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Assessment : 1

Part 1

Iceland and other comparable countries place a high value on children participating in outdoor activities whilst they are still young. Government research identified that being outdoors can be beneficial for children. According to Norodahl and Johannesson (2013) and as shown in the curriculum guidelines, an outdoor learning environment can increase concentration levels as well as the advantage of a location to exercise and live a healthy life. Iceland has emphasised for years that children aged between one and six should participate in outdoor activities daily however, engagement appears to decline between the ages of six and sixteen. The actions performed and taken to support students in this area may vary depending on the school and teachers. There are signs that indicate the outdoors are being used more frequently and in the capital Reykjavik, 70% of schools take part in outside educational activities (Oladottir, 2008).

Adapted from:

Noradahl, K. and Johannesson, I. (2014) 'Icelandic teachers' views of using the outdoors' *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*. Vol 44, No. 4, September 2014, 391- 406.

Part 2a

This essay will discuss Forest Schools. The Forest School Network created a definition of Forest Schools that reads as follows:

It is an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults' regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a woodland environment.

(O'Brien and Murray, 2006)

O'Brien and Murray (2006) suggest communities are growing concerned that children currently in education do not get to visit forests and other green outdoor environments like their parents might of due to fear of something going wrong and feel there is enough for children to do indoors. Research carried out concluded that children who spend time outdoors in their early years are less likely to continue doing so as they become older causing them to miss out on psychological and physical benefits of having access to nature and woodland (Thompson et al. 2004). The Welsh Assembly Government (2009) is urging teachers to implement Forest Schools, especially at foundational levels so that students can experience the benefits of an outdoor learning environment as opposed to a traditional classroom setting.

Reference List:

O'Brien, E. and Murray, R. (2006) *A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn: A Participatory Evaluation of Forest Schools in England and Wales*. Farnham: Forest Research.

Thompson, W.C. et al (2004) *Open Space and Social Inclusion*. Edinburg: Report to the Forestry Commissions.

Welsh Assembly Government, (2009) *Outdoor Learning Handbook*. Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

Part 2b

<https://www.blogger.com/blog/post/edit/6112071394098023875/8824144959594669741>

Part 3

The article titled "Schooled to Fail? The Underachievement Debate in Wales" by Emma Smith is a paper discussing the unfair comparison between both England and Wales' national education system's success rates. The main objectives of the paper are to shed light on the "underachievement debate from a Welsh perspective" (Smith,2005, p.84), discussing both the issue of comparing England with Wales as

well as the possible differences with their respective curricula and finally to attempt to change the opinion that Welsh students are 'Schooled to fail' (Reynolds and Murgatroyd, 1981). One of the primary points Smith makes in the article is that in order to compare underachievement in Wales to England fairly and accurately, comparisons should be made with regions that are similar in terms of population and economic standing. Following on from this Smith (2005) states the Northeast of England would seem to provide a fairer comparison with Wales.

Initial examination of the article's structure reveals that paragraphing has not been utilised as effectively as it could be. The structure and flow of a passage of text is provided by paragraphs which make it possible to switch between ideas. Beginning a new paragraph signals to the reader that the subject is over and you are moving on. One's thoughts and arguments will be challenging to understand without this format as it is very easy for a large passage of text to appear intimidating to the reader (Bacon, 2017). Due to a lack of words and phrases that serve as transitional or linking sentences, the piece lacks a defined rhythm and flow. Use of 'therefore' or 'similarly' for instance joins ideas together. In order to write concise, impactful sentences and paragraphs that support the quality of your work, it is vital to look for phrases that may be substituted with a single word. Smith also demonstrates the use of statistics/graphs within the passage, yet like the use of paragraphs, has not been utilised effectively. Despite the fact a handful of the statistics and figures used within the text are useful and successfully utilised, there are still multiple figures that appear to have no mention. The author has placed irrelevant figures/statistics at the end of the passage with little to no comment, leaving this difficult for the reader to know what information is of importance.

Moving on from the general structure of the article one can begin to analyse the tone and intended target audience. Smith uses formal language, which is expected for this type of writing, however, this can become difficult for the intended target audience, in this case, the general public, to read as it can come across as quite professional. The target audience reading the article may have difficulty understanding some of the terminology used, and therefore some of the arguments being made. Although a lot of what Smith says can be seen as objective through the use of statistics and using credible sources, some points she makes are just assumptions. The article makes use of repetition to drive home ideas and support

arguments. The core concept or message becomes more familiar as terms or phrases are repeated. As a result, one's message becomes more memorable and eventually sticks in the audience's mind. The article is clearly intended to educate the reader on the misconception of underachievement in Wales, and in fact change that narrative. The general tone of the article begins to do this with the use of the statistical information, however the language used can start to work against the author as many would find it difficult to understand the arguments being made due if one cannot interpret the text with ease.

Smith's article brings to light several concerns regarding the Underachievement Debate in Wales. It is mentioned that according to statistics, pupils of black Caribbean origin are three times more likely than their white peers to be excluded from school, and half of all students graduate without attaining five or more 'high' GCSE passes (DfES, 2003). This appears irrelevant to the article topic because it does not directly correlate to the Wales/England comparison and Smith has not elaborated on what this information can show, as well as not providing supporting evidence on why this is the case. After analysing several of the sources, one can conclude that they hold creditability with factual research to support arguments presented. There is a satisfactory amount of evidence within Smith's article, however, it can be argued that she relies heavily upon quotations to put forward ideas and make her argument rather than using them to support claims being made. Smith's primary point is straightforward and consistently made throughout the text, however unnecessary facts and pieces of evidence lessen the paper's overall impact. The conclusion appears longer than expected. It does not return to the article topic of whether students are being 'Schooled to Fail' in Wales but instead seems to discuss further sub-topics such as testing at certain ages or the gap between the different economical demographics rather than concluding what has been discussed and coming to a decisive and definitive conclusion.

Overall, one can conclude that as a stand-alone piece of work, the article does not seem to inform as much as intended. Smith makes her primary argument and stays consistent in mentioning it throughout the paper, however, does not communicate a lot of the information clearly and as an informative article, one of the most important aspects is the ease of understanding. The lack of paragraphing also contributes to the difficulty of understanding as paragraphs can often be used to divide the paper

and make it easier for the reader to know when a new topic is being discussed. Although the article uses appropriate formal language throughout, it may be necessary to change some of the terminology to make it easier for the reader to grasp what is being conveyed. The issue of underachievement in Wales should be addressed by additional study that is solely focused on Welsh schools and the measures being taken by them as well as school boards and organisations to counteract the 'underachievement'.

Reference list:

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