



Lesson observations. bmpe5005

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Introduction.

This presentation aims to explore how outdoor learning can enhance children's physical literacy in the Foundation Phase curriculum. The observations taken from school visits have provided insights into how children interact with the outdoor environment during their learning and play. The age range of children analysed was between three to seven years old, and the observations revealed that these children exhibit a lot of movement, creativity, and problem-solving skills when given access to outdoor environments. This report explores the physical, social, and cognitive benefits of outdoor learning, strategies for incorporating outdoor learning into the curriculum, and the impact of the environment and nature on children's learning. The thesis statement suggests that outdoor learning should be promoted for children in the Foundation Phase curriculum, as it enhances their learning experiences and supports physical literacy development.

Physical literacy

Physical literacy refers to the development of movement skills, motivation, confidence, and knowledge of health, that enables children to participate in a variety of physical activities. Outdoor learning, as its name suggests, involves the use of outdoor environments for learning which can include structured or unstructured activities, and provides children with a change from the indoor classroom setting. Both physical literacy and outdoor learning have been found to be vital for young learners as it enhances the development of gross motor skills, and it provides opportunities for social interaction, cooperation, and exploration of the natural world. Therefore, the integration of physical literacy and outdoor learning in early childhood education is critical for the holistic development of young learners.

observations

- The observations gathered from school visits have provided a comprehensive perspective of the interaction between young learners and outdoor environments. Children were observed engaging in various physical activities such as climbing frames, hopping, skipping, and ball games, and shown to exhibit high levels of energy and motivation. Furthermore, the use of sticks, leaves, and other natural materials in the creation of seasons of the year and various structures allowed children to develop their creativity and problem-solving skills. By providing opportunities for physical activity and exploration, outdoor learning experiences enhance children's physical literacy development, which is critical for their holistic growth.
 - There are numerous benefits to incorporating outdoor learning experiences into the Foundation Phase curriculum.
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observations

- Firstly, outdoor learning provides a change of environment from the traditional classroom setting, which can enhance children's motivation towards learning. Secondly, outdoor learning has been linked to cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional benefits, such as improved memory, problem-solving skills, physical skills, and social interactions. For instance, by engaging in group activities such as building blocks and ball games, children develop their teamwork skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. Lastly, outdoor learning provides opportunities for children to engage with the natural world, learn about environmental sustainability, and develop a sense of appreciation for nature.
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observations

- There are various strategies that can be employed to incorporate outdoor learning into the Foundation Phase curriculum. One way is to identify topic areas where outdoor learning can be utilized to support learning objectives. For example, Science-based lessons such as learning about habitats and life cycles can be conducted in natural environments such as parks and gardens. Another strategy involves the use of structured activities that incorporate a range of experiences such as ideal group sizes, equipment requirements, and learning outcomes. Teachers can also attend outdoor learning training sessions, where they can learn how to incorporate outdoor learning experiences into their lesson plans. By teaching the Foundation Phase curriculum in outdoor environments, teachers can promote emotional development, enhance physical literacy, foster a sense of enjoyment and excitement towards learning, and provide opportunities for children to take risks and develop their problem-solving skills.
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observations

- Creativity plays a crucial role in outdoor learning experiences for young children. When children are encouraged to explore and interact with the outdoor environment, their imaginations are sparked and their creativity flourishes. Outdoor settings offer endless possibilities for open-ended play and creative expression. Whether it's building structures with natural materials, engaging in role play scenarios, or creating artwork using found objects, the outdoor environment provides a rich and stimulating canvas for children to unleash their creativity. By fostering creativity in outdoor learning, educators can nurture children's problem-solving skills, critical thinking abilities, and artistic expression, all of which are essential components of their holistic development.
 - Physical skills and object control are essential components of a child's development, and outdoor learning experiences provide a valuable platform for their growth. Through various activities such as climbing, balancing, throwing, and catching, children are able to develop their gross and fine motor skills, coordination, and spatial awareness. Outdoor environments offer a wide array of opportunities for children to manipulate objects, whether it be playing with balls, tools, or natural materials. By engaging in these activities, children enhance their object control skills, hand-eye coordination, and dexterity. For instance, observing children using balls and targets to improve their hand-eye coordination or building structures with plastic shapes to practice their manipulation skills highlights the impact of outdoor learning in promoting physical skill development.
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observations

- Inclusion strategies and techniques play a crucial role in ensuring that every child has equal access and opportunities for learning in outdoor environments. By implementing inclusive practices, educators create an inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs and abilities of all children. In outdoor learning experiences, inclusion strategies can involve modifications to activities or equipment to accommodate children with physical or cognitive challenges, promoting peer collaboration and support. For example, providing visual aids or simplified instructions during outdoor activities allows children with learning disabilities to fully engage in the learning process. By incorporating inclusive practices, educators create a supportive and inclusive outdoor learning environment where all children can actively participate and thrive.
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Observations-STEP

- The STEPs (Strategies for Teaching with Excellence in Play) framework provides a structured approach to promote inclusion and diversity in outdoor learning settings. This framework ensures that every child has the opportunity to actively participate and engage in learning experiences. The STEPs framework incorporates strategies such as providing supportive environments, tailoring activities to meet individual needs, enhancing peer interactions and communication, and fostering a sense of belonging and community. By implementing the STEPs framework, educators create an inclusive and supportive outdoor learning environment where every child's unique abilities and strengths are valued and nurtured. Observations from school visits have demonstrated the effectiveness of the STEPs framework in action, including instances where children of diverse abilities were actively engaged in collaborative learning activities, demonstrating inclusivity and fostering positive social interactions.
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observations

- The environment and affordances within outdoor learning settings play a significant role in shaping and influencing children's learning experiences. The environment refers to the physical surroundings, including natural elements, structures, and materials, while affordances refer to the opportunities and possibilities the environment provides for children's learning and exploration. The environment offers a range of affordances that can stimulate children's curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. For instance, observing children using natural materials such as sticks and leaves to create different seasons of the year illustrates how the environment provides opportunities for imaginative and sensory play. Additionally, the presence of climbing frames and diverse play equipment offers opportunities for physical development and motor skill enhancement. The variation in environments and affordances observed in school visits highlights the importance of creating diverse and stimulating outdoor learning spaces that cater to children's developmental needs and promote rich learning experiences.
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observations

- Incorporating nature into outdoor learning experiences is crucial for the holistic development of young children. Nature provides a rich and diverse learning environment that nurtures children's curiosity, connection to the natural world, and appreciation for the environment. When children are exposed to nature during outdoor learning, they have opportunities to engage with natural elements, observe plants and animals, and explore the wonders of the natural world. By interacting with nature, children develop a sense of awe, wonder, and respect for the environment, fostering their environmental stewardship and sustainability. Observations from school visits have highlighted instances where children were actively exploring nature, such as examining plants, insects, and natural materials, thereby demonstrating the immense value of incorporating nature into outdoor learning experiences.
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observations

- Movement plays a vital role in children's learning experiences, particularly in the outdoor environment. The impact of movement on learning is multifaceted, as it enhances cognitive, physical, and social aspects of development. Physiologically, movement increases blood flow to the brain, improving cognitive function, concentration, and memory. Through movement, children engage their senses, explore their surroundings, and make meaningful connections with the world around them. Observations from school visits have demonstrated how movement in outdoor learning experiences facilitates active exploration, problem-solving, and creative thinking. Moreover, movement in the outdoors fosters social interactions, collaboration, and communication among children, allowing them to develop teamwork skills and empathy. In the outdoor environment, movement not only enhances learning but also cultivates a sense of freedom, joy, and engagement, leading to meaningful and holistic learning experiences.
 - The environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's learning experiences, especially in the outdoor setting. The impact of the environment on learning is significant, as it provides opportunities for exploration, discovery, and sensory experiences. The outdoor environment offers a rich array of stimuli, such as natural elements, diverse landscapes, and open spaces, which stimulate children's curiosity, engagement, and motivation to learn. Observations from school visits have shown how children interact with the environment during outdoor learning, actively engaging with their surroundings, and making connections with the natural world. The environment in the outdoors enhances learning experiences by providing an immersive and dynamic setting that encourages hands-on exploration, problem-solving, and critical thinking. By being exposed to the ever-changing outdoor environment, children develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the world around them, fostering a sense of wonder and curiosity that supports their overall learning and development.
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observations

- There are diverse debates and perspectives surrounding outdoor learning and physical literacy in early childhood education. Some argue that outdoor learning promotes holistic development, fosters a love for nature, and enhances cognitive and physical skills. Others may express concerns about risks, lack of structure, and potential distractions in outdoor environments. By referencing literature and research studies, these contrasting opinions can be examined in-depth. Such analysis helps to enhance understanding and inform practice in outdoor learning experiences. It enables educators to critically evaluate different viewpoints, consider the benefits and limitations identified in research, and make informed decisions on how best to incorporate outdoor learning and physical literacy into early childhood education.
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conclusion

- In conclusion, the findings and discussions presented in this report highlight the importance and benefits of incorporating outdoor learning experiences and promoting physical literacy development for young children in the Foundation Phase curriculum. The observations and analysis have demonstrated how outdoor learning enhances children's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development, as well as their creativity, problem-solving skills, and overall engagement with the learning process. It is recommended that educators and policymakers prioritize the provision of high-quality outdoor learning experiences that offer diverse environments, inclusion strategies, and opportunities for nature exploration. Additionally, there is a need for a collective call to action to integrate more outdoor learning experiences into early childhood education, recognizing its significant impact on children's holistic development and lifelong love for learning.
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