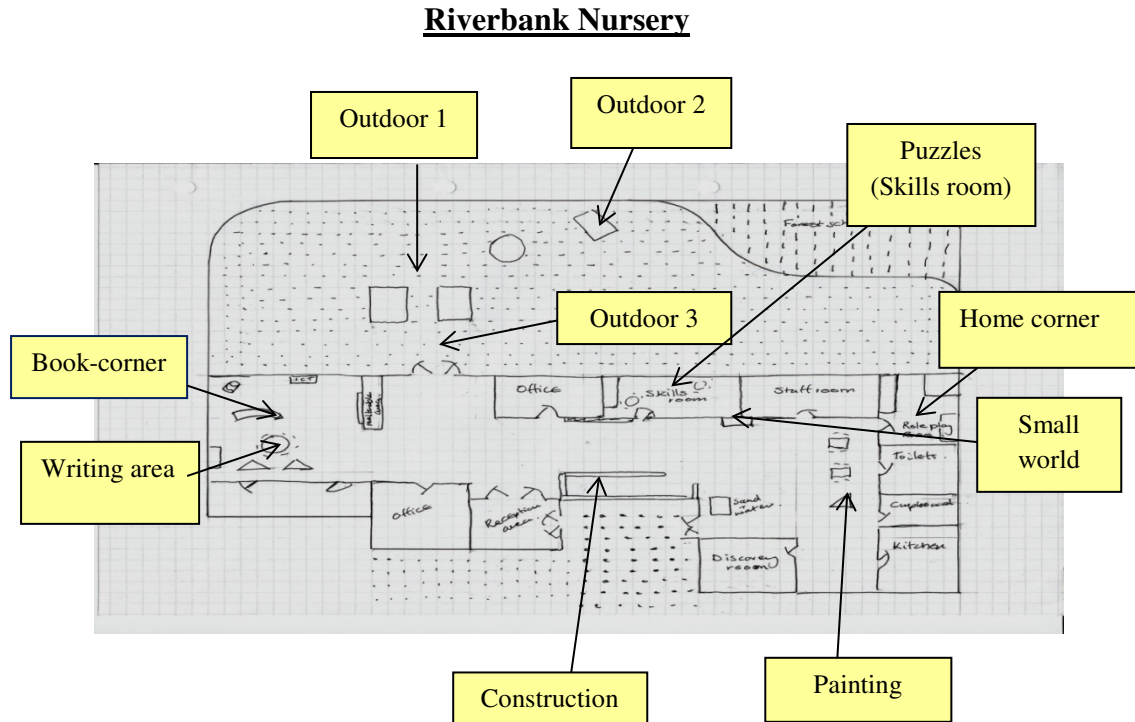


Figure 3.7.4.. Riverbank nursery: Interior/Exterior floorplans and labels marking the positioning of the ten pictures included in the specialised tasks.

The nursery has a large open plan interior, which is brightly illuminated and generously resourced. Children’s work is displayed across the walls and there are a variety of clearly scripted themed displays. The main room is L-shaped and contains a construction area with a plentiful supply of blocks, a large painting easel and tables for creative work, a malleable clay/playdough workbench with a wide assortment of tools and two generous plastic water and sand trays (Figure 3.7.4. Riverbank floorplan). A series of rooms lead off from this central hall and are organised to reflect specific themes and/or activities as part of the Foundation Phase’s continuous provision. The largest of these rooms contains both the writing area and the book-corner. Further down the main hall is the skills room, where a variety of puzzles and games are set out daily for the children. The next themed room is the home-corner, which contains a range of child-sized kitchen units and toy appliances, dressing up clothes and a large wooden frame containing stairs which lead to a raised platform. The room is regularly enhanced to stimulate role-play and, during the study, the domestic theme

changed to incorporate a dental surgery. The final and smallest of these peripheral rooms labelled the '*Discovery room*' contains various tactile and visual resources such as glitter balls, lengths of fabric and torches.

The children at Riverbank have free-flow access to a very sizable outdoor space that includes a variety of permanently fixed structures such as, a boat, a wooden playhouse, a fortress and a mud-kitchen. Many of the continuous activities are also replicated outside and the children have scheduled access to a separate enclosed area set as a Forest School (FS).

3.7.5. Practitioners

Practitioners at Riverbank maintained positions in all the continuous areas to oversee and support children as they moved between the various activities. They also managed access to the areas such as the painting, the construction, home-corner and skills (puzzles) rooms, in order to deter overcrowding. Practitioners at Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise also maintained positions in close proximity to certain activities, such as the painting and playdough, but since the continuous provision in these settings was confined to one main hall there appeared to be greater flexibility in terms of the practitioners' general deployment when they were not engaged overseeing specific activities, or working one to one with focused tasks. In each of the three settings the children appeared confident to access resources and engage with the structuration of free-flow movement where such provision was made available.

3.8. Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the stratified research design, structured to assess the impact of the spatial contexts contained within the Foundation Phase on children's understanding and engagement with the pedagogy. Placing children's perspectives at the fore of the investigation, particular consideration was afforded to respond ethically and responsibly to their inclusion and any data subsequently generated. The multiplicity of methods was also designed to achieve a more holistic perspective. By explaining the issues and dilemmas that emerge from the researcher's sense of situatedness, the chapter provides a rationale for the selection and design of research instruments, methods of employment and negotiation. This methodology underpins the analysis and ongoing evaluation of the following three empirical chapters. The first is structured to explore the Foundation Phase's pedagogical ethos and construction, as conveyed by advisors within the field. By incorporating photographic stimuli, the second chapter considers the practitioners' views on

how the Foundation Phase pedagogy is mediated in respect to the setting. The third empirical chapter investigates how children recognise and engage with the spatial contexts to assess if there are similarities or variations, both within and across the three sites.

Chapter 4

Formulating the pedagogical space

4. Introduction

Drawing on Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation, this chapter examines the production of the Foundation Phase curriculum during the initial stage development. It presents findings from interviews with four early years' educational advisors, who had been granted opportunity to contribute to the development of the curriculum. The interviews introduce concepts and contexts, which were pertinent to the dissemination of the curriculum across Wales and signalled subsequent challenges for those implementing the pedagogy at various sites within the Pedagogic Recontextualising Field (PRF). The semi-structured interviews were analysed for themes and discourses that the advisors regularly identified, to suggest what kind of competing ideologies and localised interests were at play. Their accounts also suggest how the Foundation Phase policy and guidance was recontextualised by players within the non-maintained and statutory preschool settings.

4.1. Introducing the Early Years Advisors

This section explains how each of the four advisors came to be initially involved in the development of the Foundation Phase.

Celia, Mary, Dawn and Catherine had each been identified by the National Assembly for Wales as knowledgeable in the field of early years education and relevant to the policy process in respect to their own particular specialisms. As agents positioned at various sites, they gained access to concepts and ideals that would influence the structure of the curriculum and have an effect upon the construction of the pedagogical space.

Each of the four advisors had been actively involved in early years' education when the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) conducted a national consultation on child-care and early years' education. As a senior lecturer specialising in early years' education, Celia explained how she had been appointed by the (NAfW) to analyse the data and produce a report, outlining recommendations on the education of three-year olds.

'At that time there was a mixture of provision and an unequal playing field. It (the Foundation Phase) was seen as a threat in the first instance by the non-maintained sector seeing four year olds in school and if three year olds were going to school, that would be a disaster. I recommended a bottom up approach. It was important for

everyone to see the benefit of partnership, to draw together everyone's views. The objectives would be that we would develop a partnership of provision, integrate all the current types of provision and work to the same aims, to meet the needs of the child' Celia.

Celia confirmed how the concept of partnership was introduced at an early phase of the curriculum's development and signals towards the intended grassroots' policy ambition, to integrate not only provision, but also the sharing of the same ideals and intentions.

In response to this initial report, the National Assembly for Wales' detailed proposals for a statutory Foundation Phase curriculum extending from 3-7 years, through the publication of the 'Learning Country' in 2001. Mary, a Head-teacher of a nursery school at that time, explained how the proposals motivated her to participate in the development of the Foundation Phase scheme.

'When I read the Learning Country document that was put out by the Education Minister I was just blown away and thought this is the way we should be going and so I wrote and put the nursery forward to be selected as a pilot school in 2003 and the pilot started 2004' Mary.

The publication of the Learning Country document (NAfW, 2001), which set out plans to eradicate formal classroom based learning, resonated with Mary's own values of early years' education.

Following a career in teaching, Dawn had occupied the role of playgroup manager for over seventeen years. Dawn's setting was nominated by the local authority to be included on the Foundation Phase pilot scheme and she explained why she thought the transition would have less of an impact on playgroup settings than on schools.

'It wasn't so much of a culture shock for us as it was for the teachers. We were already emphasising play and experiential learning, but it became more focused'. Dawn.

Dawn and the other advisors, were also invited to attend various Foundation Phase working parties. These networks were coordinated to assist the drafting of the pedagogical framework and contributed to the development of the guidance materials.

The fourth and final interviewee, Catherine, was a member of the All Wales Foundation Phase Advisors (AWFPAs). The AWFPA group contained a panel of senior education advisors, employed to represent each of the twenty-two local authorities in Wales. Working

in partnership with other local authorities, Catherine saw her role as conducive to the progression of policy and its eventual implementation within the micro sphere.

'It was my job to drive it forward and develop in response to what the Welsh Government wanted' Catherine.

Each of the four advisors were pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Foundation Phase and each conveyed opinion that they had specific contributions to make, which would have a positive impact upon the production process. Celia signalled that the bottom-up partnership agenda was intended to produce positive rates of participation and create a shared culture of support for the pedagogy. Mary drew comparison between the curriculum currently embedded and what she recognised as a more innovative and attractive movement in early years' education. Through her experience of child-centred learning, Dawn proposed that the statutory sector would have to accommodate new strategies that were already fulfilled by the playgroup movement and finally, Catherine identified her role as instrumental to the transferring of knowledge from the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) to sites across the PRF. Although each advisor had different roles and responsibilities, their situated activity within the realms of preschool education can be described in terms of what Lave and Wenger (1991, p29) define as, 'legitimate peripheral participation'. As masters and producers of the newly developed pedagogy, the advisors would enable other newcomers to access and participate in the repertoire of knowledge and skills required to become part of the changing community of practice (CoP).

4.2. Influences, ideals and objectives

Having established how the advisors came to be involved in the initial stage of the curriculum's development, this section introduces concepts and contexts that the advisors recognised as relevant for inclusion.

Reflecting on the structure of early years' provision as it existed in Wales before the development of the Foundation Phase Celia, explained how the new curriculum would transform the existing framework.

'The context was such that it was inevitable that before Foundation Phase, the influence of schools and the National Curriculum was predominant. My recommendations were that we moved away from that and we started with the child from birth onwards and we had a continuum of the developing child and the child's needs' Celia.

Celia's account confirms how the devolvement of power from national to sub-national locations created an opportunity to deviate from the classified boundaries of the performance pedagogy and to align towards a more holistic, child-initiated trajectory. Having identified a gap in the provision of education in Wales for 3-7 year olds, the National Assembly for Wales recommended that the curriculum's design would be influenced by a grassroots, partnership, agenda (NAfW, 2003).

Mary explained why she felt there was a need for a change of approach to early years' education in Wales.

'Children in Wales were going to school younger and younger, but it wasn't having any impact on their outcomes. We asked, 'why are we going with formal education coming down top thrust when children on the continent and in Australia were doing better and not receiving concrete learning until they were seven and were streaks ahead of our children by the age of nine? There were a number of us at the time who thought until concrete learning, children don't need to learn in a concrete fashion. We thought we need to look at children's development their individual learning needs and not one size fits all. Children need to have experiential learning children need to try things out' Mary.

Mary's account illustrates how the official pedagogy was recognised and contrasted against other pedagogical models and theories. Mary cited '*Piaget and Vygotsky*' as having particular influence in the context of '*holistic child-development and scaffolding learning*' (Wadsworth 1996), to reiterate the emphasis placed on focusing (structuring) the pedagogy that Dawn had also identified. Both Mary and Celia spoke of their depth of experience in early years education and both referred to models, such as High Scope (Hohmann et al. 1979), that they were familiar with and recognised as compatible for inclusion to the new scheme. Celia explained how certain pedagogical discourses emerged and dominated during the development process.

'Of course a main influence was research. Well founded and documented research backed up by those working in the field over the last 30 years and more recently in the 1990s; Research supporting the idea of the importance of a curriculum based on a child investigating, exploring and being independent. High Scope, for example which was common in America and the Scandinavian countries had actually been drawn from best practice here when nursery education was the pride and joy of the UK back in the 1930's and 1950's. The High Scope curriculum showed that for every one dollar spent on high quality nursery education for under-fives then seven dollars could be saved on public services later. So the main objectives were to have a good quality preschool education that met the child's needs and enabled them to have the best opportunities to reach their potential' Celia.

While Celia intimated that the pedagogical discourses that were emerging as relevant for inclusion descended from preceding education epochs, the example of High Scope alluded to wider socio-economic issues and models of intervention. Although High Scope had been produced as a performative model in the 1950's and was reshaped to accommodate a more constructivist child-centred pedagogy in the 1960's (Hohmann et al. 1979), Celia and Mary recognised concepts and contexts that were relevant to the production of a radical and distinctive new curriculum. The National Assembly for Wales confirmed its intention to address social disadvantage in the 'Learning Country' document (NAfW 2001) in reference to its 'Flying Start' programme. The document also contained another overarching objective, to narrow the gap between the attainment levels of boys and girls (NAfW 2001, p19). The inclusion of these clauses made visible compensatory modes of learning that pertained towards social inequality and the underachievement of boys. Repositioning the pedagogy to include active and experiential learning required changes within the educational environment to accommodate new rates of participation.

Celia and Mary each conveyed depth of knowledge and experience pertaining to their careers in early years' education. Concepts and contexts which had been identified as emerging discourses, relating to social disadvantage and the value of a child-initiated learning, were mediated through knowledge and understanding that the two advisors had already acquired. This did not however detract from the pedagogical intention to produce a new curriculum and the two advisors provided a clear indication that they each maintained a keen interest in current research.

While the four advisors each conveyed knowledge pertaining to a shared discourse of preschool practice that they recognised from earlier in their careers, they were also proactive in their endorsement of global and governmental ideals and objectives that entered the pedagogical framework.

4.3. New modes of learning

This section explores pedagogical modalities that the advisors recognised as legitimate for appropriation and relevant to share.

In view of the need to structure the environment to promote different forms of engagement, new modes of learning were positioned in the pedagogical gap and recontextualised in

respect to their potential employment. As one of the twelve AWFPA representatives invited to visit the Reggio Emilia scheme in northern Italy, Catherine spoke enthusiastically about the design of the newly encountered space, *'a central piazza filled with natural light and surrounded by a series of interconnecting rooms'*. The open space, which enabled the free-flow of movement and contained the plentiful supply of good quality resources contrasted with the more formal and familiar table and chair configurations of the classrooms in Wales.

'I felt privileged that I had been invited to go to Reggio Emilia. We saw first-hand how the environment influenced the teaching, learning and experiences of children. We were doing all this years ago, but we didn't formalise it' Catherine.

Four of the Advisors stated that the experiential modes of learning being scrutinised for the delivery of the Foundation Phase corresponded closely to the child-centred ethos that existed earlier in their careers. Catherine's intimation that the previous British model had not been formalised, placed emphasis on the classification boundaries of the emerging pedagogic discourses. Equally, the investment made towards the AWFPA group visiting the Reggio Emilia environment to gain *'first-hand'* experience, confirmed the scheme's legitimate classification and subsequent inclusion in the construction of the new curriculum.

While the Reggio model was identified as having an effect on the design of the Foundation Phase learning environment, it offered no template for outdoor learning.

'Outdoor learning was never really a focus initially. The focus was creating an exciting, inviting learning environment that children would want to explore. Suddenly everyone was aware of Forest Schools' Celia.

The emergence of the Forest School initiative illustrates how new concepts and ideals entered the pedagogical gap and were recognised to have legitimate value for appropriation within the Foundation Phase at various levels of transmission. As head-teacher of a nursery school, Mary strongly advocated the benefits of outdoor learning as she described the development of provision in the nursery.

'We had been developing a Forest School at nursery and I noticed how the children relaxed more, learned more and were calmer than when they were inside. I was looking at children's physical development – until you get that sorted other areas of learning lag behind. It was not specified, but we had to consider how we would develop those areas. Our scheme was based on the High Scope model, so we were already set' Mary.

Recognising the advancing discourse of the Forest School, Mary was able to position the model as relevant for inclusion within the established nursery environment. As the pedagogy was *'not specified'*, the gap was recontextualised at micro level and in context to the reinstallation of the previously employed High Scope scheme. Through this recontextualising process, Mary identified underlying issues that influenced the positioning of the artefacts contained within the outdoor space.

'We found it difficult getting down to the children's level outdoors, so we included a bench so that we could get down and talk to the children. Storing equipment was a problem too. The nursery was on one of the poorest estates in Wales so it was important it was safe and that was another thing, getting the parents on board' Mary.

Mary's account illustrates how the micro environment of the nursery had to adapt in response to the wider socio/cultural habitus that extended beyond its perimeter. Having previously confirmed that her interest and subsequent participation in the construction of the new curriculum had been inspired by the publication of the *'Learning Country'* (NAfW 2001); Mary's mediation of the guidance materials involved a struggle to create and sustain outdoor provision within a locale of high socio-economic disadvantage. Mary also conveyed a notion of challenge in getting parents on board as promoted by the guidance (NAfW 2001, p15). According to Connolly and Haughton (2015), teachers' mediate forest school practice in accordance with what they perceive to be parental expectations. The study, which included thirty-seven participants, found that the perceptions about absence of risk associated with the increase of technology and imagined sedentary lifestyles, parental anxieties and overprotection, influenced the type of outdoor learning that the teachers' produced. Connolly and Haughton suggest that tensions underlying the mediation of risk assessments could potentially restrict the range of forest school provision that practitioners and institutions choose to undertake. While each of the four advisors had identified disparities between the non-maintained and statutory sectors, other pedagogical gaps were now beginning to emerge. Celia's intention, *'to integrate all types of provision'* through the development of the Foundation Phase, now revealed notions of struggle within the PRF pertaining to, high expenditure, social disadvantage and parental attitudes.

Each of the advisors' accounts signalled how themes and discourses that were emerging in the first phase of the curriculum's development were mediated through various processes. Catherine recontextualised the open spaces and the quality of resources available in northern Italy with the formal structuration of the classroom that she recognised to be representative of

settings in Wales. In contrast, Mary reshaped what Celia identified to be the rapid dissemination of the Forest School in context to previous practice aligned to the social interventionist model, High-Scope. Having identified problems associated with costs, maintaining equipment and encouraging parental involvement to facilitate outdoor play, Mary's account suggested that there were underlying tensions incorporating new discourses into localised and perhaps conflicting, cultural distinctions.

Mary, Celia and Catherine each identified new pedagogical modes that would reshape the preschool environment and influence teaching and learning. They also revealed potential barriers that would affect the dissemination of the curriculum at various sites within the PRF.

4.4. The transfer of knowledge across and within the pedagogical sites

This section examines how the advisors assisted the transformation of the pedagogy across and within various sites of the Pedagogical Recontextualising Field (PRF).

The Advisors explained how the production and dissemination processes were structured and each identified contributions that they had made to assist its transference from policy to practice.

Each Advisor participated in the series of working parties and contributed to the production of the curriculum. The Welsh Government requested nominations for these groups and each of the Advisors were representatives of their local authorities. Dawn and Mary were involved in the pilot scheme and their experiences informed the production process. Dawn described the pilot phase at the early stage of the pedagogy's development.

'When it started we had nothing. No one had the picture, no one knew what it looked like, we were all floundering so we all hid under our own little stone and worked out what was good. We were left to our own devices. What worked in the first year didn't necessarily work in the second year, so it was a continuum of little bite size chunks and see what you can do with it' Dawn.

'We had meetings inspections research we were exploring, experimenting and being evaluated at the same time. Of course, you wanted to be seen as doing it right, but there was no right way, so that was hard at that time. In hindsight, I think we could have more guidance or more time to debate, to see if it was working' Mary.

Both Dawn and Mary's accounts illustrate the relevance of time and space in the construction of the curriculum. Discourses identified as valid for inclusion during the initial production phase, such as the global pedagogical modalities, were mediated in context to other modes of

practice that emerged within the pilot process. Placing the new curriculum within the micro-sphere exposed a pedagogic gap and prompted new forms of recognition and recontextualisation. During the initial phase of the pilot scheme, the process of developing and trialling elements of the curriculum appeared piecemeal and disconnected. Rather than convey any sense of empowerment through the position of being, '*left to our own devices*', Dawn described the experience as '*floundering*'. Mary also alluded that the context of constructing the pedagogy within the setting was '*hard*' and signalled how the impact of surveillance from the upper and horizontal reaches of the education system influenced pedagogical practice '*to be seen as doing it right*'. While the construction of the pedagogy within the micro-sphere appears fragmented and distant from the cohesive partnership ethos the initial phase of production had intended to cultivate, the advisors still maintained that they had gained value from working in collaboration towards a shared ideal.

In contrast to the fragmentation identified in the micro-spheres of the schools and settings, the partnership agenda of the four Advisors, appeared sustained. Catherine explained how her early teaching career had influenced her opposition to the formal teaching of three-year olds and that the new pedagogy produced positive rates of cohesion. Recognising the value of the collaborative ethos she had encountered through her work with AWFPA and within the various working parties, Catherine identified a coherent and productive community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991).

'We worked together with the neighbouring authorities and did a lot of joint visits to each other's settings. It was useful to share concerns and challenges' Catherine.

Further confirmation of the existence of a cohesive and collaborative CoP operating at a different level to the one identified within the micro-sphere emerged through Dawn's account, as a member of one of the working parties. Dawn identified her position within the production site as being effectual to the sharing of knowledge she recognised as relevant to impart. First, in respect to the child-centred focus of the new curriculum, Dawn felt well placed to share the '*ethos already captured by the playgroup movement*'.

'We were already there. We were already doing child-initiated learning to an extent so it gave us more credence. I was fortunate to be invited to all the documentation meetings. There was a broad range of experience and everyone's views were relevant. I felt valued and made good contacts. It was good to visit different schools and network' Dawn .

Dawn's inclusion in the production process granted her access to knowledge, as the official Foundation Phase pedagogy began to transpire. Although it seemed that the grassroots agenda generated efficacy for those involved in the policy process, levels of stratification within the PRF were beginning to emerge. Advisors maintained positions in specific knowledge domains and as such, each retained different roles and responsibilities. Catherine had described herself as '*privileged*' to be included on the visit to northern Italy to gain '*first-hand*' experience of the Reggio Emilia model, so was aware of a sense of authorisation. Catherine explained how she and some of the AWFPA representatives disseminated the pedagogical model on their return to Wales.

'There was no textbook and we needed to share the ethos. We had good advisory teachers working with us who had not been able to go. When we returned we took them to an Italian restaurant and delivered a slide presentation on what we had seen. The square outside the restaurant was similar to the central piazza' Catherine.

Catherine's account illustrates the dissemination process between horizontal and vertical domains. As Catherine had gained direct access to the pedagogic model the Welsh Government had appropriated as legitimate for inclusion in the Foundation Phase, Catherine was able to distribute knowledge and increase rates of participation. Through the recontextualisation process, Catherine identifies the various culturally symbolic cues instantiated to assist levels of mediation in support of the Italian scheme. Without the verification of the '*textbook*' and the symbolic distance between sites, Catherine's example illustrates her autonomy to disseminate knowledge within the PRF. She also signposts how the relocation and reshaping of the pedagogy is made explicit to those deemed relevant for entry to the scheme. Given the disparities that Mary and Dawn had identified in relation to the ad-hoc (self-help) production process and notions of surveillance, there was evidence to suggest that the advisors' experienced variable rates of inclusion to the partnership bond, designed to assist integration. Although Dawn confirmed that she felt valued with the contribution she made to the policy process, both she and Mary indicated that their experiences were more vulnerable and fragmented. In contrast, Catherine identified a strong and coherent discourse of integration, working closely with the neighbouring local authorities.

Each of the advisors had contributed to the recontextualisation of the pedagogy as it transferred across sites within the PRF. However, the gap and division of labour between

agents and agencies suggested that the process of integration was far more complex than the shared ethos of the Foundation Phase appeared to imply.

4.5. Competing pedagogical modalities

In view of the potential gap that the previous section identified, as knowledge transferred across the PRF, this section details how the advisors recognised competing pedagogical distinctions.

Each of the four advisors had been actively involved in the drafting and redrafting of the Foundation Phase guidance materials during the production process. Throughout the construction period both the non-maintained and statutory sectors sought reclassification of terms and concepts contained within the pedagogical framework. Details of these concerns were confirmed later with the publication of the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase (MEEIFP) report (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2006). Findings from the MEEIFP resulted in the reconfiguration of the final seven Areas of Learning (AoLs) and generated the appointment of a para-professional tier of advisors, as previously detailed in chapter 1:1.7. Dawn described how the reclassification of the skills framework challenged concepts and contexts contained within the statutory sector.

'The National Curriculum was based on skills then the whole principle was turned on its head. Holistically, not all children are going to produce these skills. Teachers had to be taught how to observe the children. Skills were identified before the curriculum had been finalised it should have been the reverse' Dawn.

Dawn alluded to variations of practice that affected the dissemination process and created tension within the statutory sphere. Mary also identified tension in a range of schools accommodating not only the new skills framework, but also their ability to ameliorate and incorporate new modes of provision. Mary explained how the impact of Continuous, Enhanced and Focused modes of learning required greater dexterity on the part of the practitioner and flexibility within the environment.

'Instead of asking, 'How can we teach about maths using Dinosaurs?'' they needed to know the skills they were looking for. In the laissez-faire days of the 1970s and 80s the focus was on the topic not the assessment. Now things were planned to focus on the child's interest in a more structured way. Focusing on the skill and not the activity created a lot of debate' Mary.

All four Advisors were well versed in the ethos and typology of the Continuous, Enhanced and Focused framework that had been structured to enable children to explore and practice

skills (Welsh Government Module 4 2008). In this context, the practitioner occupies the supporting role of observer and facilitator, guiding the child's learning in response to what the practitioner has observed previously. As a result, the material culture of the setting had to be adapted to accommodate the emerging pedagogical practices, so the model incorporated a range of cues to assist the positioning of artefacts and practical activities. Having already achieved a depth of understanding of the advancing pedagogy, Mary and Dawn were able to draw comparisons with other modes of learning and identify patterns of variation and resistance.

Although evidence suggested that both the non-maintained and the statutory sectors had experienced problems interpreting the curriculum, as confirmed by findings of the MEEIFP report, Mary and Dawn each identified struggles within the statutory sector. For Dawn, the onus on a child-initiated approach to learning was recontextualised as problematic for teachers who she recognised to be, situated within a performance culture of instruction and assessment. Dawn questioned the teachers' ability to read the child holistically and reaffirmed what she identified as salient child-initiated pedagogical practice. Mary also identified concerns regarding the statutory sector's ability to observe children effectively, but this time the onus was on structuring provision to facilitate learning in relation to the child's interests and needs. Through their recontextualisation of the pedagogy, the two advisors identified the struggle of reshaping the embedded performance modalities of schools with the play-based discourse disseminating from the State. Mary recognised the Foundation Phase as weakly framed, but argued that the practitioner required proficiency to identify skills, so that all that the child exteriorised could be addressed (Bernstein 1975). Dawn intimated that teachers required the skills to observe. Dawn also maintained a clear distinction between what she recognised to be the strong, adult directed discourse of the school and the more holistic, child-initiated approach adopted by the non-maintained sector. While both practitioners recognised the variation between the formal and competence-based modalities, their interpretation of the latter signalled variations between modes of pedagogy and approaches to teaching. If the State intended to create a balance between child-initiated and adult-directed learning through the production of the Foundation Phase (WAG, 2008), the advisors' accounts suggested that the practitioners' conceptualisations of the various modes of performance, competency and child-centred pedagogies would be open to interpretation.

With the relocation and reshaping of the new curriculum, the advisors identified the difficulties of integrating and transforming traditional fields of practice, with new pedagogical modalities

4.6. Variations of ideals and intent

Each of the Advisors' accounts revealed how sites within the PRF are able to reproduce, or reshape what the State recognised to be a legitimate pedagogical discourse.

The Welsh Government appointed an additional tier of Advisors to assist the dissemination process. Each of the twenty-two local authorities across Wales appointed a Training and Support Officers (TSO's) to train practitioners in both the statutory and non-maintained sectors. Although the appointment of the TSO's was intended to create greater consistency, it would seem that the production of the official pedagogical guidance was open to interpretation. Catherine explained how the regional authorities adapted training based on the models they had visited *'to suit their own needs'*. Catherine emphasised the challenge she had identified locally.

'We had to train staff – early years' nursery and reception and roll-out year's 1 and 2. The non-maintained involved a delivery challenge; so many courses. We had to produce documentation, adapt training. We'd hold courses in the evening, then once a term we would deliver a specific Foundation Phase related theme' Catherine.

Catherine's concern of having to facilitate high volumes of training for the non-maintained practitioners contrasted with the opinion put forward by Dawn, that a play-based and experiential discourse had long been established within the sector. By recognising specific training requirements to assist the levels of understanding within the statutory and non-maintained schools/settings, the two advisors also conveyed classified distinctions between the two sectors. With their assertion of the distinctiveness of these pedagogical spheres, the advisors' revealed concepts of insulation and boundary maintenance that worked to impede the transfer of knowledge across these domains.

Dawn explained how the variations she had identified between the two sectors generated disparities in respect to realising and accommodating the pedagogy as the scheme rolled out. Reflecting on the focus generated towards outdoor learning, Dawn described how the repositioning of the curriculum would affect settings and schools.

'Outdoor provision was the biggest hurdle for schools, teachers having to be outside in all weathers. We are lucky, we've got an outdoor space we can use all year round. We are continually assessing what we can do outdoors. When we approached the committee of the hall they agreed to free access, so we can have free-flow between the indoors and outside, but how could you sustain parity with resources? We didn't know how much to budget for staff and resources in the pilot, the bulk went to the school. We did fundraising and begged and borrowed. The fencing was donated and the sand pit was donated' Dawn.

Dawn's account provides an insight into the various tensions that emerged in respect to positioning outdoor learning within the existing pedagogical framework. First, she identifies conflict between the habitus of the school and the cultural shift entailed by teachers working outside (Maynard et al. 2013). Then, placing the pedagogic gap in the context of the hall that accommodates her playgroup, Dawn explained how the concept of outdoor learning was recontextualised through negotiation and then positioned through the regulative function of the community hall's committee. Finally, in reference to the self-help, piecemeal acquisition of resources to facilitate the new mode of learning she identifies economic disparities between the two sectors.

The sudden pursuit towards outdoor learning that Celia had identified in the first phase of the construction of the pedagogy, maintained its pace of execution across the various fields of production. While Dawn identified challenges within the micro-sphere, Catherine's account focused on the Welsh Government's Foundation Phase conferences, structured to disseminate the ethos of the Foundation Phase top-down.

'The WAG conferences and initiatives were fantastic. It was particularly important that boys have access to outdoors so it was important to have the trigger to go on a course and see. Yes, we've got indoor space but it is important to have free-flow. Outdoor learning was not seen as the prime focus in Wales, but it has been absolutely fantastic. You have got everything there – you don't need masses of space so it is no good saying you can't do it, you can. We've probably progressed further than Italy' Catherine.

The official classification of outdoor learning generated new forms of specialism and Mary, Catherine and Dawn positioned *'Forest Schools'* and *'Learning through Landscapes'* as the instrumental interlocutors within the pedagogical space. Catherine also signalled how the Welsh Government had produced conferences to promote what it recognised as a legitimate discourse of outdoor play. Catherine's disclosure that boys in particular benefitted from the outside space, signalled to wider political intentions identified with regard to the underachievement of boys, but in light of the disparities Mary and Dawn had identified trying

to facilitate outdoor provision, it was difficult envisage what the State intended to achieve. As there is no explicit message to confirm interventionist strategies that the National Assembly for Wales (2001, p19) had identified to address social disadvantage and what was seen as a widening attainment gap between boys and girls, modes of pedagogy were re-adapted. Consequently, the advisors reverted to previous modes of pedagogical theory and practice they had known and/or relocated and reshaped new schemes, to accommodate these other competing discourses.

Through their interpretation of the pedagogic discourse relating to outdoor play, the advisors conveyed notions of insulation and boundary maintenance between the statutory and non-statutory sectors. They also disclose variations in the way the pedagogy is mediated and appear to confirm that principles of self-help, generated in the 1960's when the playgroup movement first emerged, were still required to facilitate outdoor play provision in response to wider policy directives, pertaining to gaps in educational attainment.

4.7. Reflections on the impact of time and space

As the semi-structured interviews had been designed to enable the Advisors to look retrospectively at the production of the Foundation Phase, the final question prompted them to describe the ethos of the Foundation Phase as it appeared in 2012, four years after the official roll out.

First, the Advisors maintained a united stance focusing on the delivery of a child-centred pedagogy. Rather than confirm that the implementation phase was complete, they each identified areas of investment and opportunities for further growth and development.

'We've still got a number of people to bring on board. We've still got staff that need support and investment' Catherine.

Mary explained how challenges remained within the statutory sector where the concept of play remained an obstacle.

'Play was the vehicle and everyone was on board at nursery level, but some head-teachers are not convinced children learn through play, they believe they need to sit down and be taught, particularly in junior schools, we need to sit them down and write' Mary.

According to Dawn, the insulation of domains and classification of boundaries in response to what she interpreted to be, the official pedagogy of schools, appeared to create division

between the statutory and non-statutory sectors. Dawn suggested that the statutory sector were less scrutinised, because of their ability to maintain distinctive knowledge boundaries. Dawn placed her argument in reference to the para-professional tier of teaching advisors who supported the two sectors with the delivery of the Foundation Phase.

'Advisory teachers' expectations differ between us and the expectations they have for schools. Schools don't have to prove their worth' Dawn.

Despite this level of assistance, Dawn also managed to convey a sense of autonomy in respect to influencing the delivery and structure of the curriculum.

'I tend to do my own thing, I look for new initiatives, new research, it all impacts day to day' Dawn.

For Celia, the roll out of the Foundation Phase had incurred *'huge funding and training implications'* but in respect to the employment of distinctive quality, child-centred scheme for 3-7 year olds she described the outcome as favourable.

'The ethos was one of commitment, enthusiasm, interest, certainly on the part of those involved within early years. I think it was convincing others who worked in the school system that the Foundation Phase was going to be beneficial and until the outcomes are known I think, again, there are so many initiatives coming out along in parallel. Sometimes it is the lack of joined-up thinking prevents things from being as hugely successful as they might have been. The Foundation Phase has certainly been well received not only in Wales, but admired elsewhere, but again we are moving back and looking at results again, results of secondary school children that don't include children that have experienced the Foundation Phase' Celia.

Although she identified challenges for settings and schools, Celia seemed resolute that the ethos of the Foundation Phase would be maintained.

'Not all settings are able to provide the same opportunities, but if their context is the same, if the curriculum and aims are the same they can be achieved in different ways. The learning environment itself is important, the ethos, the resources, the pedagogy and the approach of the staff is crucial in making the environment work' Celia.

Each of the four advisors provided a unique stance from which to explore the development of the curriculum. While Celia evaluated that the Foundation Phase had been well received and intimated that it had achieved what the Welsh Government had initially intended (for the pedagogy to be recognised as distinct), she also suggested that other competing initiatives had impacted upon its success. Similarly, rather than convey a notion of integration the other

advisors also identified commonalities such as, resistance to training, schools reverting to formalised methods and global comparisons of outcomes with other nations, which they recognised as detrimental to what was yet to be firmly established. Dawn's assertion, '*to do my own thing*', also implied that sites within the PRF remained segregated and autonomous. The capacity of the advisors to reshape the pedagogy in relation to new themes and discourses signalled that the pedagogy was open to interpretation. There was also evidence that without explicit guidance, or clear modes of delivery, that previously held values and experiences influenced the construction process.

All four advisors recognised that the curriculum was continuing to evolve and would potentially be relocated, reshaped and reinterpreted in the future.

4.8. Findings summary

The four advisors retrospectively charted the Foundation Phase's development from its origin within the State, to the more localised sites of production where they had each participated. They also revealed variations in the way the Foundation Phase had been mediated and reshaped, as it transferred between sites within the PRF.

Having generated autonomy for agents and agencies to influence the pedagogy through a grassroots agenda, Celia assumed that the integration of the non-maintained and the statutory sectors would meet the same aims in relation to the needs of the child. What transpired through the various accounts was the difficulty in establishing shared aims, when other competing themes and discourses entered the gap, both between and within sites. Concepts and contexts, such as the American interventionist model, High Scope, were recontextualised with the intention to bridge the gap, created by the lack of guidance provision to address social disadvantage. The capacity of advisors to draw from knowledge and experience already achieved, revealed different levels of consciousness and understanding. Alternatively, discourses that emerged as legitimate models to reproduce, such as Reggio Emilia and the advancing movement in favour of outdoor play, were not simply reproduced, or accommodated.

The advisors' identified disparities, not only between the transfer of global discourses, but also, with the reshaping of practice within the statutory and non-maintained sectors. Mary and Dawn recognised the reclassification of the skills framework (WAG, 2008) to be a challenge for the performance culture of schools, where assessment of the child focused on

results and not observations. The two advisors interpretation of the skills framework also implied different meanings in relation to the reading of the child. Mary (statutory sector) had argued that practitioners needed to know what skills they were looking for, in order to identify and support what the child produced. In contrast, the other advisor, Dawn (non-maintained sector) intimated that the range of what the child had potential to produce would be inhibited by the narrow assessment of skills. Both Mary and Dawn's interviews created insight of the relocating, reshaping processes that occurred within the setting and school. Mary and Dawn each identified more pragmatic, hands-on experiences, to suggest that the development of the curriculum was based on piecemeal trial and error experiences, which required initiative and self-help. Concepts and contexts they each identified during the pilot scheme, suggested notions of isolation, surveillance and ambiguity, which contrasted with the strong insulation that Catherine projected, working in partnership with the other local authorities.

Although there had been a clear intention to encourage wider breadth of participation, through the joint enterprise (Wenger 1998) of partnership towards non-maintained and statutory integration, the production of the official curriculum remained influenced predominantly by the State. Agents and agencies employed to oversee the transference of the pedagogy between and across the ORF and PRF (as detailed in Figure 2.3, p21) had been granted autonomy to regulate the discourse by implicit and explicit means (Bernstein 1996, 2001). Government advisory bodies Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Aseu Cymru/Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) and later, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) oversaw the production of the official guidance materials. Local Education Authorities produced training and paraprofessional support in conjunction with leading governmental objectives and Estyn maintained capacity to influence production and practice with the publication of thematic reports, pertaining to the expectations of quality and standards identified through inspections.

4.9. Summary

Interviews with the four advisors created insight of the development of the Foundation Phase during the initial stage of the policy process. Each advisor conveyed knowledge about the various contributions they were able to make to assist the curriculum's production. Although, there was evidence to suggest that the advisors' recognised the production of the Foundation Phase to be a reproduction of what had existed earlier in their careers, their individual experiences did not appear to reflect an homogenous community of practice. The

stratification of roles and responsibilities contained within the PRF conveyed notions of segregation, inconsistencies and resistance, which signalled that the transformation process was not linear. These findings will be used to cross reference similar or contrasting examples that emerge in the empirical chapters 5 and 6 where practitioners and the children's recontextualisation of spaces and the material culture of the pedagogy will be explored.

Chapter 5

Recognition and realisation rules within the three preschool sites

5. Introduction

This chapter investigates how the early years' practitioners recontextualised the Foundation Phase curriculum within each of three the preschool settings. Observations, field notes, informal and formal interviews, were used to explore how practitioners interpreted the Foundation Phase guidance and how they instantiated the curriculum in their everyday practice. Through the administration of a favourites task, which had been designed to elicit children's understandings of the curriculum, the practitioners' accounts provide further insight of the spatial contexts and material culture produced in the three settings. By reflecting on their own interpretations of the pedagogy, other concepts and contexts that shaped the instantiation of the curriculum also emerged and the chapter investigates discourses and intentions that the practitioners' identified.

5.1. The twelve practitioners

Four practitioners from each of the settings volunteered to be interviewed and pseudonyms have been applied to protect identities.

Quarry Lane

Jen, the playgroup's leader, works at the setting with four members of staff who attend on a regular basis and one additional practitioner who covers, as required. Jen and her colleagues request that the children call them by their first name and precede this with the title, 'Aunty'. For the purpose of the following account on the tasks, only the four practitioners' pseudonyms: Jen, Linda, Elaine and Pam will be applied.

Meadow Rise

Gill, a former primary school teacher, has managed the playgroup for a number of years. Children address the practitioners by their first names and they were easily identifiable as they each wore polo shirts with the playgroup's logo embossed on the front. Gill, her deputy Teresa and the other two practitioners, Michelle and Sandra (all pseudonyms) volunteered to participate with the research tasks, having expressed an interest to know what the children had been engaged with and were enthusiastic to learn more.

River bank

Mrs Shore, the head-teacher at Riverbank was hesitant when the researcher asked if she would permit four members of staff to participate in the study. Mrs Shore expressed concern that the research tasks would impinge on each of the practitioner's time, but later agreed that Mrs Drew and Miss Thomas could participate after they had chaperoned the children who were already included in the study. On completion of the activities by the first two practitioners, both the nursery's deputy, Miss Price and another teacher Miss Ellis also volunteered for the study.

5.2. The practitioners' interviews

Interviews, with the twelve practitioners' evolved after the pilot study, when practitioners at Meadow Rise expressed an interest to see the instruments produced for the children's tasks. These tasks were presented as one-to-one interviews, which the practitioners were willing to undertake. During the interviews, practitioners were asked to look at ten pictures of the artefacts, objects and spatial contexts that had been produced in each of the three settings. Each practitioner was asked to create groups from the ten pictures they recognised as, '*things that went together*'. Once the practitioner was satisfied with the various compilation/s of pictures, she had created, she was asked to explain why the pictures went together and her justifications were recorded both digitally and in writing.

In a further part of the interview, practitioners were asked to place the ten pictures in rank order, placing those they felt were most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. Next, practitioners were asked to place the pictures in rank order according to what they recognised to be the children's preferences. They did this, by placing their selections of highest preferences in descending order from 10 highest-1 lowest and those identified as the lowest in ascending order from 1 lowest -10 highest to reflect what the children liked the most and what they liked the least (Appendix 7). Finally, they were explicitly asked to talk about which of the pictures were most important for the delivery of the Foundation Phase curriculum.

Four practitioners from each of three settings were interviewed this way. Three groups of ten pictures were created to represent areas and artefacts that had been produced within each of the three settings. Each practitioner was presented with the ten pictures from their setting, so that they were able to respond to aspects of the indoor and outdoor spaces that they were

familiar with and possibly had helped to design. In order to achieve an explicit interpretation of the way practitioners recontextualised and instantiated the pedagogy, in each of the three settings, a short series of tasks were employed, to elicit depth of explanations.

5.2.1. Practitioners' hierarchal ranking tasks

The hierarchal ranking task was designed for the practitioners to rank the ten pictures in order of importance. First, according to what they individually perceived to be important provision to have available, then, in order of what they recognised to be the children's preferences and finally, what they understood to be important for the delivery of the Foundation Phase. Divided into three separate tasks to reflect the differences between categories, the practitioners placed their selections in ranking order on an imaginary grid and scores were awarded in descending and ascending order of placement, as detailed in Chapter 3 (3.3.7.) Findings from the practitioners' interviews and the results of the hierarchal ranking tasks are examined in detail, according to each setting.

5.3. Quarry Lane: Practitioners' interviews

The four practitioners at Quarry Lane created a variety of groups, from the ten pictures they recognised as, *'things that went together'*. Elaine and Jen made a distinction between outdoor and indoor environments, to justify the positioning of the pictures, while Pam and Linda described the outdoor areas, as important to promote *'physical'* and *'gross motor skills'*.

'It's important to build muscles. Parents aren't keen for their children to experience rough and tumble or take risks, so this area is important' Linda (Quarry Lane).

Linda first identified the outdoor space to be beneficial for children's physical development. Linda went on to explain, how the outdoor provision offered children alternative experiences, to the ones they encountered in the company of their parents. Rather, than imbue a sense of disengagement, that the Advisors had identified, when they expressed concerns about, *'getting parents on board'* (Chapter 4, 4.3), Linda implied alternative meanings. Notions of risk-taking and rough and tumble play were mediated in context to parental anxiety, control and surveillance. During the full duration of the study, there was no access to the outdoor spaces. Although, there was provision to accommodate physical play at the far end of the hall, there were no examples to confirm the type of risks, or rough and tumble play that the children might have engaged in.

Quarry Lane playgroup occupies a large community hall, as detailed in chapter 3 and the open space is informally divided two-thirds of the way down to accommodate physical play.

As this physical play area was not representative of all three settings, it was not included as one of the ten pictures selected as relevant for the study. In addition, practitioners at Quarry Lane did not refer to this internal space, as being alternative provision to the areas represented in the three outdoor pictures. At the other end of the hall, the space was filled with a variety of table and floor based activities, together with themed areas, such as the book and home-corners and creative play, which also incorporated the painting easel. The division of space between the two ends of the hall and the positioning of provision, created a visible juxtapose. At one end of the room, there was a clustering of tables, floor activities and themed areas, which the children had to navigate around. At the other end of the hall the space was relatively open to create access and movement around the physical play activities (Figure 3.7.2.). As all the spaces and activities that the practitioners' had produced to deliver the Foundation Phase were sited within this large room, the practitioners were able maintain surveillance of the areas throughout the session.

Practitioners at Quarry Lane, each combined the home-corner with the small-world provision and labelled the areas as, *'imaginative play'*. In addition to recognising these spaces to be child-initiated provision, Linda said that the areas, *'extended role play'* and Pam felt that two spaces, *'created valuable opportunities for children to interact.'*

When the practitioners at Quarry Lane were asked to group the pictures in a different way to the combinations they had created before, they appeared more hesitant and took time to make their selections. Linda, Elaine and Jen combined, outdoor picture 1 with the construction blocks.

'We can put anything outside...we can take story time outside. We are doing the 'Three Bears' at the moment so we will take the bears out and hide them in the tyres for the children to find. With maths, we can count the tyres. We also take role play outside, weather permitting'. Elaine (Quarry Lane).

Although, there had been no evidence to confirm how the outside spaces were utilised during the study, Elaine suggested that the outdoor provision served to extend activities, that the children had access to indoors. Using the examples of storytelling and maths, Elaine identified alternative pedagogical intentions, to the physical play activities previously associated with outdoor spaces. When asked why the area was not available, Elaine, first suggested the weather had an impact on rates of access and then quietly stated, *'Perhaps because you're here?'* While it had been the researcher's intention to remain unobtrusive, it

was important to reflect on the practitioner’s perception of accommodating the study and the influence this might have on the usual, day-to-day rituals and routine.

Jen, also combined outdoor pictures 1 and 2 with the construction blocks, but was more hesitant to convey why the pairing was compatible and the task appeared to induce a more deliberated stance.

‘I am not happy with these groups. I am struggling to say why I have put them together. The outside space is very dull and boring, so I am struggling with what I am able to put in the area’. Jen (Quarry Lane).

The three outdoor images presented a challenge for Linda and Jen and their justifications suggested that they disconnected these spaces and artefacts from what was produced inside the hall.

With their combination of the third and final group, which brought together the writing and painting areas, the practitioners made a clear distinction, that these, ‘*Creative, messy play and mark-making*’ activities, were child-initiated, rather than adult-led pursuits.

The first series of interviews at Quarry Lane revealed that the practitioners’ recontextualised the spaces and material culture of the setting in relation to, physical, social, creative, imaginative and child-initiated forms of pedagogical intention. There was also some suggestion of ambiguity in response to the outdoor pictures, which implied that the indoor and outdoor sites were recontextualised differently by practitioners, in their production of the curriculum.

5.3.1 Quarry Lane: Practitioners’ rankings in order of importance

Areas ranked in order of:	Home-Corner.	Writing Station.	Construction	Book-Corner	Painting	Outdoor 1	Outdoor 2	Outdoor 3	Puzzles	Small World
Task 1 Individually perceived Importance	27	9	16	32	23	28	27	26	12	20
Task 2. Children’s Preferences	31	9	16	15	24	32	32	32	7	22
Task 3. Delivering the Foundation Phase curriculum	19	24	19	30	13	27	29	28	17	14

Table 5.3.1 Quarry Lane: Practitioners’ results of hierarchal ranking tasks, N 4 practitioners.

The book-corner, which each of the practitioners' referred to as *'the mat'*, emerged as the area rated highest, in terms of what they felt to be important, as illustrated in Table 5.3.1. This area not only functioned as a book-corner as Linda, Pam and Jen each suggested that the space was used to support more formalised modes of pedagogy. The mat was regarded as a place where competencies associated with co-operation, language acquisition and emotional development could be enhanced. Observations revealed that the children would gather collectively on the mat for registration, stories, singing and to receive instruction, at various stages throughout the session. During the study, the instructional sessions encompassed learning colours, counting and observing rules that were also visually displayed as, *'Good looking, good listening and good sitting'*.

'The mat is important because I don't think the child will get to this stage without having that stage (Jen points, first to the image of the writing station and then to the mat). 'We are sitting on the mat and it's a lot for a child and you know I am not expecting them to sit for more than a couple of minutes, but unless they learn how to sit and listen and follow instructions, to learn to share and take turns, to learn to express themselves, they won't be ready to sit and do colouring, mark-making'. Jen (Quarry Lane).

Through Jen's instantiation of the mat, meanings that contributed to a more formalised pedagogical orientation were substantiated in a more controlled and directive notion of child development. Stages of development were mediated in context to the child progressing through the areas of the pedagogy that the practitioners at Quarry Lane had produced and were able to direct.

5.3.2. Quarry Lane: Practitioners' rankings in order of children's preferences

Outdoor play achieved the highest frequency rating in terms of what the practitioners' recognised, as the children's preferred space. Elaine emphasised how the children, *'loved to play outside, when they had the chance'*.

'They love going out, they absolutely adore this'. Elaine (Quarry Lane)

The home-corner, also received high appraisal and Pam reaffirmed the opinions expressed in the first task, that the area generated social skills and extended role-play.

*'Children enjoy socialising in this area and copying their mums and dads'.
Pam (Quarry Lane)*

Although practitioners had identified the writing area and the painting easel to be child-initiated and creative activities in the first series of interviews, the positioning of the images

to reflect the preference of the child revealed some variation in relation to the writing provision.

'Unless there is an adult there (Pam points to the image of the writing station) they won't bother. They may go and empty pencils on the floor or open the drawers, but other than that, they won't bother'. Pam (Quarry Lane)

Although, the space was clearly defined and children had access to a range of mark-making materials (as represented by the Foundation Phase's model of continuous provision p 21), the type of active engagement the practitioner described, once again placed onus on the adult's role, to monitor and influence what was produced.

Pam also identified the small-world area and noted how boys were drawn to the space, whenever the toy cars and trains were made available. In contrast, the practitioners' identified the puzzles' table to be the least popular area for boys and girls alike.

5.3.3. Quarry Lane: Practitioners' rankings in order of importance to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum

All four practitioners reaffirmed the justifications made previously when they ranked the mat (book-corner) in order of importance. Three of the four practitioners' identified the mat to be integral part of the playgroup and confirmed it as relevant fixture for delivery of the Foundation Phase.

'Obviously it (the mat) is the starting point, without children's language or concentration, nothing else can be achieved'. Linda (Quarry Lane)

The focus of instruction, was not only seen to benefit levels of participation in the other areas of the setting, it was also perceived to have a positive effect, by assisting the child's transition to school. Rather, than convey a notion of that the local school would have produced a non-traditional pedagogy to accommodate the Foundation Phase, the practitioners appeared to suggest that the instructional discourse would assist a continuum of learning beyond the setting.

'Learning to sit down and listening is important. What is really important is they have to do this when they go to school'. Pam (Quarry Lane)

Practitioners' explained that the outdoor pictures reflected the curriculum's ethos and outdoor training they had received. Jen and Linda explained how the Foundation Phase training and

support had recently changed and there was greater emphasis towards the delivery of numeracy and literacy skills. This shift of emphasis was also reflected in the placing of writing and puzzle images, which the practitioners' identified as maths, as these pictures now achieved higher scores, than had been awarded previously.

'All the courses I have been on they have drummed into us the importance of maths and literacy. Maths is important, but where would I put painting and the home-corner, because I am looking more at education now'. Jen (Quarry Lane)

'Maths is important, but there are other more fun ways of learning maths, recognise shapes and numbers. I am old fashioned, I see these as the set areas (Linda taps her finger back and forth across the writing and puzzle images) you need to get a good job and good quality of life' Linda (Quarry Lane)

Jen and Linda revealed some variation in relation to the positioning of maths within the setting. Jen questioned the production of areas she recognised to be, child-initiated spaces, when the training and guidance she had received, appeared to promote an alternative and formalised, educational discourse. Linda, also recontextualised the drive towards literacy and numeracy as being different to the play-based provision currently installed. Linda mediated the maths and literacy discourse, transcending from the training, to be narrow in range of approach. Linda also placed value on the two subjects' inclusion and created linkage between the pedagogy and the children's social mobility.

The second series of interviews, with the practitioners at Quarry Lane, created insight towards their recontextualisation of the pedagogy in response to the three tasks. The practitioners' instantiation of the curriculum appeared mutually agreed in relation to the instructional discourse of the mat and preparing children for entry to school. There also seemed to be an element of tension, to suggest that the practitioners questioned what they produced in response to concepts and contexts of the Foundation Phase that they had previously instantiated. Positioning their interpretation of the curriculum in context to what they recognised to be a salient and legitimate discourse on maths and literacy that had recently emerged from the State, created a sense of ambiguity.

5.3.4. Summary of the interviews with practitioners at Quarry Lane

While there was a clear pedagogical intention to reproduce what the practitioners' recognised as the curriculum's continuous provision, their justifications in the interviews conveyed

alternative themes and discourses that shaped their instantiation of the pedagogy. By creating provision for physical play within the confines of the main-hall, practitioners were able to minimise the deployment of staff between outside and inside spaces and observe all aspects of the children's engagement. They placed value on the using outdoor play, but their appraisal of the area suggested that access was restricted. The outdoor pictures also revealed a level of ambiguity and underlying tensions. For Jen, what had once been produced in the outside space, now appeared visually disconnected and her capacity to recontextualise the area as part of the everyday provision seemed restrained. Although they intimated that the outdoor space offered an alternative discourse to the one transmitted from home, it was difficult to ascertain how the management of outdoor spaces would vary in terms of surveillance. Without evidence to suggest how the outdoor spaces were utilised, questions arose as to whether issues regarding challenges and risk taking extended beyond parental concerns (Little et al. 2011; Connolly and Haughton 2015).

In view of their recently acquired 'Flying Start' status and additional level of responsibility they had undertaken to accommodate children from the age of two, it appeared that the setting was going through a phase of transition. Although the practitioners' made reference to child-initiated learning and identified spaces and material culture that the children used as stimuli for creative, imaginative and social play, the reshaping of the Foundation Phase also included a more visible instructional modality. In reference to recent changes aligned to the repositioning of literacy and numeracy within the pedagogical framework, it was unclear if this would reaffirm the directive stance already undertaken. In view of their recent changes to accommodate, 'Flying Start', the production of the curriculum at the time of the study, appeared to convey tensions. A collision of discourses, pertaining to different, but similar, trajectories of care and education, may also have been recontextualised in relation to subjective anxieties (Palmer 2009). While their personas, as "Aunties", conveyed notions of attachment and extended family membership (Moss 2006), the practitioners at Quarry Lane appeared to mediate their role, as the bridge between home and school.

5.4. Meadow Rise. Practitioners' interviews

Three distinct groups emerged when the practitioners looked to find pictures that went together. The first group consisted of the three outdoor spaces, but the practitioners' differentiated between them, by identifying spaces and artefacts they recontextualised as

relevant to produce. Holding up the image of the plastic playhouse in outside picture 2 the playgroup deputy, Teresa said, *'That doesn't look very inviting, does it?'*

Each of the practitioners' categorised the three different groups they created in the context of skills. Outdoor pictures 1, 3 and 2 were defined as *'Physical, gross motor skills'*; Writing and painting as *'Creative and fine motor skills'* and the home-corner and small-world *'Social skills'*.

Michelle divided the indoor space into two areas, describing the first large group as, *'imaginative and creative'* and the second, *'books and puzzles'*.

'Reading and puzzles, they're on their own, I am all for education. Reading is important and access to books. I love reading and puzzles are really important for hand-eye coordination' Michelle (Meadow Rise).

Michelle recontextualised the books and puzzles as having educational value. Areas that the practitioners instantiated as having clear pedagogical intentions, were visibly labelled. The book-corner was marked with a corresponding sign, as if to signal the type of engagement that occurred there. A table displaying a large abacus, maths books, weighing scales and various small plastic toys and brightly coloured cups to be used as a sorting game, was also distinctly labelled, *'Maths'*. Although this area was not included in the ten pictures, the researcher noted, during observations of the indoor space, that the children did not access, or engage with this display. Signage to confirm the significance of performative modes of practice, such as maths and literacy, had little meaning to convey to the children, but would be recognised as salient by the competitive school catchment of the local community.

During the study, the researcher observed that the children at Meadow Rise were divided into key groups and this became visible at snack-time, when the children were set specific tasks. The playgroup leader confirmed that children were allocated their groups at the start of the year and that occasionally they had often been formed through friendships the children (or their parents) had established outside the setting. A lead practitioner, guided the children with a daily activity during each key group session. The activities observed included, learning and practicing the Welsh language, playing number games and games to encourage visual discrimination, listening games and language recognition. On other occasions, practitioners would work one-to-one with children from their groups, or could be seen writing notes and/or taking photographs as they observed children. While specific times were set for registration,

stories and songs, when the children came together at the start and close of the session, the practitioners' remaining time appeared to be democratically employed across the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Practitioners at Meadow Rise indicated that they recognised spaces and artefacts to have pedagogical value in promoting the development of the child's physical, creative and social skills. The activities that the practitioners' were observed to employ and the signage marking areas they recognised as salient, such a maths and literacy, appeared to have a clear educational intention.

5.4.1. Meadow Rise: Practitioners' rankings in order of importance

Areas ranked in order of:	Home-Corner.	Writing Station.	Construction	Book-Corner	Painting	Outdoor 1	Outdoor 2	Outdoor 3	Puzzles	Small World
Task 1 Individually perceived Importance	21	23	14	32	25	33	10	25	24	13
Task 2. Children's Preferences	23	20	24	7	25	40	29	27	10	15
Task 3. Delivering the Foundation Phase curriculum	21	20	13	24	25	38	28	27	16	8

Table 5.4.1. Meadow Rise: Practitioners' results of hierarchal ranking tasks, n 4 practitioners

The outdoor play pictures achieved the highest ranking (Table 5.4.1.) in order of importance by the practitioners, although there was some variation between outdoor picture 1 and outdoor picture 2, where the small plastic playhouse was sited. In reference to the cars, bikes and scooters illustrated in outdoor picture 1, Gill explained how the outdoor areas supported children's social skills, through sharing and taking turns.

'One of the most important things is for children to get on and develop their friendships and they do this in the garden more than anywhere else' Gill (Meadow Rise).

Meadow Rise maintained the principles of creating free-movement between the outdoor and indoor environments. There was evidence to reflect the ethos of the Foundation Phase's continuous and enhanced provision, as demonstrated by the repetition of activities across

indoor/outdoor sites. For Teresa, the outdoor space served as an effective resource for boys in particular.

'Outdoors is really important especially for boys, because they've got the freedom to run around and get rid of their energy' Teresa (Meadow Rise).

Teresa also referred to boys in respect to the book-corner, which received the second highest ranking. This area contrasted with the first, however, as Teresa defined it as a, *'quiet and important area for girls and quiet boys to go and look at books'*. By differentiating between the type of provision that was important to produce for girls, Teresa suggests that the girls' are more inclined to engage with the books. Occupying a central position across the back of the hall, the book-corner offered some seclusion due to the positioning of two small sofas, which framed the area. Gill emphasised how important it was to create free access to books by having them on display and making the area comfortable for children and practitioners alike and to accommodate storytelling.

'Stories are a massively important part of nursery life' Gill (Meadow Rise).

5.4.2. Meadow Rise: Practitioners' rankings in order of children's preferences

The three outdoor areas achieved high rankings with practitioners' predictions of the spaces the children preferred to occupy and the selection included the play-house in outdoor picture 2, which the practitioners had previously rejected.

'It looks the least important to me, but they really enjoy the house' Michelle (Meadow Rise).

'The children like the house, they enjoy being hidden away'. Sandra (Meadow Rise)

Sandra's suggestion that the children enjoyed being hidden away prompted further enquiry to observe spaces the children occupied and where they might achieve a sense of enclosure (see chapter 6).

The construction and the painting areas were identified as the most popular spaces indoors, but there was also a comparison made between the preferences of boys and girls.

Boys like this (she selects - construction) because they like to build it up and knock it down. Girls tend to flock to the painting and writing' Michelle (Meadow Rise).

Gill reiterated that, *'the gang of boys enjoyed construction'* and Sandra explained that boys who preferred more solitary play, tended to prefer the puzzle and book areas. Through their differentiation between types of boys and the objectification of the spatial contexts they

choose to occupy, the practitioners signalled different forms of accommodation. Practitioners identified spaces that functioned as outlets for the energy for the gang of boys and different, quieter places, where more passive and thoughtful types of engagement occurred.

In view of the gender constructs that were beginning to emerge, it was first assumed that the practitioners reading of these areas conveyed localised notions of boy's and girl's patterns of engagement. With further investigation of the Foundation Phase guidance documents, it appeared that the practitioners' instantiation of the areas closely represented what the State also recognised as salient provision to produce, as the following extract indicates:

'Evidence from neuro-scientific research suggests that differences in brain structure and function between boys and girls also lead to differences in learning styles.

Boys often respond more readily to active learning challenges that involve physical play and girls often prefer quieter activities that require more social interaction.

While equal opportunities policies have shaped the way all children are given the same opportunities, there is scope to consider whether individuals are achieving the best outcomes in relation to ability or whether more suitable activities could be provided to meet their needs' (Welsh Assembly Government 2008, p11).

5.4.3. Meadow Rise: Practitioners' rankings in order of importance, to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum

Practitioners ranked outdoor play to be the most important for the delivery of the Foundation Phase. Reiterating some of the comments they had made previously regarding the relevance of experiential learning and the opportunities for children to develop social skills, the practitioners also referred to competing agendas. In reference to the support the Local Authority's (LA) education team provided, the practitioners said,

'They are big on reading and maths now, aren't they? But learning through play is still important' Michelle (Meadow Rise)

Sandra gestures to spread of pictures,
'All these things are important, but outside is again on top' Sandra (Meadow Rise)

'Outdoor play is essential. Reading is supposed to be the emphasis at the moment, but social skills are really important' Teresa (Meadow Rise)

Each of the practitioners' mediated the Foundation Phase discourse projected by the LA differently, but were resolute in promoting what they produced in response to the guidance materials and LA support. In view of the researcher's dual role as advisor to support non-

maintained settings, Michelle's reference to the LA as, 'they' inferred that the State's discourse was recognised as distinctive and separate to the one projected by both the non-maintained sector and the setting. Michelle also placed emphasis on the playgroup movement's ethos of, '*Learning through play*' (Bray, *et al.* 2008), to reaffirm the setting's stance on re-producing experiential forms of engagement.

'The Foundation Phase is based on experiential learning. Outdoors children can do their own thing, it is open ended. Puzzles aren't experiential. Some research on jigsaws recently showed that they just assist fine motor skills, but they are not flexible toys, there's just one outcome' Gill (Meadow Rise).

The puzzles' area produced a conflict of opinion, between those who identified the area as having educational value and the leader's suggestion, that the objects offered no experiential challenge. Gill's research into the subject conveyed not only that she maintained pace with current ideas and intentions, it also illustrated how new initiatives could be appropriated, according to what the practitioners recognised as relevant to produce.

In the second series of interviews, practitioners at Meadow Rise conveyed a strong and shared discourse in support of experiential learning and outdoor play. They also made a clear distinction of the spaces and material culture they produced in relation to different types of occupancy by the children. This included gendered patterns of engagement, which they recognised as differences between boys and girls and differences between energetic boys and quiet boys.

5.4.4. Summary of the interviews with practitioners at Meadow Rise

Practitioners at Meadow Rise recontextualised the pedagogy in recognition of what they considered relevant to support the children's development. This implied that the positioning of pedagogical spaces within the setting conveyed a mutual sharing of meaning in respect to ideals and intentions. The outdoor provision achieved particular high appraisal with justifications aligned to physical, social and emotional development. Books and stories were identified to be of high value and the book-corner's central, yet discreetly enclosed position, was designed to induce positive rates of access. This pedagogical intention was not confirmed, when the practitioners' ranked the book-corner in relation to children's preferences and it achieved the lowest ranking of 7/40.

The access created to indoor and outdoor spaces, generated a flow of play-based child-led action. This movement contrasted with signage to illustrate specific areas of learning, such as the book-corner, that the practitioners' recontextualised a more formalised and traditional mode of provision. This contrasted with the type of engagement the practitioners recognised in respect to other areas that they marked as spaces that enhanced social skills. Some of the areas and activities were repositioned to accommodate adult-directed, 'key-group' work, focused tasks, or spaces where the children gathered collectively for storytelling and registration. As these additional areas were not included in the ten pictures used for the tasks, there was no opportunity to explore, how practitioners recognised these areas in context to the Foundation Phase. While the practitioners expressed awareness of a recent pedagogical shift towards maths and literacy, they were confident that their curriculum was already sufficiently compatible to accommodate any impending changes. They were also certain that the changes would not affect outdoor play, which they perceived as salient for children overall.

The outside area was recontextualised as an effective outlet for energetic boys. This hegemonic construct was also confirmed by the representation of a '*gang of boys*' who were seen to dominate the construction area. In contrast, boys who preferred to occupy quiet spaces such as the book-corner and puzzles table were less overtly accommodated (Renold 2004). Teresa identified the book-corner as, '*an important and quiet area for girls*', to suggest that girls engaged with the space and resources differently to boys. While, Michelle suggested that, '*girls tend to flock*', to the writing and the painting areas, to imply the girls' had other forms of energy and expression to expel. Although the practitioners appeared to democratically share roles and responsibilities, alternating duties across the indoor and outdoor sites at Meadow Rise, they did not convey how their practice influenced patterns of gendered participation. In view of the gendered strategies identified by MacNaughton (1997) there was no evidence to suggest the separation of activities into gendered groups to improve rates of access. Neither was it made clear, whether or not the practitioners policed spaces strategically to deter the marginalisation of girls and boys from certain pedagogical/spatial contexts, or activities (Epstein et al. 2001). Rather than interrupt common-sense constructs of maleness and femaleness, the material culture and spatial contexts instantiated by the practitioners appeared to reinforce, rather than challenge gendered stereotypes (Blaise 2009).

5.5. Riverbank. Practitioners' interviews

Three of the practitioners at Riverbank made a distinction between outside and inside areas, but categorised each of the interior spaces differently. For Miss Thomas, the construction and puzzles area (referred to as the skills room in Riverbank) and writing areas, were places where children gathered collectively in small groups with their teacher and a teaching assistant for *'their sessions'*. These areas were also marked by the children and for the purpose of the study were labelled as the children's base-rooms. Miss Price also paired the construction area with the puzzles (skills room), which she described as, *'cognitive and collaboration'*. She then placed books together with small world and defined these as *'personal and social'*. Finally, Miss Ellis created one large group that combined the three outdoor images together with the home-corner, painting, small world and construction and said, *'This group allows children to be creative'*. Gathering the remaining photographs that depicted the puzzles, writing and book areas Miss Ellis continued,

'These areas are more adult directed. The activities that we plan here are for a specific purpose, for children to practise skills' Miss Ellis, Riverbank.

5.5.1. Riverbank: Practitioners' rankings in order of importance

Areas ranked in order of:	Home-Corner.	Writing Station.	Construction	Book-Corner	Painting	Outdoor 1	Outdoor 2	Outdoor 3	Puzzles	Small World
Task 1 Individually perceived Importance	15	23	15	24	18	33	32	33	16	11
Task 2. Children's Preferences	18	16	23	10	23	34	35	38	16	7
Task 3. Delivering the Foundation Phase curriculum	15	22	16	24	18	34	34	33	16	8

Table 5.5.1....Riverbank Practitioners results of hierarchal ranking tasks, n 4 practitioners

The focus on skills that Miss Ellis previously identified was reaffirmed in the second task when the practitioners' placed greater emphasis on adult directed, rather than child initiated, activities.

Both Mrs Drew and Miss Price expressed a personal preference for the book and writing areas. Mrs Drew rejected the image of the painting area and said.

'I have grouped them in the areas I like to work in. Everyone knows I don't enjoy the crafting areas. Mrs Drew, Riverbank.

Miss Price combined construction with the puzzles and made a second group with the writing and the book-corner images.

'I feel that out of the areas of the nursery these would be my strengths'. She points to the second group. 'That's where I feel I can do a lot more focused work, because English is my specialism'. Miss Price, Riverbank.

The practitioners at Riverbank were confident in their appraisal of the images that they marked in recognition of pedagogical intentions and the division of space. They also revealed a sense of personal investment to suggest that they had additional value to offer particular strands of the curriculum, such as literacy.

The three outdoor images were listed as having the highest rate of importance during the first ranking task. While Miss Price and Mrs Drew did not elaborate other than to say they felt that the outdoor learning was of *'tremendous value'* and *'hugely important'*, Miss Ellis could hardly contain her enthusiasm.

'Outdoors is open-ended and I love being out there. Large spaces don't dictate what they can do and they can make their own games and be imaginative' Miss Ellis, Riverbank

5.5.2. Riverbank: Practitioners' rankings in order of children's preferences

The outdoor images were also rated highly in terms of areas the children preferred. Outdoor picture 3 was identified as a space that had particular relevance because it did not convey any apparent meaning and contained no obvious artefacts so children would be drawn to it.

'That space (outdoor picture 3) can be anything they want it to be. There are resources and things out there, but they like the freedom of their own games, just exploring and their natural inquisitiveness' Miss Price, Riverbank.

The outside images were also described in respect to gender and identified to be the preferred space for boys.

'I would say boys in particular are very confident and their preference would be outdoors all of the time. The children's play is completely different when the sun is shining. The mud kitchen (Outdoor 1) would rate lower because it is not always accessible, but again when it is they are totally engrossed in their play out there'.

Miss Ellis, Riverbank

In contrast to the rating the book area achieved in order of importance for the practitioners, it now received one of the lowest rankings (Table 5.5.1.) and the reason, according to Miss Ellis, extended beyond the perimeters of the nursery.

'I would say the book area is their least favourite, because it is the same children whose parents take them libraries and read them bedtime stories, which a lot of our children don't have, so they don't know how to look after books. They rip them, stand on them, draw on them, so we find that a challenge to encourage children to access that area' Miss Ellis, Riverbank.

5.5.3. Riverbank: Practitioners' rankings in order of importance to deliver the Foundation Phase curriculum

When the researcher asked practitioners to rank the areas in order of importance for the delivery of the Foundation Phase, they were relatively consistent in their selection of outdoor learning.

'Outdoors definitely, they have to have access and it is so important for the children to have stimulating activities out there' Miss Thomas, Riverbank.

'Actually all these areas are important, but the outdoors is where children should be. That's how I have interpreted the Foundation Phase and outdoor play is part of my philosophy' Miss Ellis, Riverbank.

Each of the practitioners' identified the final task as being the most difficult to complete. They described the dilemma of having to choose one image over another, because they felt each of the areas presented were relevant for inclusion for the fulfilment of the Foundation Phase.

Practitioners at Riverbank identified the spaces and material culture as having clear pedagogical intention and reaffirmed the significance of what they had been produced by accentuating specialised domains. Although their individual preferences and skills implied diversity in range of contributions to outdoor and indoor activities, they all placed value on what they had collectively produced.

5.5.4. Summary of the interviews with practitioners at Riverbank

Each of the four practitioners at Riverbank had a clear understanding of what the pedagogy represented in respect to the areas that had been produced within the setting. During free-flow, when practitioners were not situated in their appointed base-rooms, they were deployed across the nursery at various sites to oversee and support children's learning by offering

direction, or conducting what appeared to be passive, yet engaged, observation. As these positions were maintained as part of a rota system, the practitioners had experience of working in each spatial area identified for the study. They also alluded to pedagogical objectives and placed value on the material layering of spaces to create, '*stimulating activities*'. Through their justifications in response to the sorting tasks, the practitioners differentiated between the various spaces in recognition of what they perceived to be personal attributes and interests regarding the curriculum content that was produced. Practitioners labelled spaces in respect to personalised interests and specialisms, which imbued self-ownership. This was applied to support the contribution practitioners' made towards the book and writing areas, while outdoor play was recognised as a legitimate and one practitioner purported it to be a '*shared philosophy*'. These concepts not only imbued notions of strongly framed pedagogical domains contained within the nursery, they were also instantiated by the practitioners as authentic and professionalised constructs.

While the pedagogical culture within Riverbank appeared to emerge as a coherent and collaborative discourse, there was also evidence of some variations in range of the practitioners' individual contributions. The practitioners' identified the creative spaces, outdoor provision and more formalised book and writing areas in context to their own interests and attributes. Children who were identified to have gained cultural value for books through their socialisation at home were recognised as a more compatible ideal as they were able to integrate easily within the culture of the setting. Practitioners also identified the parental value within some ethnic households, of teaching children to write. As the over sixty-percent of the children who attended the nursery came from ethnic households it was not clear what percentage of children were included. It was also not clear whether the push towards writing was compatible with the developmental ethos of the setting, where an established regard for books was recognised as salient. The practitioners at Riverbank gave a balance of opinion to support the clear representation of the educational, creative and outdoor provision that they interpreted to be the theory and the practice of the Foundation Phase. They also conveyed consensus that the various spatial contexts embedded within the setting represented a legitimate and specialised pedagogic discourse that was continuing to evolve.

5.6. Summary of findings

Interviews with the twelve practitioners created insight of the way they recontextualised the Foundation Phase in each of the three settings.

First, in range of similarities, concepts, such as the benefits of outdoor play, were recognised to be important strands of the pedagogy, although it was difficult to ascertain how Quarry Lane utilised the outside spaces at the time of the study. As Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise only had temporal use of the accommodation the settings occupied, they each experienced similar challenges setting up themed spaces and positioning resources for the delivery of the curriculum at the start of every session. There were some variations between the two non-maintained settings, as Meadow Rise had achieved some level of permanence and had invested in large items of equipment in the outdoor space. All three settings provided free-flow provision, which the practitioners recognised as relevant in range of what children could choose and they each confirmed outdoor play to be the children's favourite. As Meadow Rise and Riverbank had created free-flow movement between the indoor and outdoor areas, the deployment of practitioners, who guided some activities and occasionally intervened in children's play as they moved across sites, was relatively similar. These two settings also placed emphasis on the value of outdoor play for boys. Practitioners at Riverbank and Meadow Rise also perceived the instantiation of what they produced in recognition of the Foundation Phase pedagogy, to be similar to their own attitudes and values of child-initiated learning.

Although the three settings produced similar themed areas and artefacts to the ones contained in the guidance documents and training module, as discussed in chapter 2, the production of the curriculum in each of the three settings was not homogenous in range of interpretation. Riverbank nursery was well resourced and had capacity to project strong messages pertaining to what the State had identified as legitimate pedagogical discourses, such as Reggio Emilia and Forest Schools. A large preschool with a cosmopolitan catchment area, Riverbank, also revealed different ways the children were able to engage with the curriculum, as shaped by their wider social and cultural experiences.

As the guidance on continuous, enhanced and focused provision had indicated, there was capacity for practitioners to adapt the curriculum in response to the child's needs and for practitioners to use observations as a means to enhance the provision they produced. Practitioners at Quarry Lane recognised the spaces and activities that the children preferred to be child-initiated, while provision of the mat (book-corner) and the writing table generated a more formalised, adult-directed stance. Pedagogical practice in Quarry Lane, at the time of the study, reflected a greater pull towards care than education. Positioned between the fulfilment of the Flying Start programme and the recontextualisation of maths and literacy,

Quarry Lane's instantiation of the Foundation Phase pedagogy, appeared weak and visibly controlled. As non-maintained settings, both Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise received external support, but appeared to mediate its influence on their production of the Foundation Phase with different rates of response. Meadow Rise maintained the traditional ethos of the playgroup movement and asserted value towards experiential learning, but the focus of what they produced was structured towards the achievement of skills and not simply pragmatic care, as identified by Anning (2001). Meadow Rise was also situated within well-established, school catchment and appeared to have some autonomy to project alternative meanings to the ones produced by the State. In contrast to the extended family discourse projected by the Aunties (who wore brightly coloured tabards) at Quarry Lane, practitioners at Meadow Rise signified authorised yet approachable identities. The embossed polo shirts signalled synergy in relation to mutually shared pedagogical intentions, while the friendly and informal usage of the practitioners' first names suggested equal access to parents and children alike. The lack of uniform at Riverbank made it difficult to differentiate between teachers, teaching assistants and auxiliary staff, but some distance was maintained as children addressed all adults by their surnames. The egalitarian, yet professionalised stance adopted by Riverbank reflected the ease by which this long established statutory setting acquired knowledge and had capacity to anchor abstract concepts and contexts of the pedagogy as they emerged.

5.7. Summary

This chapter has drawn on Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation to investigate how the practitioners' instantiated the Foundation Phase curriculum in the three settings. Findings from the interviews and observations revealed that practitioners recontextualise the pedagogy in response to children's development, patterns of engagement and the undertaking of child-initiated and adult-directed learning. Other elements that emerge also indicated that the practitioners' mediate the spatial contexts and material culture they produce in relation to: individualised specialisms, gender marking and notions of child development responding to fields of care and education. In view of these findings, the next chapter investigates how children interpret and differentiate between the pedagogy the practitioners' have produced, to assess the impact it has on their engagement.

Chapter 6

Children's spatial encounters within the three preschool settings

6. Introduction

This chapter explores how children recontextualised the Foundation Phase curriculum. It brings together analysis from the specially designed research instruments and some additional questions to encourage children to talk about the selections they created within the three tasks. These tasks included a sorting task, a favourites task, in which children selected the pictures in order of preference and a gender task. The chapter also presents additional findings from the favourites task, to examine the preferences created by boys and girls. Findings from field-notes and observations were also used to explore, how children recontextualise the pedagogical spaces and artefacts they encounter as part of their everyday preschool experiences.

6.1. The children's sorting tasks

Two research instruments, a sorting task and a favourites task, designed and piloted with the assistance of an independent assessor in one of the three settings were used to elicit the children's unique perspectives. The sorting task was designed to explore how preschool children recognised visual assemblages of contexts and artefacts that the practitioners had produced, both inside and outside the setting, to represent areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum. The sorting task was administered as a one-to-one interview, with the child sitting with the researcher at a table in a quiet space reserved for the task, as detailed in chapter 3. The aim was to work in a place that provided some quiet and privacy and where the child was not be distracted by the activities going on in the setting. At the start of each sort (task), the ten pictures were jumbled up then placed (right side up) across the table, but were in no particular pattern or order.

First, the researcher asked each child to, *'take a good look at all the pictures'*. The child was then invited to sort the pictures, using the following instruction, *'Can you see any pictures that look the same to put into a group?'*

Each child was invited to sort the pictures into as few, or as many groups as they wished and to base their selections on, *'things that went together'*. When the pictures had been sorted into groups, the researcher asked, *'why do they go together?'*, or repeated the child's

interpretation of the grouping by asking, ‘*why are they the same?*’ Each group of pictures the child created was recorded using the numbers on the reverse of each photograph. Separate digital recordings were also made of each child’s account of his or her justifications.

Analysis was quantitative and qualitative. Each group of pictures the child created was allocated a number. The ten pictures formed the columns in an SPSS data file and a group number was allocated to each. Data for each of the ten children in one setting were subjected to analysis. A cluster analysis was undertaken and presented as a dendrogram. The dendrogram provides a visual representation of pictures that were grouped together the most often, by the ten children in one setting.

6.1.1. Quarry Lane: Findings from the sorting task

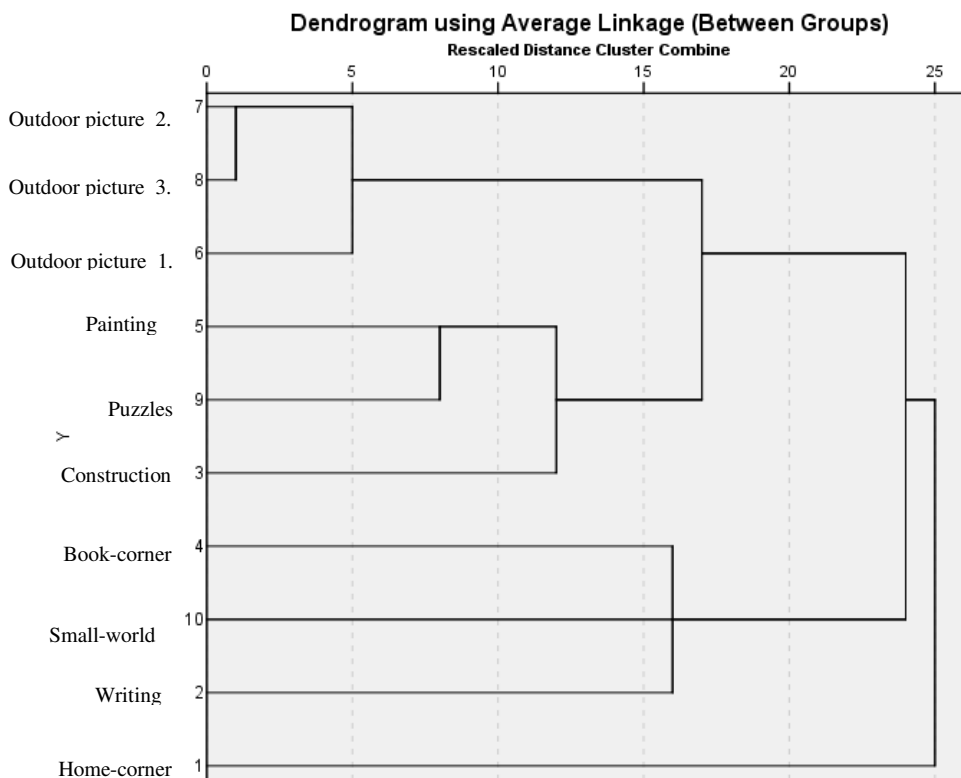


Figure 6.1.1. Task 1. Quarry Lane. Findings from children’s sorting task: Cluster analysis, N=10.

Results from the sorting task at Quarry Lane (Figure 6.1.1) depict a cluster formation connecting the three outdoor pictures. Analysis of children’s justifications for their groups revealed that a few children had recognised outdoor pictures 2 and 3 to be a connected space. Observations confirmed that these narrow and enclosed outside spaces at the side of the building contrasted with the wider, more exposed outdoor area positioned at the front of the hall. The front yard also served as the main entrance to the playgroup and although the

children would have occupied this site more frequently, they did not disclose any features or experiences to convey a sense of familiarity. As explained previously in chapter 5, access to the outside areas was allocated at set times and Quarry Lane did not appear to offer free-flow provision between the internal and external sites. For the duration of the study, the children had no access to the outdoor areas, but utilised the space set aside for physical play and, on one occasion, a small group of children accompanied two practitioners on a visit to the local library. In light of the practitioners' initial re-contextualisation of the outside space where they conveyed concepts of versatility, risk-taking behaviour and developmental benefits, strands of ambiguity also transpired to signal that the pedagogical intention was weak. Similarly, the tyres, which the children identified as '*wheels*' or '*car wheels*' were recognised as salient because of their predominant distribution across the narrow pathway, but their function in context to forms of engagement were not made explicit.

In her verbal justification of her groupings, Lucy said, with an air of despondency, that she liked to play outdoors. She also alluded to the rarity value of going outside, by accentuating the regular provision of bikes that the practitioners had created for use indoors.

'Every, every, every day we play inside with bikes'. Lucy (Quarry Lane).

Observations identified that the inside space was reserved for physical play and was organised to enable children to move freely. Small numbers of children occupied this space during the free-flow period of each morning's session, at the time of the study. Due to the business of the space, the area generated a swell of noise that reverberated around the rest of the hall. Practitioners controlled the noise levels by directly monitoring the space, or by calling out for children to be quiet. As there was no opportunity to observe children within the outside spaces presented in the three outdoor pictures, it was not possible to report how these separately enclosed areas were managed, or how children engaged with these spaces and the materials provided within them.

6.1.2. Meadow Rise: Findings from the sorting task

The sorting task was administered to ten children in Meadow Rise, which presented ten pictures that had been specifically designed to represent areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum, as it was instantiated in the material culture of the setting.

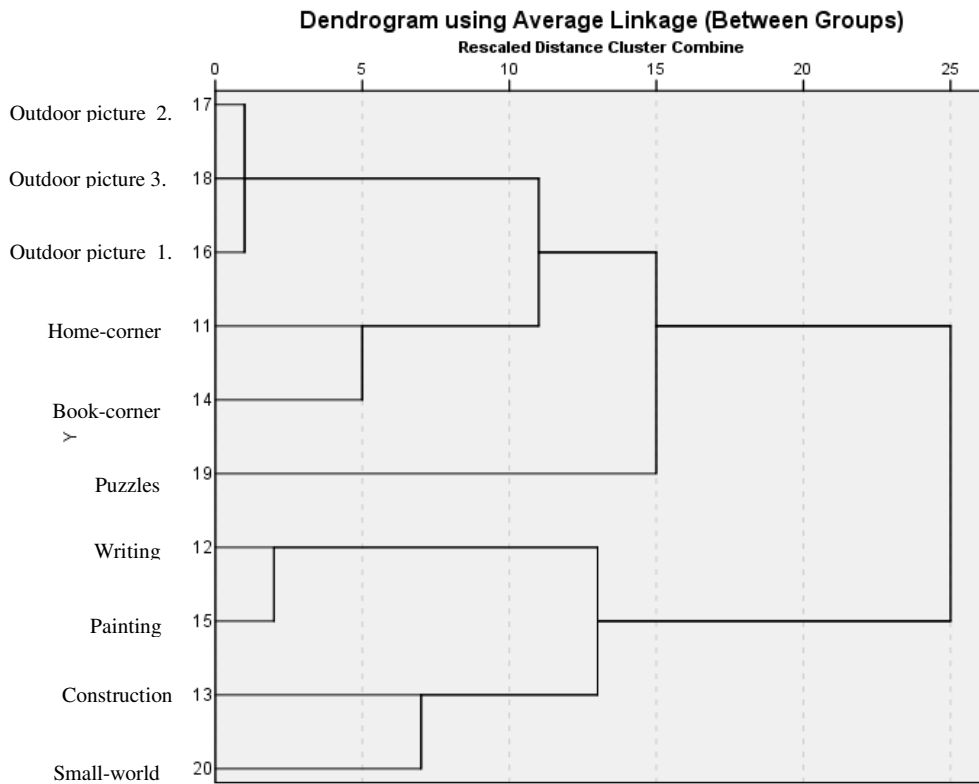


Figure 6.1.2 Meadow Rise. Findings from Children: Cluster analysis Sort 1 N=10.

The three outdoor spaces emerged as a strongly identifiable cluster in Meadow Rise. Four of the nine children who grouped the three outdoor areas together described the difference between outdoor and indoor environments, through their individual justifications.

‘The park in our garden and the inside’ Oscar, Meadow Rise.

‘It’s all part of the nursery, but we should put the outside bits with the outside bits’ Jess, Meadow Rise.

‘That house is outside and the bikes and the scooters’ Miles, Meadow Rise.

‘The outside, that one goes with that one. That’s another outside one. That’s the painting and that’s the drawing, they are both inside’ Josie, Meadow Rise.

A second cluster combined the writing and painting areas and indicated similar forms of engagement, as each requires the holding an artefact and moving the arm to write or paint. Observations revealed that the two activities took place in different parts of the room. Writing was positioned near the entrance of the room and the painting easel was towards the back of the room in an area reserved for ‘messy play’. Both activities require tactile, hands-on, forms of manipulation that produce text (letters or free shapes).

A third cluster combined the home and book-corners. Observations revealed that the activities took place in close proximity in the main hall (see Figure 3.7.3.). The home-corner was densely furnished with a range of resources, which contrasted with the less crowded book-corner. In the book-corner, two brightly coloured sofas framed the bookstand to create a small and enclosed space that offered some seclusion from the rest of the room. Observations indicated, that the close proximity of the home and book-corners appeared to combine the two areas, as Lily justified through her selection of the two spaces.

Lily holds two pictures up in the air and says, *'They are two halves'*. Lily places the pictures on the table and twists them around as if to create a match.

Researcher *'Have you made a group? Can you tell me what it is?'*
'Yes, they are in half - the kitchen and the books'. Lily, Meadow Rise.

Abi justified her selection of the home-corner picture in reference to the way the continuous provision had been enhanced by practitioners to produce other meanings, which created a division of space between the home and the book-corners.

'That's the café, Ticw (home-corner) and that's the stories' (book-corner).
Abi, Meadow Rise.

The practitioners at Meadow Rise recontextualised the book-corner to be a less popular for the majority of the children, however, observations indicated that the area was rarely unoccupied. In contrast to the various table and chair configurations sited across the room, the combination of these two areas appeared to evoke greater levels of comfort and social interaction.

6.1.3. Riverbank. Findings from the sorting task

The sorting task was administered to eight children in Riverbank, which presented ten pictures that had been specifically designed to represent areas of the Foundation Phase curriculum, as it was instantiated in the material culture of their preschool. Unfortunately, two of the children who had gained consent to participate in the study were both absent on the days when the tasks were administered, so only eight children at Riverbank were included in the sorting task.

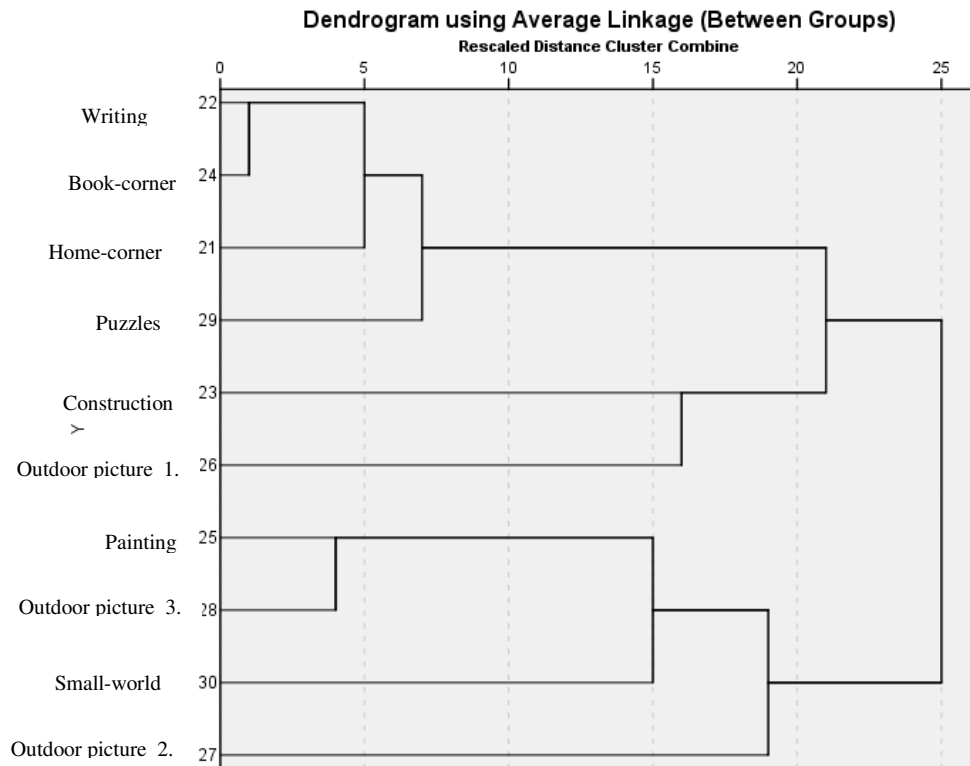


Fig 6.1.3. Riverbank. Findings from Children: Cluster analysis Sort 1, N=8

Findings from the sorting task at Riverbank indicate a strong pairing of the writing area and the book-corner and the cluster extends to include the home-corner (Figure 6.1.3). Observations revealed that the writing area and book-corner shared occupancy of a large room on the periphery of the main hall. Similarly, the home-corner was also situated within a separate room at the opposite end of the nursery. Since the first cluster contains two of the peripheral rooms (see Riverbank’s floor plan. Figure 3.7.4.) it might be assumed that these spaces are recognised as different and pertain to other forms of action and engagement which the children perceive as relevant through their justifications.

‘My room’ (writing area) Eva, Riverbank.

‘This room (book-corner) and the home room’ Henry selects the picture of the writing area. *‘This is my group where I go’*. Henry, Riverbank.

At Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise, the opportunity to map children’s movements had been relatively easy to achieve, as the ten spatial contexts were contained within two main (inside/outside) sites. In contrast, the breadth of pedagogical spaces and free-flow movement that the children at Riverbank were able to engage in made it difficult to map. One or more practitioners, who oversaw and guided activities within the skills room (puzzles area) and the

one accommodating the home-corner were observed to control entry and exit of the peripheral rooms. Without wishing to disrupt these environments, notions of gatekeeping and boundary maintenance began to emerge. Having observed that the doors to these smaller rooms were often closed, it was difficult to ascertain how children might experience free-flow movement to these areas.

The second cluster depicted in Riverbank’s results contained the painting area and an open space presented in outside image 3. The combination of the painting area, with the image depicting outdoor picture 3, might appear contradictory in terms of contexts and pedagogical intent. Observations revealed that provision for creative ‘hands on’ explorative play was clearly visible throughout the nursery and mark-making activities, such as painting, were regularly available outside. The space depicted in outdoor picture 3 served as the main thoroughfare to the outdoor spaces while the indoor painting area was situated some distance away, at the opposite end of the main hall. Given the spread of activities and free-flow movement within Riverbank, this pairing indicates elements of more autonomous levels of action and engagement.

6.1.4. Findings from the sorting task across the three settings

	Quarry Lane N=10 Selections: 59/100	Meadow Rise. N=10. Selections 84/100	Riverbank N=8 Selections 49/100
Cluster 1	Outdoor 2,3,1 (7.8.6)	Outdoor 2,3,1 (17.18.16)	Writing and Book-corner, Home-corner (22.24.21)
Cluster 2		Writing and Painting (12.15)	Painting and Outdoor 3 (25.28)
Cluster 3		Home-corner and Book-corner. (11.14)	

Table 6.1.4. Findings from children’s sorting task across the three settings.

Findings from the cluster analysis reveal some variation across the three settings (Table 6.1.4). While the outdoor areas were recognised as distinctive at Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise, other features also emerged as salient to children within each of the preschool settings. Children in Quarry Lane recognised features such as the tyres. Children in Meadow Rise created a distinction between the outside and inside areas. They also connected the home and book-corners, as a place of two halves, ‘*half the kitchen and half the books*’ Lily (Meadow Rise) and bridged the physical gap between the painting and writing materials. Children at

Riverbank created a connection between the peripheral rooms that enclosed the home-corner and the writing and book-corner. The children revealed that they had knowledge of the layout of the nursery. Observations confirmed that creative activities, which Jake also identified as cutting and painting outside, highlighted the range of free-flow movement. This contrasted with the more enclosed modes of engagement observed within the peripheral rooms.

6.2. The favourites task

The favourites task was designed to explore children's preferences in range of the ten activities depicted in the pictures. Children were asked to rank their favourite activities by placing the picture of their favourite activity at the top and placing the picture of the least favourite activity at the bottom of an imaginary line.

A short series of questions were used to encourage responses (as detailed below) and results recorded.

'Which of these pictures do you like most?'

'Why do you like that one?'

'Can you see any that you don't like?'

'Why don't you like that one?'

As children selected pictures in order of preference, each selection was placed in hierarchical order and the pictures numerically coded on a ranking scale of 1-10 (10 = highest score 1= lowest). Scores were analysed by each setting and the results are presented in Table 6.2.

6.2.1. Findings from the favourites task in order of children’s preferences

Quarry Lane.			Meadow Rise.			Riverbank.		
Area	Rank order	Score	Area	Rank order	Score	Area	Rank order	Score
Painting	1 st	57	Painting	1 st	71	Book-corner	1 st	51
Small World	2 nd	44	Book-corner	2 nd	65	Writing	2 nd	49
Construction	3 rd	41	Home-corner	3 rd	55	Outdoor 3	3 rd	42
Book-corner	4 th	33	Outdoor 1	4 th	55	Outdoor 2	4 th	33
Outdoor 1	5 th	33	Outdoor 2	5 th	35	Painting	5 th	27
Outdoor 2	6 th	30	Outdoor 3	6 th	35	Outdoor 1	6 th	26
Writing	7 th	26	Puzzles	7 th	35	Puzzles	7 th	26
Home-corner	8 th	18	Small World	8 th	34	Construction	8 th	24
Outdoor 3	9 th	18	Writing	9 th	33	Home-corner	9 th	17
Puzzles	10 th	13	Construction	10 th	29	Small World	10 th	4

Table 6.2.1. Results from the favourites task in order of children’s preferences across the three settings Quarry Lane. N=9 Selections 55/100. Meadow Rise. N=9 Selections 81/90. Riverbank. N= 7.Selections 50/70.

The results for each child’s selection were combined to form an overall score for each area with a maximum score of 10 (ten pictures) multiplied by the number of children from each setting. The total for all ranking scores the child awarded each activity within the setting achieved the sum of 55. This allows comparison of the scores of a child who ranks all of the areas, with a child who ranks some, or none of the areas. Preferences for each area within a setting were then derived from the ranking scores applied to each of the ten pictures. As a result, the area that achieved the highest score was identified as the most popular and the one with the lowest score recognised as the least, as depicted in Table 6.2.1. This ranking system provided an indication of the children’s favourite areas/activities across the three settings and signified other forms of engagement that existed within each of the preschool sites.

6.2.2. Quarry Lane: Findings from the favourites task

At Quarry Lane, results from the favourites task revealed some variation from the spaces that the children had recognised as salient in the sorting task, as illustrated in Table 6.2.2.

Quarry Lane.			
Task 1 Sorting task Cluster analysis Salient Areas/Activities Distance of similarity. N=9. Selections: 55/100		Task 2 Favourite Areas/Activities favourites task: Individual preferences + corresponding scores. N=10 Selections 59/100	
Cluster 1	Outdoor pictures 2,3 and 1	Painting	57
		Small World	44
		Construction	41
		Books	33
		OD1	33
		OD2	30
		Writing	26
		Home-corner	18
		OD3	18
		Puzzles	13

Table 6.2.2. Quarry Lane: Comparison of categories identified in Tasks 1 (sorting task) and Task 2 (favourites task)

In contrast to the outdoor images selected in the first sorting task, the painting, small-world, construction and book (mat) areas achieved the highest ranking in terms of the children's individual preferences. The painting easel was tightly positioned in an area reserved for hands-on exploratory play and close to the clustering of activities in the main part of the hall. Sharing his enthusiasm for painting, Archie intimated that although access to the space was granted freely, some elements of conformity had to be adhered to before the activity could commence. Archie pointed to the apron illustrated in the photograph of the painting easel at Quarry Lane.

'You put this on, then you take it off afterwards. If I want to do another I can do it again' Archie (Quarry Lane).

In view of the clustering of neighbouring activities and the close positioning of practitioners who directed or guided children within this area, the hall appeared visibly juxtaposed. At times the reverberation of noise, which intermittently increased with more exuberant activity within the physical play area created a sense of fusion across the hall, in terms of tolerance and regulation. Since the small-world, construction and book-area (mat) were all floor-based activities that the children selected in order of preference, analysis was drawn to the type of behaviour that occurred within these spaces. While practitioners occupied the mat at various intervals to read stories to small groups of children or one-to-one, they did not appear to participate at floor level in the spaces containing the construction, or the small-world

activities. Within the small-world area, children played quietly alongside one another, but with little interaction or acknowledgement to suggest either mutual occupancy or a sharing of interests. In contrast, more exuberant forms of action were observed in the construction area, which contained a range of large brightly coloured, foam shapes. Only the book-corner (mat) offered any form of seclusion. Framed between two walls and a couple of low-level shelving units, children could occupy the space and gain some distance from the omnipresence of the practitioners positioned close by.

The children at Quarry Lane were at times reticent, or tentative in their communications towards the sorting tasks. Much of their interest in response to the various spatial contexts focused towards specific surface features. When the children selected the book-corner, which they labelled as the 'mat', the researcher probed further, to see if they identified either the positioning of books, or were aware of the instructional discourse that the practitioners' alluded to.

Quarry Lane:

'We cross our legs and bang our knees' Molly (Quarry Lane).

'We listen to Aunty Jen' Nathan (Quarry Lane).

'We don't do anything, toys aren't allowed on the mat' Archie (Quarry Lane).

With consideration to the restriction of free-flow movement between the inside and outside areas as previously described, alternative forms of pedagogical engagement were now emerging. Although the creative element of the easel appeared restrictive in terms of choice and proximal spacing, the rhythm of movements, release of emotion and absorption of the task would cocoon and disengage children from the wider structuration (Hyde 2008; Hemming 2013). Similarly, floor based activities which averted the gaze of the practitioners, or shut down the competing distraction of noise and aural surveillance (Gallagher 2011), might also induce more autonomous forms of self-regulation, or simply enable the child to passively withdraw (Dunn 2007).

6.2.3. Meadow Rise: Findings from the favourites task

Meadow Rise.			
Task 1 Cluster analysis Salient Areas/Activities Distance of similarity N=10. Selections 84/100		Task 2 Favourite Areas/Activities favourites task: Individual preferences + corresponding scores. N=9 Selections 81/90	
Cluster 1	OD 2,3,1	Painting	71
Cluster 2	Writing and Painting.	Book-corner.	65
		Home-corner	55
Cluster 3	Home-corner and Book-corner.	Outdoor 1	55
		OD2	35
		OD3	35
		Small-world	34
		Writing	33
		Construction	29

Table 6.2.3. Meadow Rise: Comparison of categories identified in Tasks 1 (sorting task) and Task 2 (favourites task)

With the first sorting task, the children at Meadow Rise made a connection between painting and writing areas. Findings from favourites task summarised in Table 6.2.3. revealed, that the children recognised the two activities differently when they ranked them in order of preference. The painting easel was positioned in close proximity to other sensory materials, such as the playdough and the children recognised that they had regular access to the provision.

‘Painting because I do it all the time I have done two today. When the paintings are dry you can take them home’ Freya (Meadow Rise).

Like Freya, Oscar also created a linkage between painting and his home to reveal other, intricate notions of cultural representation.

‘I paint pictures of Mummy, Daddy and the baby’ Oscar

Researcher *‘What is the baby’s name?’*

‘Sophie, she is still in Mummy’s tummy’ Oscar (Meadow Rise)

While provision of the painting easel enabled forms of expressive action, the pairing of the home and book-corners that the children had confirmed in the previous task were also recognised as salient in terms of their individual preferences. In view of the sense of

seclusion the combined areas represented, the children's interest focused on the aesthetic layering of the spaces, which they recognised to be relevant for inducing levels of engagement.

'I like the books, they've got sofas there'. Jessica (Meadow Rise)

As the children signalled ways in which the home-corner had been enhanced to accommodate role play through the contextual layering of materials to create cafes, shops and promote Welsh language usage, they also revealed how the aesthetic positioning of resources imbued more internalised forms of cultural meaning.

'I like this one, this is the shop (home-corner)' Josie (Meadow Rise).

Researcher *'What's in the shop?'*

Josie *'Food, tomatoes. My sister doesn't like tomatoes, actually she doesn't like carrots. You have to eat tomatoes and cucumbers because they are vegetables'.*

Although there were a variety of alternative activities and resources within the three outdoor spaces, the small ride-on vehicles emerged as being particularly popular with both boys and girls alike. Due to the high demand, children were encouraged to queue, rather than compete and *'bash for bikes'*, as one boy indicated. The textural features the children recognised as messy and chaotic, also determined rates of engagement or gender marked, such as the chalk, the construction blocks and the home-corner's dressing up rail.

'I don't like the dressing up it's only got girl's things, they've only got girl's dressing up' Oscar (Meadow Rise)

Researcher *'Have they? What sort of things are in the dressing up?'*

Oscar pauses *'I don't know – Princess things'.*

While there was evidence of protocol and control due to the popularity of some activities, the spaces children occupied singularly, or in small numbers, revealed different forms of negotiation. This was most apparent at times when the majority of children involved in outdoor play and a small number of children remained indoors. Where provision may not have been fully accessible previously, children were able to occupy areas such as the home-corner, construction and small-world activities. It was also noticeable that the small number of girls who remained inside often stayed in close proximity to the practitioners, clustered around an activity, or were seen to be actively pursuing interaction. This type of engagement contrasted

with the boys who chose to remain in the hall who appeared fully absorbed in their chosen activity. While practitioners had identified the 'quiet spaces' that a small number of boys occupied at Meadow Rise, there was also evidence to suggest that a small cluster of girls also choose to select quieter spaces to achieve autonomous and reciprocal levels of engagement.

The children at Meadow Rise were able to engage immediately with the sorting and favourites task and were confident to interact with the researcher one-to-one. At times the interaction developed into an informal conversational exchange, so there was little need to prompt and elicit responses. As previously described, elements contained within the structuration of the setting were recognised as boundaries which signified the type of engagement children were able to participate in. While surface features such as the chalk symbolised mess and the subsequent avoidance of the writing table, the blocks signalled other forms of evasive action associated with 'tidy-up' time. These examples gave new meaning to the way children navigated across the setting and imposed boundaries upon themselves in terms of access and choice. For Miles, linkage between the material culture available within the home and the preschool environments enabled him to differentiate between activities he enjoyed and those he dismissed. Miles confirmed that outdoor play was his preference, while painting at the easel and the aesthetic layering of the book-corner each represented spaces he preferred to avoid.

'I like painting at home and I like painting on my hands, but I don't like painting like this....I don't like the sofa and the books because I don't like to sit and read. I read them at bedtime' Miles (Meadow Rise).

Miles revealed how he had autonomy, not only to differentiate between the types of activities he chose to engage with, but that his occupancy within the setting was also shaped by knowledge and experiences derived from home. The children also recognised spaces and material culture in respect to evasion, or more purposeful and gratifying forms of pursuit. Girls marked the construction area as masculine and a source of uncooperative forms of play.

'I don't like the blocks when the boys are here, I don't like them playing with me because they hit me with them' Jessica (Meadow Rise)

'The blocks because you get a bit hurt, because people are nasty to each other' Josie (Meadow Rise).

This comment suggested that girls experienced aggression and masculine control and so constructed the place as masculine. The girls also conveyed a notion that they wanted to avoid confrontation (MacNaughton 1997). Through their descriptions of the material culture of the setting, children signalled what was salient to them.

'I love the blocks because you can build stuff, you can build towers' Freya
(Meadow Rise).

'I like the puzzles because I get them right' Jessica (Meadow Rise).

Children at Meadow Rise recognised elements of material culture and spatial contexts made available by the practitioners, but were also able to articulate meanings that affected their levels of engagement.

6.2.4. Riverbank: Findings from the favourites task

Riverbank			
Task 1 Salient Areas/Activities Distance of similarity N=8 Selections 49/100		Task 2. Favourite Areas/Activities favourites task: Individual preference/s + corresponding scores. N= 7. Selections 50/70	
Cluster 1	Writing, book-corner and home-corner.	Book-corner	51
		Writing	49
Cluster 2	Painting and Outdoor 3	OD3	42
		OD2	33
		Painting	27
		OD1	26
		Puzzles	26
		Construction	24
		Home-corner	17
	Small-world	4	

Table 6.2.4. Riverbank: Comparison of categories identified in Tasks 1 (sorting task) and Task 2 (favourites task)

Findings from the favourites task at Riverbank, as summarised in Table 6.2.4, corresponded closely to the groups the children had created previously in the first sorting task. Both the book-corner and the writing area emerged as salient in their individual preferences and once more, the spaces were distinctly labelled by the children as, *'my room, my friend's group, or my group'* which signalled the area's function as a base-room. A total of four peripheral rooms and the carpeted space within the construction area were all used as base-rooms. These spaces functioned as a visible divide, enabling small groups of children to gather in the company of their lead practitioner and an assistant for registration and mid-morning snacks, storytelling/singing, or to participate with a set activity as directed by the adult/s. Having observed children during these interludes, it was clear that they were well versed in

responding to the repertoire of these sessions, which contrasted with the more autonomous action that they engaged with during the rest of the morning's session. Often the children would sit on the floor in a circle with practitioners sitting on opposite sides of the sphere. While a focus was generated towards the lead practitioner who gave instructions, or encouraged rhetorical interaction, the second adult predominantly adopted the stance of observer. Rather than remaining passive, however, the assistant's posture mirrored the (verbal, non-verbal) language projected by the leader and she engaged with low-level forms of interaction with neighbouring children.

Observation: Snack-time in Aisha's base-room at Riverbank.

Mrs Ball asks the children to cross their legs and begins to take registration. Miss Kite enters the room with the snack tray and passes it to Mrs Ball who in turn selects a boy to distribute the crackers and milk. The routine is well rehearsed and children wait while the boy slowly walks around the inner-circle with the plate of crackers stretched out in front of him. As the boy moves towards the back of the circle, a girl rises up from the floor and stretches her hand out in front of Aisha towards the plate. Aisha raises her finger as if to discipline and the girl recoils and waits her turn.

Although the routine of snack-time was well rehearsed and appeared relatively docile in terms of engagement, alternative actions signalled anticipation, enthusiasm, tension and constraint. Given the series of signals and movements that emerged in this short observation and the orchestration of the second practitioner, Miss Kite (plus the addition of a passive researcher), children were able to confirm or subvert the overriding dialogue with little disruption to the previously established routine. In recognition of the specialism Miss Price had previously identified in respect to the writing and book areas and the potential these spaces granted, *'to do a lot more focused work'*, it might be assumed that the children also recognised these enclosed spaces in terms of their more formalised patterns of engagement.

Although a juxtaposition between the enclosed peripheral spaces and open thoroughfare of the Riverbank's main-hall and the outdoor areas appeared to be emerging, the creative transformation of spaces and repetition of objects and activities across the various sites created a sense of synergy. While the writing area was structured in a simple table and chair configuration with a plentiful supply of mark-making resources positioned nearby, provision here was also regularly adapted and on one occasion, the entire floor surface had been lined with paper. Material elements, such as the inclusion of mirrors, which lined the lower half of the walls, signalled the philosophy of Reggio Emilia where mirrors are seen to extend the creative process. Large boxes covered with paper were scattered across the space and children were encouraged to make marks on the various prepared surfaces using a variety of

coloured pens, crayons and pencils. For Jake, this pedagogical arrangement imbued alternative meanings as he quickly transformed the area into a game and attempted to jump from one box to the next. Although the scene had been structured to induce child-initiated interest and engagement, Jake's transitory interpretation of the space conveyed latitude for even greater child-led autonomy and signified distance from the more performative specialism of literacy, previously mediated by the practitioner.

While responses at Riverbank were narrower in terms of description than those achieved at Meadow Rise, they also generated insight into alternative spatial contexts, instantiated by the children. In recognition of the repetition of some activities and artefacts, the children created a linkage between alternative forms of representation. This range of choice generated comparisons between the outdoor mud-kitchen and the home-corner that was situated in one of the peripheral rooms.

'I don't like the mud kitchen it's muddy' Henry (Riverbank, mud-kitchen)

'I don't like this – it's yucky' Truda (Riverbank, mud-kitchen)

'I like the kettle but it is a dentist now. I went to the dentist and I didn't cry.'
Truda (Riverbank, home-corner).

Truda indicated how the home-corner had recently been adapted to promote dental health. Semiotic relays that were not present in the picture of the home-corner exposed deeper concepts of sociodramatic play and alternative contexts of self-regulation that Truda identified through her own experience as being relevant to share. Henry also made a clear distinction between the outdoor mud-kitchen and the nursery's Forest School that the children had weekly access to in their set groups. Henry recognised the mud-kitchen was an area to avoid, but provision of the Forest School was salient, because his brother had access to similar provision at the primary school, where Henry would join him the following term. By differentiating between the spaces contained within the outside area, Henry revealed that the Forest School signified both a legitimate and masculine transition to school. In contrast, while the children had clearly defined the space containing the puzzles as the skills room, the children's responses were ambiguous as they were unable to describe the material content, or the type of activities that occurred there, as indicated by Mason and Aisha.

'Playthingys I like playthingys, that's where I play with them' Mason (Riverbank: Puzzle/skills room).

'I like the Rainbow' Aisha (Riverbank:Puzzle/skills room)

The rainbow that Aisha identified was a decorative plastic puzzle that was on display within the skills room, which due to the narrow representation of the image constructed by the researcher, was the only visible link to the type of activities that occurred there. As Aisha only confirmed the puzzle as a surface feature, it was difficult to ascertain if the item represented significance in relation to mastery orientation or its aesthetic value.

6.2.5. Summary from the favourites task

Findings from across the three settings reveal some similarity and variation in relation to the areas and activities the children identified as preferences. Painting achieved the highest ranking at Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise, confirming the availability of the easel and forms of engagement that occurred within the confines of the space allocated for creative play. At Riverbank, the painting easel did not achieve the highest ranking, perhaps because it was not reflective of the repetition of creative activities and alternative forms of 'hands on' engagement the structuration produced. Instead, children identified the book and writing areas, which shared the same enclosed space, to be their preferences. While it was not clear if the children recognised these spaces in respect to pedagogical intention, or increased regulation, they clearly marked this shared space as functioning as a base-room. Both the sorting task and the favourites task at Riverbank and Meadow Rise revealed an association between what the children recognised as salient and what they positioned in order of preference. In contrast to the opinion of the practitioners at Meadow Rise, who defined the book-corner as having a specific (performative) function, which they did not recognise to be the preference of the children, the area achieved the second highest ranking. Although the children made reference to the aesthetic layering of sofas and the positioning of books, they did not confirm if the enclosure of the space, or the high rates of social interaction that occurred there (at the time of the study), contributed to their marking of the area.

A gap emerged between what the practitioners recognised as salient to produce within the space and what they misread in terms of the aesthetic layering and children's social and cooperative engagement (Palmer 2009). Since all of the provision designed to fulfil the curriculum was contained within one large hall at Quarry Lane, there appeared to be a higher level of regulation. Here, children ranked painting, small world and construction as their preferences and as these areas seemed to be child-initiated, alternative forms of autonomous, yet discreet, corporeality began to emerge. At Riverbank, boundary maintenance was visible,

with the division of open and enclosed pedagogical spaces. Although the juxtaposition of the open and enclosed sites signalled variation in terms of regulation and pedagogical intention, as illustrated by the close proximal stance of practitioners in the home-corner and the marking of the skills room (puzzles), other patterns of behaviour generated alternative meanings. With closer observation, the children's individual pursuits appeared to interplay with the routine, or destabilise the practitioners' pedagogical intention, to suggest that no homogenous discourse could be assumed.

6.3. The Gender Task

Since the practitioners in each of the three settings had intimated that pedagogical spaces produced gendered patterns of engagement, analysis focused on identifying how boys and girls marked the spatial contexts they engaged in. First, findings from the favourites task, where children had ranked the areas in order of preference, were examined to identify how boys and girls categorised the ten pictures. Analysis then focused on a task that had been devised around an illustration of three figures labelled, Joe (boy), Robin (ambiguous) and Sian (girl) (see chapter 3, 3.3.7.). This gender task was designed to explore how children recognised the three characters in relation to the ten pictures, to see which type of activities the children deemed appropriate for Joe, Sian and Robin to engage in.

6.3.1. Findings from the favourites task by sex group

Using the scores created in the favourites task where children ranked the ten areas in order of preference, analysis focused on identifying how boys and girls had individually selected and ranked these spaces. Mean scores were derived to reflect the number of selections, by sex group, created. These scores were then converted into percentages to provide an indication of the average scores, so that comparisons could be made both within and across the three settings.

6.3.2. Quarry Lane. Findings from the favourites task by sex group

Area	Home-corner	Writing	Construction	Books	Painting	Outdoor 1 (OD1)	Outdoor 2 (OD2)	Outdoor 3 (OD3)	Puzzles	Small-world
Girls	56 (n=3)	70 (n=3)	36 (n=3)	93 (n=3)	93 (n=3)	50 (n=3)	43 (n=3)	33 (n=3)	23 (n=3)	50 (n=3)
Boys	10 (n=1)	50 (n=1)	75 (n=4)	25 (n=2)	97 (n=3)	60 (n=3)	57 (n=3)	80 (n=1)	20 (n=3)	73 (n=4)

Table 6.3.2. Quarry Lane: n 9. Findings from the favourites task: Rating out of 100.

The book-corner that the children recognised as ‘the mat’ achieved the highest ranking from the girls, but with little description to confirm their preferences. Since no attachment had been made to the area functioning as a book-corner, the mat may have represented a quiet space creating relative seclusion, or the girls recognised the more formalised context where children gathered as a collective group for adult-directed learning. For one boy at Quarry Lane, the tyres depicted in the outdoor pictures 2 and 3 corresponded with the car wheels sited in the small-world area and the wheels on the pushchair positioned near the construction. Boys signalled preference for the small-world and construction areas that confirmed what the practitioners at Quarry Lane had previously identified. Painting achieved a high ranking from both boys and girls. As part of the continuous provision, the painting easel was available on a daily basis and so created an opportunity for children to express themselves and have control in what they painted.

6.3.3. Meadow Rise. Findings from the favourites task by sex group

Area	Home-corner	Writing	Construction	Books	Painting	Outdoor 1 (OD1)	Outdoor 2 (OD2)	Outdoor 3 (OD3)	Puzzles	Small-world
Girls	88 (n=4)	40 (n=4)	40 (n=4)	83 (n=4)	90 (n=5)	50 (n=4)	35 (n=4)	32 (n=5)	40 (n=4)	53 (n=3)
Boys	50 (n=4)	43 (n=4)	33 (n=4)	80 (n=4)	65 (n=4)	88 (n=4)	53 (n=4)	48 (n=4)	48 (n=4)	45 (n=4)

Table 6.3.3 Meadow Rise: n 9. Findings from the favourites task by sex group: Rating out of 100 by sex group

Painting achieved the highest ranking from the girls at Meadow Rise, who also reaffirmed the tight pairing of the home and book-corner as identified previously. In contrast, the favourites’ task revealed that despite the close proximity and seclusion created between these two areas, the boys identified a clear boundary between the spaces in relation to preferences. Marking the book-corner as preferable to the aesthetic layering of the home-corner, signalled that boys

recognised some aspects of provision to be more salient in range of engagement than others. The boys also ranked the three outdoor areas higher than the girls rank and placed particular emphasis on outdoor picture 1, because it contained the bikes and scooters. Although, the girls at Meadow Rise had previously suggested that the construction area was male dominated and recognised the space as a source of friction, they ranked the area at a higher rate than the boys. Since the setting’s lead practitioner had selected the cohort of children who participated in the study, it was unclear as to whether the boys included in the sample were representative of the ones the girls had identified as problematic and the practitioners had identified as, *‘the gang of boys’*.

6.3.4. Riverbank.: Findings from the favourites task by sex group

Area	Home-corner	Writing	Construction	Books	Painting	Outdoor 1 (OD1)	Outdoor 2 (OD2)	Outdoor 3 (OD3)	Puzzles	Small-world
Girls	50 (n=3)	90 (n=4)	40 (n=3)	65 (n=4)	53 (n=3)	50 (n=3)	60 (n=4)	60 (n=4)	95 (n=2)	15 (n=2)
Boys	20 (n=1)	65 (n=2)	60 (n=2)	83 (n=3)	55 (n=2)	55 (n=2)	90 (n=1)	90 (n=2)	70 (n=1)	10 (n=1)

Table 6.3.4.. Riverbank: n 7. Findings from the favourites task by sex group: Rating out of 100.

Boys at Riverbank presented a high rating for the book-corner although the space’s dual function as base-room re-emerged as salient for two of the boys, who confirmed it as their room. The boys also selected outdoor images 2 and 3, which they recognised as preferable to the mud-kitchen illustrated in outdoor picture 1. While the girls confirmed the writing area as favourable, the puzzles (skills room) achieved the highest rank. As previously stated, the content and function of the skills room appeared to be confusing when children were asked about the area, although the brightly coloured rainbow puzzle positioned within the room was something that the girls positively identified as relevant for inclusion.

6.3.5. Combined findings from the favourites task by sex group

Combined mean scores across the three settings. (Rating out of 100)		
Area	Boys	Girls
Home-corner	38 (n=6)	67 (n=10)
Writing	50 (n=7)	66 (n=11)
Construction	55 (n=10)	39 (n=10)
Book-corner	69 (n=9)	79 (n=11)
Painting	73 (n=9)	81 (n=11)
Outdoor 1 (OD1)	71 (n=9)	50 (n=10)
Outdoor 2 (OD2)	59 (n=8)	46 (n=11)
Outdoor 3 (OD3)	64 (n=7)	42 (n=12)
Puzzles	40 (n=8)	47 (n=9)
Small-world	53 (n=9)	43 (n=8)

Table 6.3.5. Combined percentage ratings from the favourites task by sex group.

When the mean scores from each setting were combined (Table 6.3.5.), painting and the book-corner emerged as positive preferences for boys and girls alike. Some distinct variations did however emerge, in the way boys and girls selected the other areas. The home-corner, writing area and puzzles achieved the highest rankings by girls and the outdoor areas, construction and small-world activities emerged as the overall preferences of the boys. Practitioners at Quarry Lane and Meadow Rise identified painting to be an important activity and practitioners across all three settings confirmed that the book-corner had particular relevance, although their accounts suggested some variation of pedagogical intention as previously discussed in chapter 5.

By marking spaces and artefacts that the practitioners had instantiated as important for the delivery of the curriculum, the children appear to reaffirm the significance of these

areas within the three settings. Ivinson and Murphy (2003) argue that social representations of gender influence how classroom practices become marked as masculine and feminine. Davies (2003) suggests that children are not socialised into gendered roles, but are instead active agents within the gender construction process. Davies argues that through the positioning of gender, as presented within the social system, children make sense of male and femaleness in association with the culture and what is presented to be natural. By *'interpreting themselves in relation to what is seen to be normal and acceptable within the culture'*, Davies purports that children achieve ways of knowing and being (Davies 2003 p21). Findings from the 'Favourites' task suggest that boys recognised the areas that the practitioners (recontextualised) inadvertently marked as masculine, as salient. By marking the outdoor spaces and small world paraphernalia (trains and cars) as important, the boys signalled what the practitioners' recognised to be energetic and male orientated forms of engagement. Similarly, while practitioners had not confirmed that they associated spaces/artefacts (other than the painting at Meadow Rise) to be feminine forms of engagement, the girls' favourite areas (home-corner, writing and puzzles) suggested both social and quiet forms of engagement that the practitioners had identified. With consideration to the patterns of similarity and variation that emerged between the boys' and the girls' selections in the sorting task, the following section explores how children recognised the gender markings of spaces and artefacts within their preschool setting.

6.3.6 Gender Task: Allocating pictures to Sian, Joe and Robin An instrument was designed to explore if children recognised the spaces and artefacts they were familiar with, to be gender marked. The children were asked to assign the artefacts and spatial contexts (depicted in the ten photographs used in the previous tasks) to three hand-drawn dolls (see Figure 6.3.6).

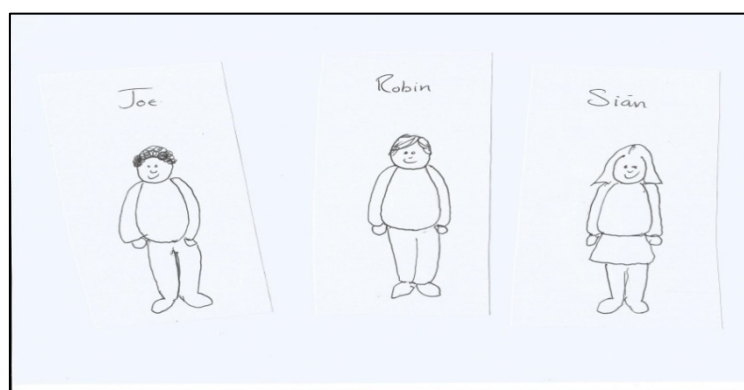


Figure 6.3.6. Illustration of characters included in the Gender Task.

Each doll was identified as, Sian (girl), Joe (boy) and Robin (ambiguous). The researcher did not refer to the dolls as being either male or female so as not to influence the children’s understanding of gender. The children were asked to select areas that they thought the dolls would like. Using only the characters’ names and pictures and not referring to gender, the researcher asked each child to justify their selections to confirm why they felt the areas/activities were suitable for the doll selected.

Findings from the gender task represent the number of selections the children created (see Tables 6.3.7.; 6.3.8. and 6.3.9.) and their justifications recorded, as detailed in the next section.

6.3.7. Quarry Lane: Gender Task (picture allocation to the three characters)

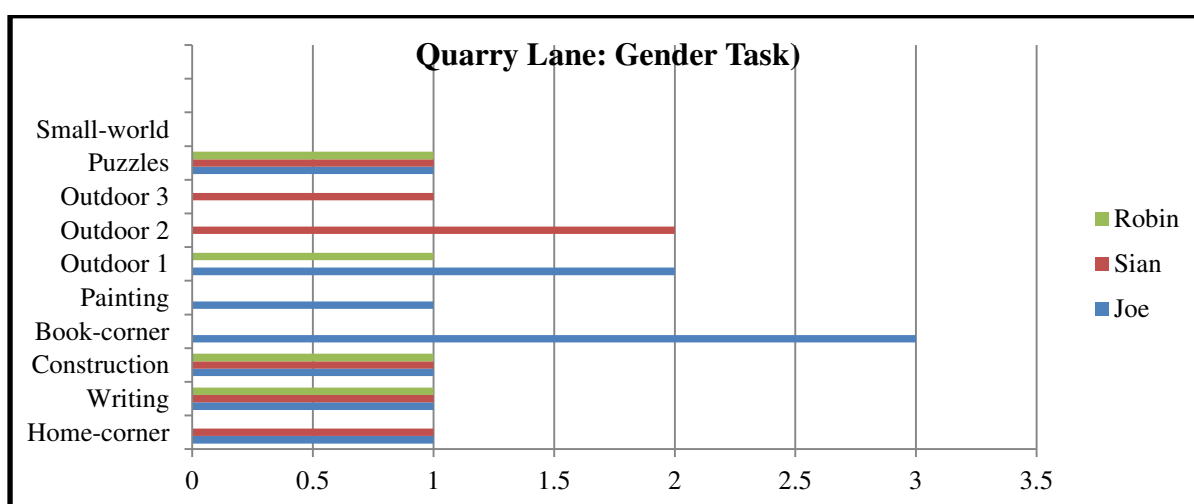


Figure 6.3.7 Quarry Lane: Gender task N=6. n (m) = 4. n (f) =2. Range 21-60. Number of allocations: Sian 7/21. Joe 10/21. Robin 4/21.

At Quarry Lane, two girls and four boys participated in the gender task and created a total of 21/60 selections from the ten images, as illustrated in Figure 6.3.7. Two boys identified the slide in outdoor picture 1 as relevant for Joe and allocated outdoor picture 2 to Sian, because it had tyres and contained no toys. Although the boys had previously rejected the book-corner in context to its formality and regulation, they now recognised it as pertinent for Joe.

*‘He (Joe) would like to go on the mat and listen to Aunty Jen’ Archie
(Quarry Lane).*

Joe achieved the highest number of selections 10/21 at Quarry Lane, while Robin received the least 4/21. Both Molly and Lucy identified Robin as a girl and listed the games (puzzles) and the writing, as areas that she would ‘love’.

6.3.8. Meadow Rise: Gender Task (picture allocation to the three characters)

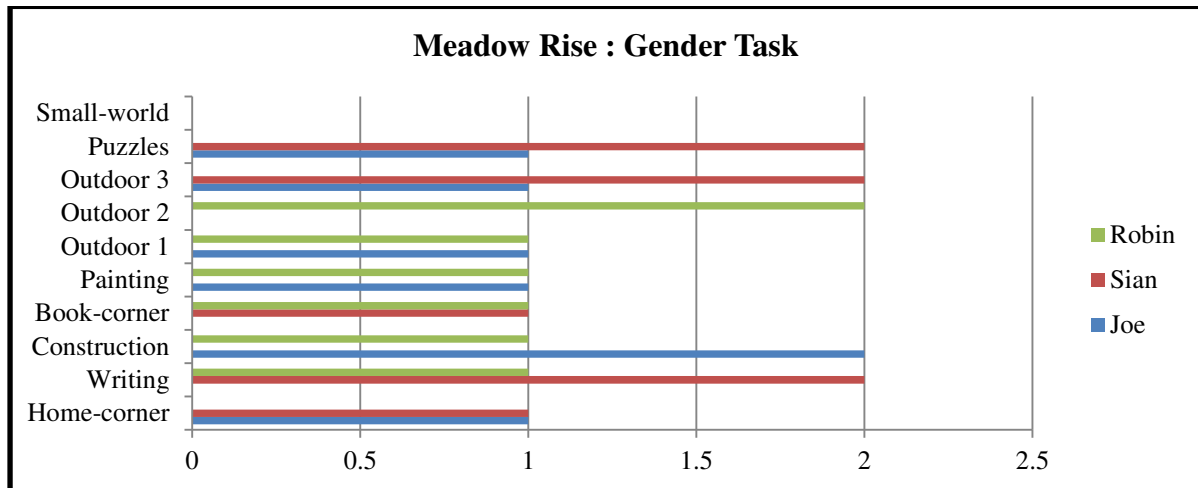


Figure 6.3.8. Meadow Rise: Gender task (N=3) n (m) = 2. n (f) =1. Range 22-30. Number of allocations: Sian 8/22. Joe 7/22. Robin 7/22.

Since the majority of children at Meadow Rise had participated fully in the three sorting tasks, only three children, Kai, Abi and Ethan contributed to the activity that was structured to identify selections for the three characters. Abi, had been reluctant to leave the quiet space at the end of the sorting task activities and asked if she could do something else, so the researcher presented her with the three characters. Abi was confident in her appraisal of areas she deemed suitable for the three characters, which at times she implied to be gender specific.

Abi Meadow Rise

‘Joe would like the bricks because they are boysy. You need to wear a helmet so they don’t bump your head when they fall down. Sian would like the jigsaws because she can choose whatever she likes. Sian can do the chalks and read to herself. Robin would like the house (OD2) because it’s a bit girly’.

Ethan created the highest number of selections and taking time to consider, allocated them according to his own preferences, placing his favourites, the painting and the puzzles with Joe. In contrast, Kai was eager to complete the task, which had been employed as an additional activity to engage his interest. Quickly aligning the outdoors and the bikes for Joe, together with the home-corner, ‘because Joe would like to do the washing up’ Kai then asked to be excused so that he could return to playing with his friends outside.

6.3.9. Riverbank: Gender Task (picture allocation to the three characters)

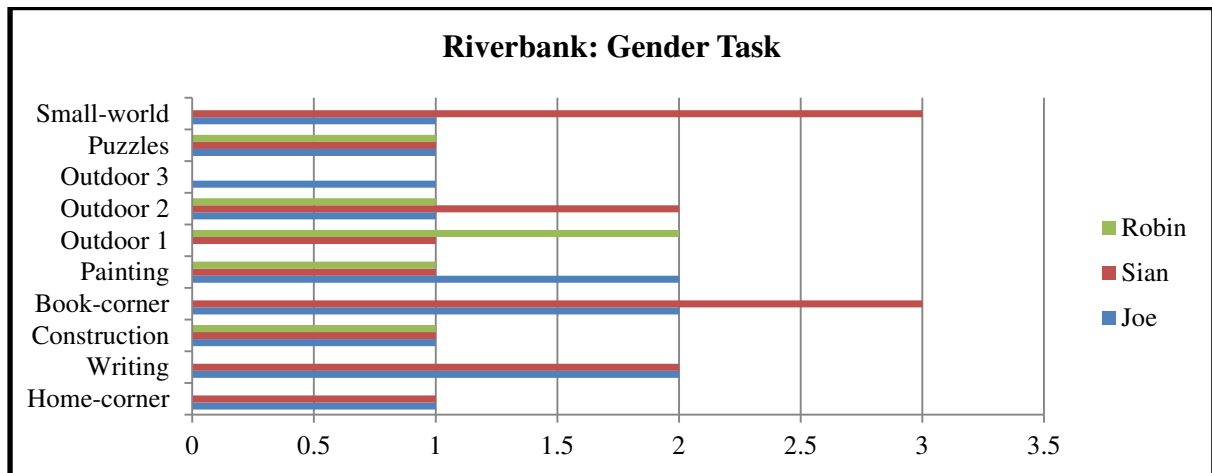


Figure 6.3.9. Meadow Rise: Gender task (N=6) n (m) = 2. n (f) = 4. Range 33-60. Number of allocations: Sian 15/33. Joe 12/33. Robin 6/33.

At Riverbank, the two boys and four girls created 33 selections in the picture allocation task (see Figure 6.3.9). Having recognised the combined space, which accommodated the writing and book-corner as their base-room, the children continued to place emphasis on the area with their selection of allocations. Although earlier descriptions of the area had been confined to what the children recognised as, ‘my group or my friend’s room’, other textural elements were beginning to emerge. In particular, the children allocated books and writing to be relevant for Sian.

‘Maybe they would like my group? She (Sian) would like the drawing and reading books in my group’. Henry (Riverbank)

‘Sian would like to play with me, she is my best friend, she likes the books and she likes the houses’. (Jake selects, the small-world doll’s house). Jake (Riverbank)

‘Sian would like my room she would like the colour (the writing). Joe would like the books because they are fun’. Eva (Riverbank)

While the small-world area appeared overlooked in the preceding task, three children now identified the doll’s house as being applicable for Sian. Where Truda had previously described the mud kitchen in outdoor picture 1 as, ‘yucky’ and both she and Henry rejected the space in relation to personal preference, they each allocated it as appropriate for Robin. Although the children referred to Robin and Sian as, ‘she’ the two images achieved very different rates in range of selections, Sian 15/33 and Robin 6/33.

Findings from the task to gauge how boys and girls perceived spatial contexts in relation to the three characters revealed some variation in terms of what they had previously identified

as their personal preferences. While the children at Riverbank continued to recognise the base-room as salient, their appraisal of its suitability for Sian and Joe exposed material and perhaps more formalised, patterns of engagement. Sian also emerged as someone the children recognised as a friend or social construct. In contrast, whereas the boys had rejected the more formal instructional discourse of the mat at Quarry Lane, their reading of the character Joe appeared to imbue alternative social constructs that were distant from their own.

Renold (2005) argues that, what might first appear to be contradictory forms of gendered knowledge and/or ways of being from the normalised hegemonic model of masculinity should instead be recognised in context to active gender processes. In reference to Connell's (1995) concept of a dominant and legitimate hegemonic masculine discourse which renders alternative forms of masculinities and femininities as subordinate, Renold purports that other roles are constructed in relation to hegemonic (and heterosexual) modes of power. From this stance, boys who do not engage in what is regarded as dominant masculine behaviour, such as the practitioners' example of the gang of energetic boys at Meadow Rise, still negotiate maleness in relation to what hegemonic masculinity represents. Renold argues that the contradictory and multiple ways children negotiate their gendered constructs relates to, for example, their maturity and their given culture. At Meadow Rise, Oscar's interpretation of the home-corner focused on the feminising of the dressing-up clothes and was distinctly non-negotiable in relation to his maleness. In contrast, Oscar was happy to share the emotional and hidden world of painting his Mummy and baby sister without disassociating himself from the context.

Through the territorial marking of areas that were *'boysy and girly'*, Abi suggested that the pedagogical spaces constructed within Meadow Rise playgroup were not only segregated, but that they also represented what Abi identified to be normalised constructs of male and femaleness. At Riverbank, the children recognised the character Sian to be a friend and someone who was familiar with the context and ritual of the setting. Sian was perceived to enjoy feminised pursuits such as the doll's house, the outdoor playhouse, but was also able to infiltrate spaces such as the construction area. Renold (2009, p233) argues that girls infiltration and assimilation of masculine discourses and practices enables them to overturn gender and sexual inequalities, but that forms of negotiation often remain heterosexually restrictive. Children across the three settings differentiated between the selections they created for Sian 30/76 in contrast to Robin 17/76, to suggest that their reading of the two girls varied in range of recognition, or perhaps collided with their interpretations of feminised

pedagogical forms of engagement. Recognising Joe, Sian and Robin to be similar or unlike themselves, the children across the three settings revealed that their interpretation of the spaces and activities conveyed different forms of gendered markings that could be variously negotiated and engaged with.

6.4. Summary of the children's recontextualisation of the Foundation Phase and patterns of engagement within each setting

6.4.1. Quarry Lane

Since the structuration of the pedagogy at Quarry Lane varied in comparison to the two other settings due to the positioning of artefacts to support physical play, there was an immediate juxtapose. Although the children's findings conveyed notions of restriction to the outdoor space, as previously indicated by the practitioners, the outdoor spaces emerged as salient. The artefacts and objects positioned within the main-hall created a visual contrast between the outside and inside environments that the children also recognised to be different, although they only used the repositioning of the pictures into groups to illustrate these distinctions.

Aspects that emerged as pertinent in terms of the children's preferences were located as part of the continuous provision. Painting, small-world, construction and the book-corner (but confirmed as *'the mat'*) were each identified in respect to access and engagement. Painting contained both elements of active pursuit and repetition that confirmed its value in respect to the setting's pedagogical framing and the children's emotional and tactile exploration of the area. In contrast, where boys confirmed preferences for the small-world and construction areas, focus was placed on the objects situated there and gave little to signify meaning of experiences. Although the discourse identified by the practitioners in relation to the function of the mat corresponded with the children's reading of the area, a division emerged in terms of recognition and engagement between boys and girls. Initially, forms of action associated with the mat signified modes of regulation and spatial confinement in what transpired to be the practitioners' culturally embedded intent to steer children's learning. The children's reading of the space also signalled recognition of the instructional discourse and, since the children gave no indication of the area functioning as a book-corner, the material layering of the space at first, appeared unconnected. In view of the selections created to reflect children preferences, however, which exposed a pattern of movement within floor-based areas and activities, alternative forms of engagement began to emerge. During the times allocated for free-flow provision, children who occupied the mat would have experienced some partial

seclusion due to its partitioning from the rest of the activities. While it had been assumed that boys might avert the gaze of practitioners within the construction and small world areas, gendered patterns of engagement also emerged in respect to the mat. By selecting the book-corner (mat) as a preferred space, girls at Quarry Lane signalled the type of behaviour the practitioners' marked as effective in preparing for the children's transition to school.

6.4.2. Meadow Rise

Practitioners at Meadow Rise enhanced the continuous pedagogical provision in a direction they recognised as salient to produce knowledge and skills. Findings from the children's tasks and observations revealed some variation in relation to the practitioners' recontextualisation of the pictures. Rather than explicitly confirm the official framing of the book-corner, children recognised the aesthetic layering of the space, which appeared to affect higher rates of occupancy and social interaction. Patterns of engagement within Meadow Rise appeared less regulated than Quarry Lane and children's corporeality between the outdoor and indoor environments was not often restricted. This freedom to explore generated autonomous forms of action and increased children's capacity to choose. Adult directed tasks, or instructional sessions where children gathered collectively on a mat, were organised at specific time intervals during the morning's session. Since these activities and the one-to-one focused tasks that were administered on the periphery of the room, they were not represented in the ten pictures. Consequently, the children were unable to suggest how these activities influenced or reshaped the everyday free-flow movement that they engaged in. The textural layering of artefacts and resources which the children recognised in relation to the practitioners' value-added enhancement helped reveal how children mediate between artefacts and resources in the context of their own knowledge and experiences. Pedagogical provision that the children recognised to be culturally compatible, revealed alternative patterns of engagement. The repetition of artefacts between home and preschool also signalled autonomous action towards outdoor play, as one child choose to reshape and disengage other spatial contexts (books and painting) from his pedagogical experience.

6.4.3. Riverbank

At Riverbank, there was a clear distinction, between the free-flow movement between the indoor and outdoor areas and the more formalised and regulated peripheral rooms. The positioning of spatial contexts at Riverbank was rather more complex than in the other two settings. While the range of space and provision might be assumed directly to conflict with

the narrowness of content contained in the ten pictures, the visual stimuli generated insights into the corporeality and types of engagement the children recognised as being salient. In view of the children's capacity to navigate across the setting, there were clear examples of autonomous action, where children had capacity to redirect or destabilise pedagogical intent. The marking of the peripheral rooms conveyed more formalised patterns of engagement, but observations also revealed examples of children expressing autonomy. By labelling the peripheral spaces, '*my room*', the children conveyed a sense of ownership in addition to formality of the ritual and routine. Although the study created an opportunity to gain some knowledge of the type of engagement that occurred when children came together collectively in their base-rooms, it would have been useful to investigate further what pedagogical features marked these spaces as different.

While practitioners at Riverbank had identified spatial contexts in terms of specialisms and recognised a shared ethos with some parents towards children gaining access to books, they did not confirm that the 'push' towards writing was of equal value. Although only Safa recognised the writing area in terms of mastery and engagement, some children recognised writing and books as being relevant for Sian in the gender task. They also signalled that this feminised persona was compatible as both a friendship construct and pedagogical ideal. Where outdoor play had emerged as an ambiguous and challenging concept during the construction phase of the curriculum, Henry confirmed that the Forest School was recognised as a legitimate discourse that transcended beyond preschool to big school environments.

6.5. Discussion

Findings from the children's sorting tasks revealed that the pedagogical spaces contained within each of the three preschool settings signify a range of alternative meanings. Within each of the three settings, children were able to expose the multi-layering of the pedagogy. This process revealed not only variation in terms of how children recognised these spaces, but also how they were able to communicate their thoughts in response to the task. At Meadow Rise and Riverbank, children were able to converse well, but there were additional distractions at Riverbank, which appeared to negatively impact on the range of dialogue. Where children had been confident and able to express themselves freely in the company of their peers, when the game was administered during the first phase of the study, the dynamic of being situated one-to-one with the researcher and in the gaze of additional (practitioner) observer, their responses appeared to be less spontaneous. In addition, the administration of

the task during the early summer term created a distraction for children who wished to join the sound of outdoor play. At Quarry Lane, children were less communicative in their descriptions, but interested in the quiet space that had been reserved for the task and were distracted by its novelty (Anderson and Jones 2009).

While children were able to accurately identify and sequence the positioning of artefacts to reflect the structure of each of the environments, their interpretation of the material culture varied in terms of recognition and categorisation. Signifiers, such as the adherence of protocol to ensure the fair distribution of bikes, the abstention from activities classified as messy or chaotic and the gap between outdoor and indoor (physical/non-physical) domains, disclosed more complex patterns of occupancy and negotiation. The children also recognised modes of learning as being relevant to the way they navigated across and within the space/s in response to formal and informal pedagogical practices. It transpired that the division of space not only has an effect upon rates of engagement, but also the forms of pedagogy the children would encounter. Where movement was restricted, either within the tight clustering of areas or activities, or within spaces marked as salient, such as the mat or the base-room, the curriculum appeared more formalised and adult-directed. Less overt forms of spatial segregation also emerged as pertinent to the ways children engaged with the pedagogy within the settings. When the children identified the feminised layering of aesthetics in the home-corner, or created the linkage between the construction area and tensions attributed to the, '*gang of boys*', their interest and corporeality decreased. In contrast, provision of free-flow movement appeared to enable alternative patterns of engagement and the spread of activities empowered children to choose the areas/ interests they wished to occupy.

For some children, their capacity to recognise areas/artefacts as relevant for inclusion was endorsed through wider social actions and experiences. In addition to the cultural capital that the practitioners had identified as being relevant to rates of participation in the book-corner and writing area, the children described spaces in context to other representations, both encountered, or imagined. Where the practitioners had previously identified outdoor play as being the preference for boys, the children also confirmed a gender divide in range of occupation of space and patterns of engagement. Through their perceptions' of Sian, Joe and Robin, the children also revealed particular forms of engagement which were distinctive to the Foundation Phase pedagogies of the three preschools and the spatial contexts contained within them.

6.6. Summary

This chapter has found that children across the three settings recontextualised the curriculum in response to what the practitioners produced. Through their corporeality, children recognise the spaces and material culture that they use, to discover, socially interact, physically and emotionally express themselves and achieve a sense of mastery. The children also recognised a variation of pedagogical intention, where spaces had been shaped to produce discourses that strengthened more formalised patterns of engagement. While some spaces were distinctly marked to suggest different forms of encounter, such as access to the outdoors, the peripheral rooms and the mat, the children also produced alternative boundaries that shaped their everyday preschool experience. Through their disclosure of these hidden rules of engagement, the children indicated how little they might contribute to the production of the curriculum. By placing emphasis on the production of focused tasks (Taylor et al. 2016) all that the practitioner is able to observe would, as Bernstein (1996, 2000) suggested, be narrow in range of the child's potential pedagogical engagement.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Implications

7. Introduction

This chapter draws together findings from the three empirical chapters, to address each of the research questions in turn. Theory and literature that informed the research process, will be explored in relation to the findings and relevant policy implications are assessed. Finally, an evaluation of the research process identifies limitations and suggests future research directions.

7.1. The four research questions

Findings, will be discussed in relation to the research questions and the guiding concept of Bernstein's notion of recontextualisation. The findings will be used to suggest: how the Foundation Phase policy drew on a range of discourses as it was created, how it was understood by practitioners, how they instantiated the policy in classroom practice and how children in the three settings recontextualised the Foundation Phase pedagogy as it was made available to them through everyday practice. The research questions are:

1. What were some of the influences and discourses that the advisors brought to the creation of the Foundation Phase?
2. How do practitioners' recontextualise the Foundation Phase?
3. How is the Foundation Phase instantiated in the material culture of three preschool settings?
4. How do children in each setting recognise the Foundation Phase and what are the consequences for learning?

The next section addresses findings that relate to the first research questions.

7.2. Foundation Phase Advisors: insights into the discourse and organisations that made up the PRF

Interviews with the four advisors, provided insight of the Pedagogical Recontextualising Field (PRF) and the range of agents and agencies involved with the development of the curriculum. In light of the Welsh Government's aim, to widen civil participation and strengthen partnerships, the notion of a grassroots policy agenda that intended to integrate

fields of care and education, would have recognised as conducive. In response to the discourse of derision that Celia, one of the participants, identified to be the voice of the non-maintained sector (who objected to the formal education of three year olds), the intention was to achieve cohesion and collaboration across the preschool sector (chapter 4, pp 64).

As previously confirmed in chapter 2, voluntary sector organisations had influence over the knowledge that the funded non-maintained settings produced and were included in the transformation process. Although, these organisations appeared amenable to change, to accommodate the evolving childcare landscape, they also maintained a clear distinction. As each organisation responded to specific child-care fields, such as Welsh language immersion, they also had different, but similar discourses to project. Through the integration of care and education, it would seem that the voluntary sector achieved efficacy to influence and reshape the curriculum within the PRF. This was illustrated by the non-maintained advisor, Dawn, who suggested that playgroups shared the same ethos as the new curriculum, of learning through play, which schools would find difficult to reproduce. By retaining elements of what they recognised to be long established modes of practice, the advisors illustrated how the transformation process had been influenced by traditionally held values and beliefs.

The small cohort of advisors, were representative of the various agents and agencies that contributed to the development of the Foundation Phase. The advisors' accounts created insight of the expectations and complexities that existed at different sites across and between the PRF and the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF). They also exposed tensions such as, costs to create provision and maintain it, engaging parents, social-disadvantage and levels of resistance by practitioners within the field of education. The advisors identified global pedagogical modalities that the State appropriated, as legitimate discourses to impart. They also provided examples to illustrate the struggle of reproducing discourses at various sites within the PRF (see chapter 4 pp 67-72). Each advisor suggested that they had capacity to contribute knowledge and understanding, to assist the transformation of the curriculum, but it would seem that levels of involvement varied in relation to what was produced. This highlighted the stratification across the PRF, between those who were engaged in trial and error pedagogical pursuits and those who had autonomy instruct and project what State recognised as legitimate discourses

Interviews with the four advisors, informed the study of the various discourses and influences that shaped the development of the Foundation Phase as it moved across sites within the PRF.

Their accounts provided some indication of the struggles and challenges of developing a new curriculum, in context to embedded traditions of care and education. They also introduced notions of scrutiny and vulnerability that produced a discourse of, *'being seen to be doing it right'*. (chapter 4, p 71). The interviews also exposed levels of consciousness that served to reshape the pedagogy when obvious gaps emerged. For example, drawing from theory and experiences, the advisors were able to recontextualise discourses responding to social disadvantage and standards of attainment that had not been explicitly produced by the State (chapter 4 p78).

7.2.1. Interviews with the practitioners

Twelve practitioners, from across the two non-maintained settings and the statutory nursery, each threw light on the production of the curriculum in each of the three preschools. The practitioners' interviews, (which included a short series of tasks) were designed to elicit their understandings of the Foundation Phase in relation to what they had created.

All three settings had produced clearly defined areas and activities that were representative of those contained within the official guidance materials. The material culture and various spatial contexts were mediated, by each practitioner, as having some pedagogical value in assisting the child's developmental growth and their acquisition of skills (Chapter 6, pp 85-98). The practitioners' recognised the principles of creating free-flow movement, to encourage child initiated learning and offered examples to illustrate the type of things that the children engaged with in the three settings. Through their appraisal of the spaces and material culture, the practitioners appeared to confirm that there was mutual recognition and support for what each setting had produced.

Alternative meanings began to emerge during the formal interviews, when the practitioners were asked to categorise the areas and artefacts in response to the three tasks. The practitioners articulated different meanings to the ones expressed in response to the same areas/activities in the other settings. Drawing from the examples that the two advisors gave, which suggested that they recontextualised the skills' framework in different ways, the practitioners also appeared to produce different meanings. At Meadow Rise, focus was drawn towards children developing their social skills and outdoor play was recognised as enhancing interactions and cooperative behaviour. Practitioners at Riverbank created areas to produce specific skills, which implied they shared the same opinion as the statutory advisor, Mary (see chapter 4, p 74). The recontextualisation of skills at Quarry Lane, were mediated through

the discourse the practitioners had produced to direct learning and move the child forward. Findings from the practitioners' interviews across the settings, found a variation in what they had recontextualised from the guidance documents towards achieving, '*a balance between child-initiated and adult-directed learning*' (Welsh Assembly Government 2008, p6) and what they produced. There was also an indication that as the guidance materials had been intentionally open for interpretation (chapter 2 p 28), historically embedded notions, such as those pertaining to gender might also be reproduced. As the interviews with the advisors disclosed a division of labour within the PRF, so too, did the interviews with the practitioners. Those working within the statutory sector appeared able to embrace themes and contexts, confirmed by the State as legitimate for inclusion. Strands of pedagogy pertaining to Reggio Emilia's creative and open-plan framework (Edwards et al. 1998) were employed, in addition to the setting's official framing of the setting's Forest School. Practitioners at Riverbank were able to articulate clear pedagogical intentions to illustrate not only their contributions to the production of the curriculum, but the value they added as qualified teachers. In view of the discourse produced by the advisors, '*to be seen to be doing it right*' (chapter 4, p71) in response to the regulatory gaze of external bodies (Osgood 2006), parallels could be drawn with Quarry Lane. Having recently acquired 'Flying Start' status and additional responsibilities, the onus to direct rather than guide children's learning suggested a level of uncertainty and/or insecurity. By reshaping the Foundation Phase through a more formalised and instructive discourse that the practitioners at Quarry Lane collectively endorsed, the curriculum's production could remain stable and easy to produce.

Although Meadow Rise was also situated between discourses of care and education, the setting appeared to exhibit more autonomous status than the other playgroup. Influenced perhaps by its professional leadership and the locale of an academically focused school catchment, Meadow Rise appeared assured in the curriculum it produced. The setting also appeared insulated and undaunted by any policy demands, or initiatives, generated from outside.

Findings, from the practitioners' interviews revealed that they recontextualised, instantiated and reproduced the Foundation Phase pedagogy in different ways within and across each of the three preschool sites. Spaces, artefacts and objects were produced in line with what practitioners recognised as salient to support children's developmental skills and assist child-initiated and adult guided/directed, learning. Through the production of competence and

performance modes of pedagogy, the practitioners illustrated variance between visible and invisible pedagogical intentions. This study has also shown that practitioners reshape and reframe the curriculum, by producing new discourses in response to wider cultural demands pertaining to school readiness and child-care sufficiency. Those insulated from the struggles between care and education had the capacity to project strong voice and message about what they produced. By maintaining legitimate status through continuing professional development and ongoing interest and research, these practitioners were able to broaden children's pedagogical engagement. In contrast, those who were exposed to increased levels of surveillance and were confronted with the tension of competing initiatives, appeared vulnerable in their capacity to produce a more child-centred and competence mode of pedagogy.

7.2.2. The children's tasks

The sorting, favourites and gender tasks that the children participated in generated alternative meanings to the ones the practitioners had identified in context to the pedagogical spaces and material culture produced within each of the three settings. The children differentiated both within and between the outside and inside areas, by marking objects that they recognised as familiar and associated with different types of engagement. Children identified a variation between child-initiated spaces and artefacts and the more formalised discourses associated with the mat and the base-rooms. Areas that had been thematically enhanced evoked other meanings relating to the children's wider cultural experiences. Familiarity of the ritual and routine were expressed through the children's notion of what was and was not available every day. Findings revealed that the children's corporeality was enhanced or inhibited by what the practitioners had recontextualised and had capacity to reproduce. Children recognised areas that they identified as social or quiet spaces and places to avoid. They also recontextualised the material layering of the pedagogy in relation to perceived gendered constructs and intimated that this restricted access and levels of participation. Where the practitioners had placed value on skills in relation to the spaces and material culture they had produced, the children also identified examples of mastery and achievement.

Findings from the tasks and observations of the children's corporeality have been particularly important to explore the recontextualisation of the Foundation Phase, as it created unique insight of the way the children read the production of the pedagogy and create new meanings. This research has identified variations to the way the practitioners' instantiated and produced

the curriculum in each of the three settings. It has also identified that children differentiate between the pedagogy produced, which shapes their engagement with the curriculum during the first year of what will be, a continuum of learning.

7.2.3. In response to the research questions

Guided by Bernstein's notion of recontextualisation, the study has been able to identify the influences and discourses that influenced the creation of the Foundation Phase and how it was recognised and instantiated in the three settings. Using the specialised instruments and drawing from observations, the research has also discovered a range of factors that influence the way children engage with the pedagogy. This research has found that practitioners recontextualise the Foundation Phase curriculum according to their values and beliefs of what the child's development requires. Traditionally and culturally embedded discourses reshape the way the pedagogy is instantiated to produce new meanings, as represented in the spatial contexts and material culture of the setting. This study has found, that the children come to understand the pedagogy through their corporeality and the clues that the practitioners create. The research has also identified, that through their recontextualisation of the spaces and material culture, children produce other meanings, to suggest how they engage with the curriculum.

In recognition of these findings, the next section revisits the theory and literature that assisted the research enquiry.

7.3. Findings relating to theory and literature

This section reassesses some of the concepts and contexts that were explored in chapter 2 and discourses and themes that have emerged from the findings.

Bernstein's (1996, 2000) concept of recontextualisation created an opportunity to generate empirical analysis of the production of the Foundation Phase from its original site of development, to the relocation and reshaping process within the three settings. Bernstein provided a stance from which to investigate, the multiplicity of the child-care landscape and players within the PRF. Rather than explore more abstract meanings that Bernstein's broad theoretical range encompasses, recontextualisation served as an explanatory framework from which to assess how agents and agencies influence the pedagogy as it is relocated, reshaped and reproduced. The framework helped to explore, how dominant discourses that fall into play, become dislocated and reproduced into everyday ideals and intentions. Drawing from

Bernstein's model of performance and competence modalities, the research was able to consider the tension between fields of care and education and identify strong and weak modes of pedagogical production.

Drawing from research by Ivinson and Duveen (2005, 2006), that identified ways in which children construct social representations of the curriculum, this study explored 3-4 year olds understandings of the Foundation Phase. It focused on the material culture of three different preschool settings. Practitioners had instantiated the Foundation Phase curriculum in the material culture and spatial contexts of the settings in different ways. This provided some evidence for the different ways they recontextualised the Foundation Phase guidance materials. Children who had not yet developed an understanding of the adults' pedagogical intentions were able to express meanings that were salient to them in their everyday preschool experiences. Through observations of the children's movements around the settings, other forms of engagement were observed that illustrate the multi-layering, complexity of the clues and markers that were salient to children in the three different Foundation Phase preschool settings.

McGillvray (2008, 2010) and Moss (2006) confirmed that embedded disparities exist between traditional constructs of care and the continuing promotion of a professionalised status. What this thesis has revealed is the division of labour between the care trajectory for non-funded settings and the acceleration of qualified status for those delivering the Foundation Phase in funded settings. It could be argued that the '*re-visioning*' (Moss 2006) of the child-care worker has generated a distance from the informal tacit skills that the role was traditionally associated with. Recent findings by Taylor et al. (2016, p301) reassert the Welsh Government's longitudinal stance that the Foundation Phase, '*offers a unique attempt to bridge a child centred approach to education within a standards driven education system*'. In view of the Welsh Government's partnership ethos, which created larger units of production to empower communities and reduce variation by weakening boundaries between organisations, there is also potential for division. This thesis has exposed a gap between fields of care and education that suggest that there is a lack of parity and legitimation between two sectors. In 2014, two independent reports³ published on behalf the Welsh Government recommended that one regulative inspectorate should replace the two and, '*historically different*' systems currently employed, to achieve greater consistency (Siraj 2014, p19;

³ 'Independent review of childcare and early education, registration, regulation and inspection' (Graham, 2014) and the 'Foundation Phase Stocktake' (Siraj-Blatchford 2014).

Graham 2014). In response to these recommendations, Estyn and CSSIW have produced a joint inspection framework, which they will pilot in 2016-2017 (Welsh Government 2016, p9). While it is not clear how this new inspection process will reduce current inconsistencies, the visible boundaries between non-statutory and statutory sectors appear to remain distinct. As the changes to the inspection framework will be structured to continue to regulate funded non-maintained settings differently to unfunded settings, it would seem that a division of labour within what is recognised to be, a largely feminised domain, has potential to remain.

The Learning Country document set out a clear intention to tackle social disadvantage and reduce the gap in attainment between boys and girls (NAfW 2001). This research has found that where gaps exist within provision, practitioners are vulnerable to mask deficiencies by employing alternative forms of practice. The growth of the playgroup movement as explored in chapter 1 and the advisors' accounts of the Foundation Phase pilot in chapter 4, identified a culture of self-help within the early years' sector. Findings from the study relating to the first phase of the Foundation Phase's production revealed that the National Assembly for Wales' intention to reduce social disadvantage through the creation of a more innovative curriculum, designed to engage children actively was not homogenously recontextualised and meanings were not made explicit. Strands of the pedagogy's design and development were formulated on previous experience and modes of intervention that were recognised by the advisors as being relevant for inclusion. While there is a clear directive towards improving standards of provision and the quality of training and assessment, the anticipated fulfilment to reduce social disadvantage relies on explicit meaning. This thesis has identified a struggle between care and education modalities that has the capacity to influence how the pedagogy is mediated and reproduced. Although, preschool settings have the autonomy to reshape the pedagogical modality to respond to their community, this study has shown that they also maintain capacity to reproduce what is locally embedded. Penn (2004, pp 89-90) purports that by retaining an alliance of self-help within the childcare landscape, standards have the potential to be compromised.

This study has shown that the Foundation Phase was generated, in part, through a grassroots policy agenda, with the aim to create a joint enterprise through the development of partnership between the statutory and non-maintained sectors. Drawing on Bernstein's concepts of the Official Recontextualising Field (ORF) and the Pedagogical Recontextualising Field (PRF), the research identified how agents and agencies on behalf of the State, were positioned to influence interpretations of the Foundation Phase curriculum as it moved between different sites. In 2014, an independent stocktake of the Foundation Phase suggested that one-fifth of all maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings were implementing the curriculum successfully (Siraj 2014, p3). The stocktake also reaffirmed findings from the MEEIFP project (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2006) that there was considerable variability between the higher standards produced in maintained schools and nursery schools, than those within non-maintained settings. Citing UNESCO's (2004) recommendations for quality improvements, which called for a strong lead from government to maintain a robust, long-term vision and sufficiently motivated and well supported staff, the stocktake suggested that in order for the Foundation Phase to be effective a fundamental change in culture within many of the schools and non-maintained setting was necessary (Siraj 2014, p3). In response to the stocktake, the Welsh Government introduced a new tier of agents between the ORF and the PRF to monitor, implement and evaluate the curriculum as it continues to be embedded. The Stocktake recommended that the Welsh Government:

Appoint a strategic group of Foundation Phase experts from across and beyond Wales to take a strategic and long-term planning role within the Foundation Phase. To devise a ten year plan to support the next steps in the implementation and consolidation of the Foundation Phase:

- using the Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7 year-olds in Wales (DCELLS 2008) as a guide.
- taking forward key recommendations from current evaluations, reviews and this Stocktake.
- developing an effective communication strategy for across Wales.
- acting as a conduit for all Foundation Phase changes, planning and evaluations.

(Siraj 2014, p5).

Findings from the Foundation Phase evaluation noted that while there has been some improvement in range of involvement disparities between boys and girls pedagogical experiences still existed.

Observed child involvement and wellbeing ratings in the case study schools are generally higher for girls than boys, even for schools with a higher degree of Foundation Phase implementation. This would suggest that there is still a long way to go before the Foundation Phase can fully address differences in the educational experiences of boys and girls. Taylor et al. (2015, pp 96).

Laevers and Verboven (2000) maintain that experiential learning has reduced gendered forms of engagement as it enables boys to participate in role-play and created an opportunity for girls to initiate challenges. Findings from the three settings suggest that where children have autonomy to choose, boys and girls made decisions about the types of spaces and material they engage with every day. The children also recognised other forms of engagement in relation to the three dolls, which suggested that they differentiated between the spatial contexts and material culture to produce similar or different experiences to their own. Although the sample of practitioners and children in the study is small, each setting disclosed patterns of gender marking which impacted upon children's levels of engagement. This research has found that boys and girls differentiate between spaces through the material culture of their preschool setting and how and practitioners' practices mark activities as masculine and feminine. Children in all three settings recognised gendered places they wished to occupy or avoid. This study has shown that through their movements and talk, children learn to understand and negotiate between gendered boundaries within the preschool setting. It seems that children come to school with already constructed notions of gendered objects and spaces. It would be useful to study preschool environments to understand what is shaping these different forms of engagement.

Although this thesis identified, but did not fully explore, social class in respect to the settings, elements which emerged as relevant for further investigation confirmed Iverson (2012) and Bernstein's concept of the non-busy child. Iverson argues that it is important not to assume that the non-busy child is passive and that assumptions vary according to what are assumed idle or knowledgeable and productive forms of engagement associated with their social class. By placing a distinction between the passive withdrawal of boys at Quarry Lane and the accommodation of boys in quiet spaces at Meadow Rise, this study has shown that further investigation of the non-doing child is relevant to understand different forms of pedagogical engagement.

7.4. Policy implications

This section considers the policy implications of concepts and contexts identified through this empirical investigation into the Foundation Phase.

7.4.1. Stratification within the PRF

The research has found that the childcare landscape in Wales is extremely diverse in response to the demands of parental choice and child-care sufficiency. While the government has adopted a partnership approach, to improve the pedagogy's dissemination and increase levels of consistency, this study has found that embedded distinctions remain, which influence the ways policy is mediated across the PRF. It has also found that the level of scrutiny and intervention is greater in the non-maintained sector than for the statutory sector, which appears to conflict with the partnership ethos and notions of parity between the two sectors.

7.4.2. A division between care and education

Further to findings by Anning (2001) which identified a divide between care and education pedagogical practice, this research also found a division between the two trajectories. By way of confirming that the non-maintained sector is recognised to be different preschool provision to that created in the statutory sector, the government has implemented para-professional support to assist the fulfilment of the curriculum. This research suggests that non-maintained practitioners recognise local authority provision and the pull towards education as separate to the discourse of the setting and thereby are able retain some autonomy and reshape the pedagogy as they see appropriate.

7.4.3. A division of labour for women

Moss (2006) argued that the re-visioning of the childcare worker has created an opportunity for upward mobility. This research has also found that in line with the governments' intention to address skill deficiencies, investment has been made to improve the level of qualifications practitioners working in funded non-maintained settings achieve and thereby enhance children's learning opportunities. As this study has already indicated, it would seem that in addition to the divide already identified between the statutory and non-statutory sectors, further fragmentation has occurred between funded and non-funded settings. This division might be seen to have a detrimental impact on those working within the non-funded childcare and would create a divide with the availability of quality provision.

7.4.4. Competing initiatives

Interviews with the advisors and the practitioners at Quarry Lane suggested that tensions emerge when settings have to respond to competing initiatives that the government and local authorities identify as relevant to employ. Findings from the advisors and practitioners have shown that discourses are influenced and adapted, according to the agents and agencies' capacity to mediate. With the transmission of top-down directives towards improving numeracy and literacy, strands of ambiguity and cultural incompatibility emerged and fuelled regression towards previously established performative traits.

7.4.5. Performance and competence modes of assessment

Recently published findings by Taylor et al. (2016) suggest that practitioners' interpretation of continuous, enhanced and focused layering of the pedagogy has created an imbalance between child-initiated and adult-guided learning. While continuous provision, forms the main part (85 percent) of the child's everyday preschool experience as previously confirmed, Taylor et al. found that pedagogical practice in schools and settings is weighted towards adult directed and focused (performative) tasks. In view of the strong visible framing of performance modes of pedagogy, which according to Bernstein, are easier to administer and assess, this research also identified deficiencies in practice that create an imbalance between child-initiated and adult-directed learning. The administration of the tasks created opportunity to explore practitioners' subjectivities in relation to other competing interests and demands. The tasks also generated insight to what the children recognised as salient, making their stance central, to the pedagogy produced.

7.4.6. Competing discourses on child development

This study has found that practitioners' reshape and reproduce the Foundation Phase curriculum in relation to what they recognise as appropriate for the developing child. In light of the variance of interpretation that practitioners' recognise as relevant pedagogical modalities to produce in relation to child-initiated and adult directed learning, emphasis should be placed on increasing levels of understanding. In the Foundation Phase Action Plan 2016, the Welsh Government acknowledges deficiencies in teacher training in relation to child development. The action plan proposes professional learning in child development and calls upon higher education institutions to include the subject on undergraduate programmes awarding Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) (Welsh Government 2016, p14). In light of the complexities that have been identified (as the Foundation Phase transferred across and within

various sites within the PRF), it is not clear to envisage how this valuable training investment will affect practice and provision within the non-maintained sector.

7.4.7. Gendered preschool provision

This research has shown that practitioners' recognised the spaces and material culture produced to deliver the Foundation Phase to be the preferences of boys or girls. Results from the children's tasks also confirmed that boys and girls marked spaces according to what they associated to be gendered forms of engagement. There has been some movement towards exploring gender within the preschool sector (MacNaughton 2000; Paechter 2007; Blaise 2009) and thought has been given to employing more innovative methods of research, (Renold and Mellor 2013), much work is needed to understand and affect the culture already embedded.

7.4.8. Wider social and cultural capital

Spatial contexts such as outdoor play have achieved legitimate pedagogical status in early years' practice. Maynard et al. (2013) explored the challenges of implementing outdoor play for teachers in schools and concluded that their previously held perceptions of children's underachievement were positively affected by the child's active involvement out-of-doors. Both the advisors' and the practitioners' findings revealed that parents played an indirect role in the implementation of outdoor play. Perceived notions of risk, parental concerns or apathy, costs and investment towards creating provision were recognised as potential barriers and would undoubtedly affect children's engagement with outdoor play. Practitioners at Riverbank differentiated between the cultural capital associated with some children's previously embedded 'love of books' and the 'push' towards writing that some ethnic families were observed to make. While the advisors emphasised the relevance of '*getting parents on board*', it would seem that social and cultural influences outside the setting also affect the child's level of engagement within the Foundation Phase.

7.5. Research limitations

In anticipation of the restriction of time and costs, the research was limited to a small-scale study incorporating the three settings. As the researcher was unable to devote considerable time to fieldwork (Denscombe 2010) the study was designed to investigate some variation of experiences. Although the cohort of advisors that were interviewed was only small, they each represented a different region of Wales to create some diversity of explanation. Concepts and

contexts which emerged as relevant discourses to explore, such as the appropriation and transfer of global interlocutors, assessment of the guidance materials and the stratification of roles and responsibilities within the PRF could have been explored more fully if the cohort had been larger and there had been more time available.

Without pictorial evidence of some aspects of the material layering, such as the resources in the skills room at Riverbank, or the alternative physical space at Quarry Lane, the children's recognition and realisation of these areas might be seen as relatively narrow, so the framework has the potential to be developed. As the children had only recently settled into the Foundation Phase during the first series of visits to the settings, it was decided that the tasks would be best employed during the spring/summer term. If there had been an opportunity to immerse more fully into the routine and culture of the setting, there may have been greater opportunity to establish rapport with the children.

Originally, the gender task was intended to engage with children who became distracted, or were initially quiet to respond. This proved to be a useful instrument to investigate how the children recognised the three characters in context to their setting. Unfortunately, due to time restraints it was not possible to extend the activity to all the children who participated in the study.

The semi-structured interviews were an effective means of enabling the advisors to speak widely. As mixed methods were employed to create validity, by cross-referencing the accounts of the advisors, practitioners and the verbal/non-verbal exteriorisations of the children, a large amount of data was produced. Transcribing the data was time-consuming and as the research had been limited to a set period, there was no opportunity to explore points of interest more fully by returning to the field to gain greater insight. The intention for the researcher to be unobtrusive was maintained and the researcher had no contact with the settings after the second series of visits. This restriction created no opportunity to follow up on the research and gain insight of later developments and experiences.

Interviews with the practitioners were also restricted in relation to time, particularly as they could only give a short time to the research. Insights and concepts that the practitioners alluded to could not be fully explored and time would have been structured in more skilfully, if there had been an initial intention to include them in the study.

In light, of the limitations that impeded further investigation and the range of findings that have emerged, it would seem that the production of the curriculum, as instantiated through the spatial and material layering and children's engagement has potential for future research.

7.6. Ethical issues

Each of the practitioners who participated in the study said that the task had been interesting and were interested to know how their thoughts compared to their colleagues and the children. These findings were not discussed and confirmed the researchers' intention to maintain confidentiality throughout the study and after, as ethically agreed.

As the research was conducted independently from the researcher's work, as advisor to assist the development of the Foundation Phase within the non-maintained sector, procedures had already been put in place to protect the confidentiality of the settings and populations who contributed to the study. There was no concern expressed by the researcher, or her employers that the two roles had collided in any way and the stance taken to maintain a clear distinction did not produce a conflict of interests. In 2014, the opportunity to generate some distance between the two fields, by leaving employment proved effective as it enabled the researcher to interpret findings and develop ideas without referring to current or competing experiences.

7.7. Conclusion

This investigation has found that the material culture and spatial contexts produced to support the production and delivery of the Foundation Phase, affects children's engagement with the pedagogy within their preschool setting.

Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation has helped to understand how the curriculum is reshaped as it transfers across sites within the Pedagogical Recontextualising Field (PRF). In response to notions of efficacy and widening participation, the research has identified how agents and agencies, granted capacity to influence the production of the curriculum at various levels of negotiation. Local authority representatives, voluntary sector organisations, teachers, college lecturers and non-maintained practitioners all contributed to the pedagogy's relocation and reproduction. The Welsh Government's intention to achieve joint enterprise, by merging fields of care and education within a complex and diverse childcare landscape was found to give rise to competing interests and variable pedagogical intentions. Concepts and contexts that the agents and agencies recognised as salient, in response to emerging

trends in early years' practice were recontextualised and reshaped in relation to the locale, competing ideologies and historically held beliefs. This study has shown that embedded distinctions between fields of care and education serve to maintain distance between the two sectors and that provision within funded non-maintained settings is pulled more firmly towards care. The research has found that through their mediation of the Foundation Phase guidance materials, practitioners reposition and reproduce the curriculum according to what they recognise as salient provision for the developing child. Artefacts and spatial contexts that the practitioners' instantiated in response to guidance on continuous, enhanced and focused provision have been shown to produce different forms of engagement.

Through the administration of specially designed tasks, the research was able to explore, how children come to understand and make sense of the material culture of their settings. Spaces and artefacts that the children identified signaled their interpretation of the various pedagogical spaces and objects contained within the three settings. Drawing from research by Iverson and Duveen (2005 and 2006), this study has found that young children come to understand the material culture of the Foundation Phase setting through their movements and how they recognise artefacts and spaces. Findings from the tasks and observations revealed that children differentiate between the spaces and artefacts according to what they recognise to be routine and familiar pursuits. Children identified spaces as having particular meaning, because they had regular access to provision (such as painting), or places (such as the base-rooms and the mat) where they gathered collectively for more formal forms of engagement. Through their navigation of the material culture of the setting, children were found to have different forms of negotiation that shaped the way in which they were able to engage with the curriculum. The research also found that preschool children within the three Foundation Phase settings, gender mark spaces and objects as male and female and this appears to regulate levels of access and engagement.

Investigation into the production and instantiation of the Foundation Phase has shown that the curriculum is amenable to change according to the practitioners' interpretations and competing discourses. Access to outdoor play, notions of risk, parental engagement, top-down policy directives, costs and expenditure and what the practitioners identify to be relevant provision for the care and educational needs of the developing child, can all be seen to influence the production of the pedagogy within the preschool sector. The research has found that much can be gained from analysing the way practitioners' instantiate the curriculum through the material culture and spatial contexts of their settings and that this

leads insight into their pedagogical intentions. Using specially designed instruments and observations of the children's movements, the study has shown that children interpret the different forms of provision created by the practitioners and that this has an influence on child's ability to be active or conform, leading to restricted and autonomous forms of engagement that affect learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to the settings.

Contact details

Dear

My name is Sharman Morgan and I work within early years education on behalf of, Wales Preschool Providers Association and the Welsh Government as a development officer assisting the Foundation Phase. I am currently studying towards a Professional Doctorate in Education at Cardiff University and seeking to find placement for my research.

My interest is child development and the purpose of my research is to explore the use of space within the Foundation Phase and assess its impact on children's learning. The placement will occur twice in the school year and would involve the same cohort of approximately 10-15 children, aged between 3-4 years.

As part of the study, I am looking to design a problem solving activity for the child to engage with individually. This one to one activity will require a quiet area within the setting, so that the child's behaviour can be observed and any language created during the task can be recorded. During each placement, I hope to gather qualitative evidence through non-participant observation and one to one interviews with the children. All the information will be made anonymous and permission by parents and guardians will be secured prior to commencement of the research. Any transcripts generated from the research will be securely stored and destroyed when no longer required. The study will be written up in a PHD thesis and might be published as an article or a book. I hope that you will kindly consider my request for a short term placement at (.....) and that you will contact me if you would like me to explain any relevant issues and answer any questions more fully.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 2. Informed consent: Parents and Guardians.

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

My name is Sharman Morgan and I am a part-time student at the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University, studying towards a Professional Doctorate in Education.

The aim of my study is to explore the use of space within the Foundation Phase and assess the impact it has on children’s learning.

I am looking to work one to one with children at (... setting...) and would welcome the opportunity to invite your son or daughter to assist me.

The study will occur twice in the school year and will consist of two tasks. I shall ask the children to complete a simple puzzle or construction activity in a quiet area of the setting. During this activity, I aim to observe each child and record his/her views and descriptions with a digital recorder.

Confidentiality

Please be assured that neither the setting nor your son/daughter will be named or identified in any way throughout this study or after. Observation note and audio descriptions of the tasks will only be accessible by my two supervisors at the university and me. These items will remain confidential in accordance with the Data Protections Act and the university’s code of ethics

If you require any further information, please contact TelephoneEmail.....

----- ✂

I can confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet and I give my permission for my son/daughter to participate in the study.

Signed

Date

Appendix 3. Interview consent form.

Consent Form: Research conducted by Sharman Morgan, Department of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Agreement to participate in a research interview.

1. I have been told that I will remain anonymous and any individuals named will remain anonymous.
2. I have been told that any details that would allow people to be recognised would be taken out and changed.
3. I have been told that the interview will be digitally recorded.
4. I have been told that I have the right to refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.
5. I have been told that the information I give will be used as part of a PhD thesis and may be published in an article, or book.

Signature Interviewee

Name (Print).....

Date.....

Signature Interviewer.....

Name (Print).....

Date.....

Appendix 4.

Advisors Interview Schedule.

Questions for Early Years Advisors.

- *How did you become involved with the Foundation Phase?*
- *What were the main influences on the curriculum at that time?*
- *What were the main objectives?*
- *How did you set out to achieve them?*
- *How would you describe the ethos of the Foundation Phase at that time?*

Order of contact.

Method

Interviewee (Pseudonym)

Semi-structured interviews

Catherine.

Early Years Advisor and local authority regional representative

One-to-one interview.

Celia.

Retired, senior university lecturer specialising in early year's education and FP Advisor to the Welsh Government.

One-to-one interview

Mary.

Retired, nursery-school head-teacher

Telephone interview

Dawn.

Playgroup supervisor and former primary school teacher

One-to-one interview

Appendix 5.**Time frame and word count**

Activity	Time-frame. Word count
Interviews with the four Advisors	May – July 2012.
Total number of minutes	176
Research within the three settings.	October 2012 – June 2013
Time spent within the three settings.	Two, weeklong visits to each of the three settings during both the Autumn and Spring/Summer terms (90 hours).
Observations	Over 60 hours of informal/formal non-participant observations and mapping of children's movements.
Field-notes, floorplan sketches and mapping children's movements	360 pages
Transcriptions of interviews with the advisors and recordings taken during the administration of the specialised tasks with children and practitioners.	Total number of words: 45263
Transcription conventions	The children's tasks were manually transcribed as conversational, researcher and child interactions. Advisor interviews and practitioners' tasks manually transcribed, in verbatim

Appendix 6.

Questions for the children's tasks.

Questions for the children's sorting task.

'Take a good look at all the pictures'.

'Can you see any pictures that look the same to put into a group?'

'Why do they go together?'

'Why are they the same?'

Questions for the children's favourites task.

'Take a good look at all the pictures'.

'Which picture is your favourite?'

'What is it?'

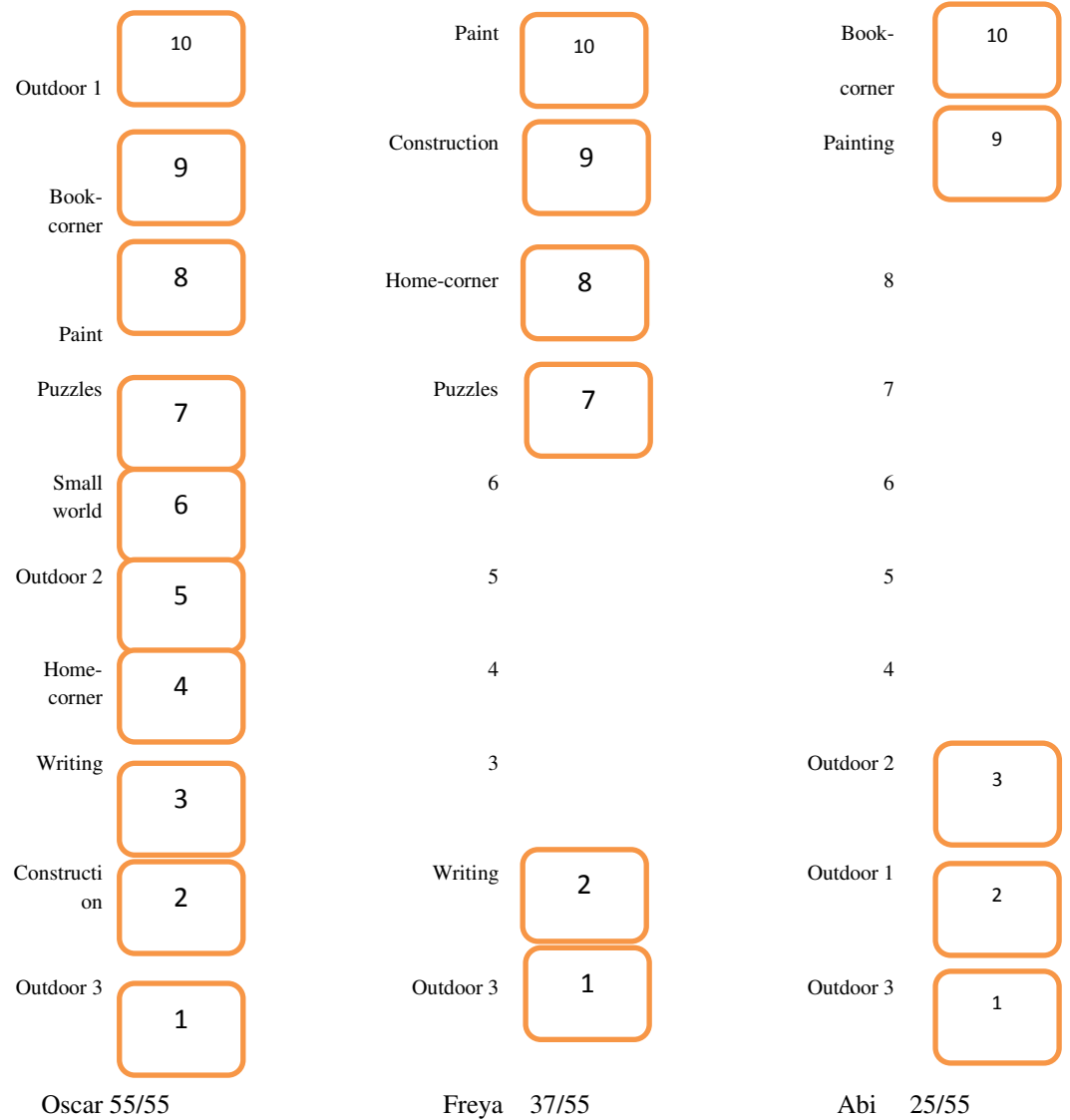
'What do you like about that picture?'

'Can you find a picture that you don't like?'

'What is it?'

'What don't you like about that picture?'

Appendix 7. Example to illustrate the favourites/ and hierarchal ranking tasks Order of preference (10 = highest 1= lowest) (Sample taken from Meadow Rise



Appendix 8. Illustration of characters included in the Gender Task

