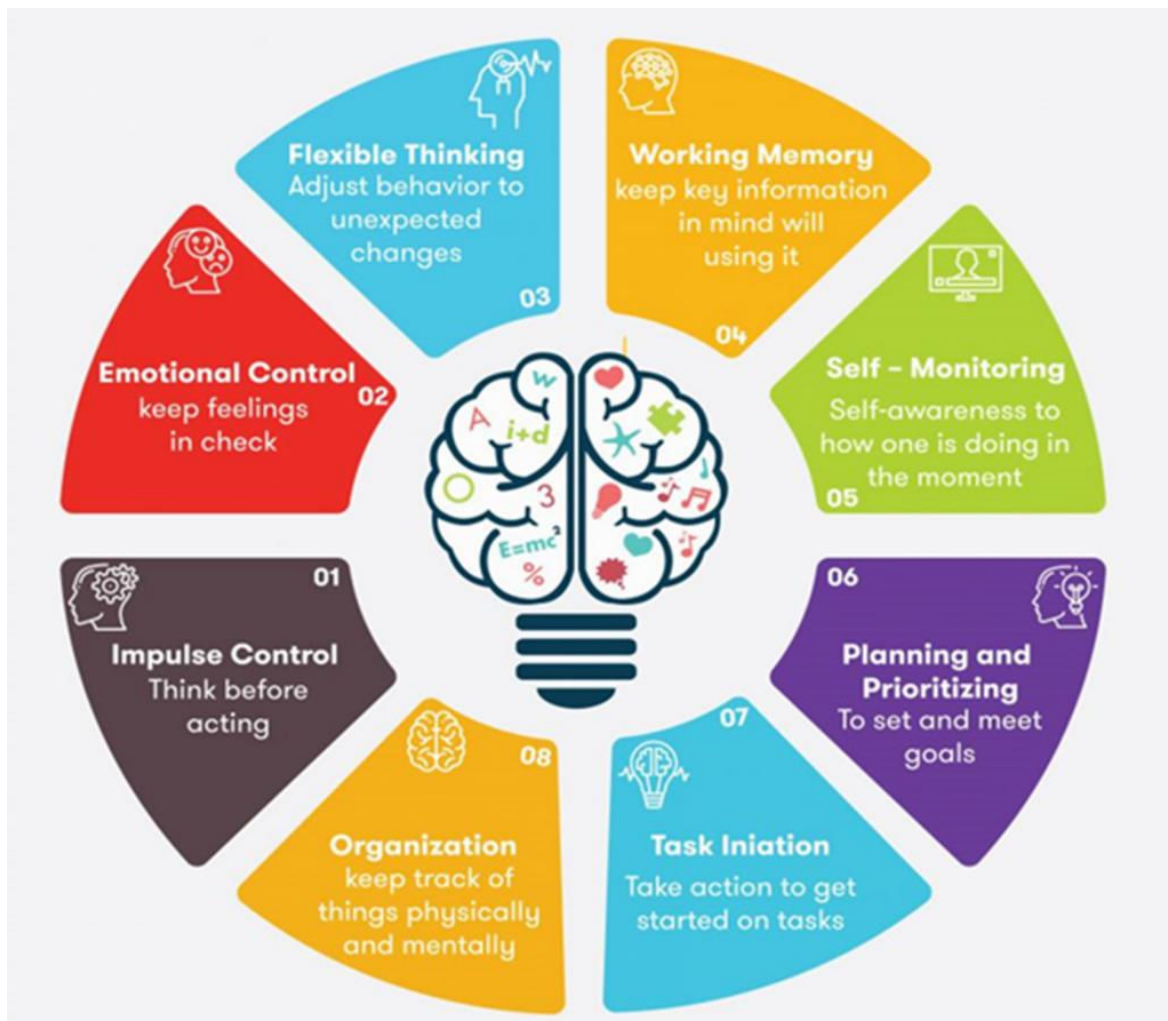


## Executive Function



Executive function is a set of skills that help children regulate their behaviour and achieve goals. These skills are important for early learning and development, and are correlated with academic and social success.

Some examples of executive function skills include:

- **Working memory**: The ability to hold information in mind, such as rules or goals
- **Cognitive flexibility**: The ability to shift or sustain attention in response to different cues
- **Impulse control**: The ability to resist initial reactions and responses
- **Planning and prioritization**: The ability to plan ahead and prioritize
- **Following instructions**: The ability to follow multi-step directions
- **Multitasking**: The ability to multitask and switch focus

Early childhood is a sensitive period for developing executive function skills, and these skills are especially malleable during this time. Teachers can promote these skills by: Building

positive teacher-child relationships, adapting activities to help children practice these skills, and Involving families in these efforts.

Key points about executive function curriculum mapping in EYFS:

- **Focus on foundational skills:**

Early childhood development prioritizes building basic executive functions like holding information in mind (working memory), focusing attention, and resisting impulsive behaviours through play-based activities.

- **Integration across learning areas:**

Executive function skills are not a separate subject, but rather should be embedded into all areas of the EYFS curriculum, including personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, and physical development.

- **Developmentally appropriate activities:**

Activities should be tailored to children's age and developmental stage, gradually increasing complexity as they progress.

- **Scaffolding and support:**

Educators should provide clear instructions, visual cues, and positive reinforcement to help children navigate challenging tasks and develop their executive function skills.

Examples of how to incorporate executive function in EYFS activities:

- **Working memory:**

- Playing memory games like "matching pairs"
- Following multi-step directions in a game or activity
- Recalling key details from a story

- **Cognitive flexibility:**

- Switching between different play activities or roles in pretend play
- Sorting objects by different attributes (colour, shape, size)
- Adapting to changing rules in a game

- **Inhibitory control:**

- Waiting for their turn in a game
- Resisting the urge to touch something they are not supposed to
- Following classroom rules and expectations

Important considerations when mapping executive function in EYFS:

- **Observe and assess individual needs:**

Regularly monitor children's development to identify areas where additional support may be needed.

- **Collaborate with parents:**

Share strategies with families to support executive function development at home.

- **Create a positive learning environment:**

Foster a calm and supportive classroom where children feel safe to try new things and make mistakes.

In the context of Early Years Foundation Stage:

1. Impulse control - a child's ability to resist acting on immediate impulses and to think before taking action, which is considered a key developmental skill that falls under the broader category of executive function, crucial for self-regulation and overall learning in young children; essentially, it means being able to pause and consider options before reacting instinctively.
2. Emotional control - a child's ability to manage their emotions, responding appropriately to situations and regulating strong feelings, which is considered a key part of self-regulation and crucial for successful learning and social interactions in early childhood development; essentially, it means being able to "calm down" when upset, wait patiently, and express feelings in a healthy way.
3. Flexible thinking - a child's ability to easily switch their attention between different tasks, adapt to changing situations, and adjust their thinking based on new information, essentially demonstrating cognitive flexibility; a key aspect of executive function development in early childhood.
4. Working memory - a child's ability to hold and manipulate information in their mind for a short period of time, which is a key cognitive skill that is considered a crucial part of overall executive function development, allowing them to follow instructions, complete tasks, and adapt to changing situations; essentially, it's the mental capacity to remember and use information while actively engaged in a task.
5. Self-Monitoring - a child's ability to actively assess their own progress towards a goal, recognize when a strategy isn't working, and adapt their behaviour accordingly, essentially acting as a "check" on their own actions to ensure they are on track; it's a key part of self-regulation and effective learning.
6. Planning and Prioritising - incorporating strategies in early childhood education to develop a child's ability to plan ahead, set goals, sequence steps, and manage their actions towards achieving a desired outcome, which falls under the broader umbrella of self-regulation skills within executive function development; essentially, teaching young children how to think through and organize tasks before executing them.
7. Task initiation - a child's ability to independently start a task or activity, meaning they can initiate a project or begin playing with a toy without needing constant prompts or assistance, essentially signifying the skill of "getting started" on their own; it's a key component of executive function skills crucial for early learning development.
8. Organisation - a child's ability to mentally plan, structure, and manage their belongings and activities, which is a key developmental skill that falls under the broader category of executive function, encompassing skills like self-regulation, working memory, and flexible thinking; essentially, it means a child can effectively tidy up, find specific items, and transition smoothly between activities by organizing their thoughts and action.