



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

(www.uwtsd.ac.uk, 2020.)



1903921

**Moving away from the traditional
classroom:**

Outdoor Education and Learning

ECEI6001.



(Learning through Landscapes, 2022)



(Weyers, 2022)



(Nursery World, 2019.)

Compare and contrast the scope and approach to outdoor provision in early years and primary school.

Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher
W. Wordsworth (1800)

In this essay, early years and primary settings will be compared and contrasted in their approach to outdoor provision these two settings are part of the same school.

Learning outdoors in education is a carefully planned approach that uses activities and resources to improve a child's learning and development by supporting their mental health and well-being, and deepening their nature connection, which promotes more inclusive and engaging learning [Harvey, 2022].

It can be done on-site [on the school premises] or off-site [for example, on school trips]. It provides a stimulating and interesting approach to learning, and teachers can comfortably incorporate it into their existing curriculum with few additional resources [Harvey, 2022].

Froebel (1782-1852) was an educational theorist who believed children should have freedom and choices to solve their problems. The Froebelian Approach highlights that by gardening, children may begin to perceive a connection between plant and animal growth and their own lives, such as a mutual need for food, water, shelter, and care.

However after the second world war it was recognising Italy by introducing Reggio Emilia(1948) schools realised that it is the community where you can choose to go outside. It is not a false setting. Community is essential to allow them access to help in the garden or outside. This outdoor space is known as the third teacher. If you leave children to go off in the real world, they will go off and make friends. Where a Year 6 may help an early year's pupil who will look up to them and learn from them and learn to care and share, this will only happen if you let it happen naturally in the outdoor environment (Berg, 2020). Numerous educational theorists Froebel, Montessori, Steiner, Vygotsky, Piaget, Dr Brian Combourne, all the way up to Forest Schools have attained the importance and benefits of outdoor learning.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) requires educational settings to address the well-being of their staff and pupils. Numerous studies show

that going outside enhancing wellness in education environments. As a result, moving lessons outside and boosting 'green time' is a simple and cost-effective solution to address everyone's health and well-being needs (Donaldson, 2015.).

Taking learning outside can significantly impact all pupils learning and development. It offers limitless chances for discovery, experimentation, and contextual learning, from problem-solving to communication and resilience.

There are many policies that support outdoor learning, one of which is the Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning (2015), for 3-7-year-olds in Wales, introduced an explicit need for young children to spend a considerable portion of their early year's provision outside, although it is in setting A it is not evident in setting B (Welsh Government, 2015).

The new digital competency framework (DCF), Which is being integrated into the schools as a cross-curricular responsibility, provides the exciting potential to move learning outside (hwb.gov.wales,2022).

In the Early Years (Setting A), there are thirty children aged between 3-4 years. The classroom has 1 Teacher, 1 Higher Level Teachers Assistant (HLTA), and two other Teacher Assistants. This setting has a separate concrete playground and an adjoining outdoor learning provision which is easily accessible by the early years' children and adults. Only this setting is allowed to use this area as it is enclosed for the children's safety.

Within the primary setting,(Setting B) will be investigated Year 6. It has twenty-four pupils aged 10-11 years. In the classroom, there is 1 Teacher and 1 Teaching Assistant. The playground is an extensive outdoor learning area for all classes and used for playtime, lunchtime activities, and outdoor P.E.

The setting A, has a sand tray, water tray, an a creative area, and more outdoor provisions, which are extremely easy for the children to access when they want. However, in setting B, access to the outdoor area is denied. This is due to the demands of the curriculum, which then puts pressure on the teacher for preparing these pupils for Secondary School. Donaldson (2015) highlights that children must have free access to outdoor provision as he wants children to find out things for themselves and learn through problem-solving.

In addition, setting B pupils do not have easy access to outdoor learning, only at set times like going to the toilet or lessons which have been planned for outdoors. They

just cannot get up out of their chair and feel as if they need to go for a walk like in setting A.

All settings have two Eco members, which oversees recycling fruit, and milk bottles, litter picking, making sure switches are switched off if not in use, among other things that help the school sustainably.

Setting A, oversees recycling milk bottles, washing them out and then reusing them for water for the paint brushes, making models, as well as making use of the tops, counters for maths activities. The pupils in Setting B learn how to respect nature by litter-picking once a week. This helps them to respect the environment and to get a handle on sustainability. From an early age, the children are learning that they just cannot keep using the elements of the earth and not recycling them.

Once all fruit compost has been done in each setting Year 6 collects the it from all the classes and uses it on their flower and vegetable beds. As the recycling of fruit, has been done from an early age then all the children learn it is the norm to collect the fruit for compost and not to throw it away. The Year 6s use the compost on their potatoes to help them grow. Early years would make cress heads out of empty eggshells, cotton wool, seeds and water or see how a broad bean grows.

On rainy days Early Years still go out to play and still use the outdoor learning due to the waterproof all-in-ones and wellies that are provided. This enables them to continue to play and learn even to have fun by splashing in the puddles. After the children have finished their wet weather gear, is hung up on pegs provided to dry for another time. Year 6 have no choice but to stay in and play a game, read a book, or sometimes watch a programme. This is to do with the lack of storage that they have, so, unfortunately, no space for wet weather gear or wellies.

Setting A, would use plastic or wooden tools and equipment, plastic scissors, and screwdrivers and have no opportunity to play with real tools. Setting B, would use real hammers, hacksaws, nails, drills, and glue guns in their arts and crafts activities and learning how to take risks. This is where the Montessori method would come in. This activity is ideal as this is where the pupils demonstrate their decision-making, do things for themselves and learn for themselves (Lopez, 2016).

There are many challenges in school: Staff levels, Financing, this setting relies on 'Friends', the name of the school community, that is constantly raising money to help

provide outdoor equipment, gardening tools such as trowels, spades, forks and anything to enhance the outdoor facilities.

Challenges that have been significantly noticed in Year 6 which needs to have more hands-on activities, because of the lack of staff, lack of finances, lack of storage and the demand of the curriculum; they just do not do enough hands-on, which then can effect their mental health and wellbeing as well as an increase in obesity due to being at home and on digital devices and sitting in school all day.

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Muddy Feet



1:8 Ratio
Qualified Staff Level 3 above
Signalong trained
ALL staff First Aid Trained
ALL Staff & Helpers
DBS checked

Ages 5-9

Max 24

**9am-
3pm**



(Yule, 2022)

This Week's Activity: Making Dens at Colby Woods

**We will be concentrating on Maths and
problem solving linked to the New
Curriculum, but this activity will also involve
Team building .**

**Permission slips and contact numbers must
be signed before any child can participate.**

**The child should experience nature 'in all its aspects
– form, energy, substance, sound and colour'.
(Froebel in Lilley 1967:148). Through gardening and
play outdoors children have real, direct experience
of the natural world. They learn in nature not just
about nature.**

**Tel: Michelle on 01834 812345 or
Email: Outdoorexplorers@gmail.com**

Resources

**Long, branches and sticks.
Lots of bendy twigs, string, rope,
mallets, nails, pegs, hacksaws.**

**Materials to cover the den
Tarpaulin, blankets, leaves, grass
WILL BE SUPPLIED**

**Children to bring packed lunch
and drink**

**Wear appropriate clothing and
wellies as we will get very
muddy!!!!!!**

**Book
Now OPEN
Every School
Holiday
FREE**

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RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

Location / Activity:	Making a den in the woodlands	Date:	18 th April 2023
Assessor:	Mrs Poole, Mrs Barrett, Miss Rachel, Mrs Sloan and Mr Simms	Review date:	18 th April 2024

The boxes in the table below will expand as you type into them; pre-entered text is simply for illustration. You should delete irrelevant items and replace with text relevant to your circumstances.

Your overall risk rating – Low, medium or high – is based on your judgement about whether the **BENEFITS** of the activity or opportunity outweigh the **RISKS**.

	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
If a hot day	Fresh air Social skills Independence Self-esteem Self- Confidence Prevention of Obesity Natural Vitamin D for stronger bones prevention against chronic illnesses.	Sun Burn/heat stroke/ dehydration	Children Adults	Make sure there is plenty of shaded area. Make sure children have sun screen on before coming to school or are capable of putting sun cream on themselves. Bring water bottles so children have something to drink. To wear appropriate clothing, sun hat, long sleeve tops, sun glasses. Adults to bring out medication (EpiPen, Asthma pump) and First Aid Kit.	M

	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
If out in (Cold Weather rain, snow, ice).	Breathe fresh air and prevent illnesses. Social skills Independence Self- Esteem Self- Confidence	Sliding and Slipping Damage to the outdoor branches fallen, icy grass, leaves	Children Adults	Adults should make sure that the children wear appropriate clothing for the weather hat, scarf, gloves, wellies, all in one waterproofs. Adults to bring medication Adults to carry First Aid Kit Make sure children do not carry water around should only be in Water area as any one could slip.	M
In the Woodland land area	Become aware of limits Know their boundaries Make Friends Come across challenges Show resilience Solve problems	Poisonous plants/berries/fungus Animal Faeces (Fox Badgers). Animals Found sting, bite.	Children Adults	Adults to talk to children about the danger sign of the woods, faeces, stranger danger, not walking away from the group etc. Children should be encouraged to wash hands regularly. Wear visible luminous jackets over appropriate clothes for the weather and closed toe shoes/wellies. In the event of being bitten, stung etc Adult should follow the Health and Safety / Carry any medication EpiPen, asthma pumps just in case child has an allergic reaction. If incident occurs adult should record it in the First Aid Book signed and dated (when returned to school).	L

	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Use of tools	Refinement of fine motor skills. Children to have freedom to work. Self-control Decision making Persistence Responsibility Overall confidence	Face or eye injury. Injury when drive nail in the wood. Injury to child if tools broken or damaged.	Adult Children	Children already been practising with different types of tools rubber mallet, small hacksaws, roofing nails (as they have the largest head so child less likely to miss) etc. Children to be supervised at all times 2 adults per group of 8 Tools to be carried in secure bag or tool boxes. Depending on child's age use a peg to hold the nail in place. Wear safety goggles. Work in two's so one child can hold wood or item steady. Adult to check ALL tools are in excellent working order.	M

	How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?	Possible hazards	Who is at risk?	PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk RATING: L/M/H
Coach Journey	Helps children with schedules and routines Teaches the children responsibility. Friendships are formed on the coach. Builds character. Responsibility. Allows Freedom and fun	Falling over bags or feet. Road traffic accident. Illness. Falling objects over head. Leaving child behind.	Adult Children	All adults to have mobiles on them in case of an emergency, also already know the area very well so know there is a good mobile signal. Permission slips names of children attending, head count and emergency contact of all children. Children to walk to seat and put on seat belt if not able too child puts hand up and an adult will come and do it. Bags etc to be placed by children's feet not above the head. Driver and Adults are all DBS. Adult to bring bucket, tissues, wipes etc if child feels travel sick. Child to sit at front next to adult. Adults to spread out up the bus near the exits front middle and back of the bus.	L

The role of Outdoor Education'

“Denying children of a chance to encounter nature, no matter how small, ‘robs them of the very essence of life’ (Engwicht, 1992: 6)”, Matthews and Limb (1999), p. 78.

It has been proven so many times by many educational theorists that pupils thrive by being outside.

Froebel and McMillan were early pioneers in using outdoor surroundings to influence child development. Bilton (2010) cites Froebel (1782-1852) supported the 'kindergarten or 'nursery garden' as crucial to nursery education. McMillan, influenced by Froebel, proposed that outdoor learning can promote physical and emotional wellbeing, a necessary precondition for intellectual development (1911; referenced by Bilton 2010).

Dr Montessori (1907), considered the outdoor world a natural extension of the classroom. Children in our outdoor habitats can expand their classroom knowledge through sensory interactions with nature and continual engagement with the seasons and the natural world.

In the words of Steiner (1920), "the child should be taught to overcome obstacles and to push his limits." Through outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, and camping, children can develop essential physical and mental skills such as strength, endurance, and problem-solving (Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School, 2023.).

Vygotsky (1934), gathered research by observation. He believed that social interaction was an important part of learning and that children learn through hands-on experience, which is a continuous process that leads to adulthood. He also proposed that suitable scaffolding can help children learn more effectively (Kent-Teach, 2021).

Many of Piaget's (1933), theories were based on the observations of his own children, and he saw play as an essential part of the development of children's intelligence. His play hypothesis contends that as children grow, their environment and play should stimulate greater cognitive and language development (Hamid, 2018).

Forest School (FS) concept requires that the outside space be viewed as more than just a place for children to burn off energy. The indoor-outdoor split is broken, and children learn in and through nature. FS will allow children to develop resilience, life-long learners with transferable skills in a pupil-led environment through open-ended play and learning. Pupils will be given the opportunity to take and manage their risks to develop emotional intelligence (Forest School Policy and Procedures, 2021).

Reggio (1948), passionately believed in a child with boundless potential ready to interact with and contribute to the world. Every child has a fundamental right to “realise and expand their potential.” This is a child who is motivated by curiosity and imagination, a capable child who enjoys taking responsibility for their learning, a child who listens and is listened to, a child whose value ring and ‘listening to children’s many strengths and abilities is central to this approach (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2006)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) recognises the value of outdoor learning and specifies that young children must have access to outdoor places. EYFS also says that Outdoor learning is critical in helping youngsters make sense of the world and grasp basic scientific concepts.

According to Professor Donaldson (2015), outdoor learning delivers real-world, multi-sensory experiences that can serve as the foundation for interesting and engaging cross-curricular learning opportunities (Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools, 2020).

Wales leads the UK in the development of outdoor learning. The Foundation Phase will guarantee that we remain at the forefront of experiential learning, of which outdoor learning is such a vital component.

The Welsh Government, in their curriculum guidance, explains the benefits of outdoor learning and connection with nature. This has been a pioneer in promoting children’s rights according to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1992). Wales was the first jurisdiction in the UK to appoint Children’s Commissioner, who serves as an independent advocate for children’s human rights (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2023).

Natural Resources Wales believes that it is every child’s right to live, learn, play, and grow up in a natural environment that is healthy and sustainably managed. So their entire workforce works together, as well as with their partners, to guarantee that all the children have access to clean air and water, beautiful landscapes, good soil in

which to grow their food, and a diverse range of plants and creatures to enjoy (natural resources. wales, 2022).

On behalf of Natural Resources Wales, the Children's Commissioner for Wales' Office held conversations with children and young people from Bryn Tirion Hall School in Wrexham, Stacey Road Primary in Cardiff, and a Young Carers Group in Merthyr Tydfil, to help us identify which rights they wanted our organisation to prioritise. They identified:

- **Article 6** - Right to life, to grow up and reach your full potential.
- **Article 12** - Right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- **Article 13** - Right to freedom of expression
- **Article 16** - Right to privacy
- **Article 17** - Right to information
- **Article 19** - Right to be kept safe from harm.
- **Article 24** - Right to clean air
- **Article 28** - Right to learn.
- **Article 29** - Right to be the best you can be.
- **Article 31** - Right to relax and play.

It was clear the children and young people involved understood that looking after nature is especially important to our everyday lives, and in turn, they said they would:

- Help keep nature healthy.
- Play with their friends in local nature spots.
- Care about and look after nature.
- Talk openly to us.
- Learn about environmental jobs and careers(natural resources. wales, 2022).

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools (PODS) is a dynamic collaboration of local and national institutions. The collaboration exists to promote and support high-quality outdoor learning linked to the New Curriculum for Wales, using their broad skills and expertise(Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools, 2020).

The most significant reform in the New Curriculum 2022 is the Areas of Learning and Experiences(AOLE) Health and Wellbeing, which recognises the value of outdoor learning in enrichment and experience. Making sure students have regular access to outdoor space and activities that might favourably impact children's attitudes, beliefs, and self-perception is a straightforward way for schools to start addressing health and wellbeing (naturedays.co.uk, 2018).

I have systematically searched articles, journals, and books to find out what others have said about the role of outdoor education.

There has been much research about outdoor education, even as far back as Froebel (1848), where a significant amount of theorists expanded the virtues of outdoor education and have proven time and time again that outdoor education is vital.

While researching outdoor education's role, I found nothing negative or critical in the articles, journals and books I used.

There are many challenges in school: Staff levels, Financing, and this setting relies on 'Friends', the name of the school community, that is constantly raising money to help provide outdoor equipment, gardening tools such as trowels, spades, forks and anything to enhance the outdoor facilities.

Challenges that have been significantly noticed with the older children who need more hands-on activities because of the lack of staff, finances, storage, and the demand of the curriculum. They do not do enough hands-on, which can affect their mental health and wellbeing and increase obesity due to being at home and on digital devices and sitting in school all day. Furthermore, other barriers such as weather, time, safety, and accountability can be included in the challenges.

Outdoor Learning can also become more challenging in an increasingly urban development as we have in the United Kingdom. Wide open spaces are becoming rarer and rarer due to more roads being built, industrialisation and homes.

Urbanisation is a global trend that has resulted in the progressive concentration of people and activity, with implications for life in cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

Access to a natural environment is one of these repercussions because of complex interconnected social, economic, and environmental variables. Government, schools, outside agencies for example youth clubs, and parents/carers must start to prioritise outdoor education, more because of the urbanisation happening in our country (UK). We must all take responsibility for our over cautiousness, health and safety, we must allow our children to play, experiment and problem solve.

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