

ECEY6005:

Regaining Paradise? Sustainability in the Early Years

Reflection

Part 1 (5 Minutes)

Hello and welcome to my presentation.

My name is Lakshami and my student number is 2218479.

In this part of my presentation, I will explain the actions I took as part of this John Muir experience.

As part of the John Muir activity, I went to the public gardens of Insole Court. Which is a grade II* listed mansion house in Llandaff as I have visited, volunteer and walked through many times throughout my life.

I have chosen this area as it is home to many flowers and trees, it attracts many birds, squirrels, insects and bugs. Also, it has its very own fruit and vegetable garden.

Whilst walking on the paths of Insole Court's gardens, I discovered around 20 different types of flowers blossoming in their flower beds and in between bushes.

Some of the flowers that I came across in this John Muir experience had unique appearances, making it easier to recognise. While others looked very similar to some of the flowers in terms of their colours, looks and size, which was difficult to determine what they could be.

For example, when I came across this brightly coloured flower in the image on the left side I had initially thought it was an orange daisy.

As I was interested to find out if I was right. Using the amazing work of google lens to help me discover if I was correct, I found out that I was not far off as this botanical plant does come from the family of daisies. Google lens helped me discover that this is a Calendula flower commonly known as a marigold pot. Upon doing my research, it was interesting to come across the fact that the petals of this type of flower can be eaten. Instead of using saffron to colour rice, the petals can be used to make it yellow.

While researching this marigold pot, I was also intrigued to find out about the other flowers that I had encountered while on my walk and upon my research, I was surprised to discover that many of those flowers had very distinctive and long names.

While walking through the different areas of Insole's magnificent gardens, I came across some dahlias. In the image, shown on the right side is one type of dahlia known as a ball dahlia or a 'boom boom white'. Which is a flower that is perennial. A botanical plant that will rot back into the soil in the cold months and will regrow and blossom in the summer.

Amongst the dahlias, I spotted some pink and blue hydrangea macrophylla flowers, rose campion, an opium poppy, carnations, Californian poppies, Erysimum Bowles Mauve, white daisies, forget – me – not flowers, baby sage. Scarlet beard Tongue and cornflowers.

When getting a closer look at the flowers, I came across two bees busy at work collecting pollen and their nectar so that they can make honey. I found out from a conversation with my dad that these bees were a Bombus and a western honeybee.

While walking through the entrance and right into the gardens, I was surrounded by and enjoyed the scenery of different trees. While walking I spotted two different types of Japanese Maple trees which is one type of tree that I am familiar with.

Amongst the trees, I was fascinated by the number of the different types of leaves that were visible and had enjoyed feeling the different textures and the patterns.

Walking through the fruit and vegetable patch I was first greeted with the smell of fresh rosemary that was growing near the entrance and I was leaving the garden I had discovered some juicy apples on a tree that were nearly ready to be picked.

In the fruit and vegetable garden where I was walking through and admiring the smells of the different herbs growing, I also spotted a small bird who had come to find its food. Before it quickly flew away, I managed to notice that this bird has an orange breast, which made it easier for me to identify using the help of my grandmother who was with me and google lens to identify its type of species.

I learned that this bird species is known as a European robin. While I was intrigued by how small it was, I wanted to take upon research to see how much it weighs and found out that they only weigh around 16 – 20g and are 14 cm (5.5 inches) in length. Furthermore, it was interesting to learn about the different stages of life that these birds go through. I have found out that a European robin's first stage of life starts while in an egg. After the 2 weeks of fertilisation, the eggs begin to crack, and the chick's hatches coming out of the egg without any feathers and are blind. Just like any baby's life, this stage is the most critical stage of life for the chick's as they are fragile and dependent on their mother for food and care. The chick's then reaches the adolescent stage, where they begin to use their wings

and start flying. Lastly, from adolescence robin develops into an adult. This is where they take on the role of protecting as they are fully developed and can look after themselves.

Completing this John Muir experience had helped me develop a better understanding of sustainability. To conserve I will be helping and volunteering within a community church garden near my home a couple of times a week and have conserved by reducing my water waste by using the water in my bottle that I no longer want to water my lovely dracaena plants at home, then will be reusing the bottle taking it into work for a junk modelling activity.

To help encourage sustainability, I shared the knowledge and understanding that I have gained from this John Muir experience about flowers and the life cycles of the honeybees and robins with my aunty and her children while exploring their garden and helping them to water their blossoming hydrangeas. Furthermore, I have shared my knowledge by sharing with the children at work and will plan an activity that involves them reusing our empty and washed milk cartons and other recyclable materials.

Evaluation

Part 2 (15 minutes)

I will now evaluate how having a similar experience completed in the first half of this assignment can support the ideas and values of early years education for sustainability.

Firstly, what is sustainability or sustainable development?

In accordance with Davis (2010) the term sustainability has no basic definition that describes what it means.

Davis (2010) explains that this is because the conception of sustainability is extensive and does not only evolve around environmental issues, but it also encompasses many other issues (Miller, 2012; Tinney and Hirst, 2017; Samuelsson and Park, 2017).

In compliance with Davis (2010), sustainability involves the interrelation of the civil, economical, governmental and nature conservation attributes to life.

However, in a more of a recent study, Borg, Winberg and Vinterek (2017) suggests otherwise and have explained that there are three main issues that interlinks with sustainability which evolve around the natural world, the social aspects and the economic matters.

Although Davis (2010) explains that defining sustainability is not straightforward.

Many studies and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which is a legislative framework have expressed common ideas of what sustainability is about.

Cited by Davis (2010), Cutter- Mackenzie *et al.* (2014), Borg, Weinberg and Vinterek (2017) and Emerson and Siraj- Blatchford (2017) in the Brundtland's Report the World Commission on Environment and Development believes that sustainability is defined as improving materials we already have in which we use to satisfy requirements in our contemporary societies and situations without negatively impacting and making the next and future generations vulnerable.

In comparison, Jennings (2016) has suggested the same in similar words, explaining that sustainability is about strengthening resources that we use in the present world and conserving and sustaining them so that our new generations and species can sustain themselves and ensure the world's survival.

Furthermore, Quoted in Blay – Palmer (2011), Percy – Smith and Burns (2012) research studies, Agyeman and Evans (2004) claims sustainability development is conceptualized as being, I quote “the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems”.

In compliance with Davis (2010) and Prince (2010) sustainability matters are a significant problem encountered in the modern world.

As Wales is encountering many of those issues such as global warming, deprivation and global health problems presently, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 legislative framework enacts the law of how public bodies should work collaboratively to protect the welfare of those in Wales to help ensure sustainability conservation, claims Welsh Government (2021).

As Jennings (2016) and UNESCO (2024) have expressed that conserving sustainability is a process that is continuous and should be shared, as it is the responsibility of everyone in both the present society and those in future generations, claims Borg, Winberg and Vinterek (2017) and in an older study (Davis, 2010).

Under the Acts sustainability development principle incorporated in the legislation (Welsh Government, 2015).

Sustainability development in Wales is described as taking actions upon meeting and protecting the current satisfactory social, economic, environment and cultural welfare needs to ensure the goals of sustainability are sustained so that future generations have a fair chance of survival as well, claims the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (2024), Welsh Government (2021) and The National Assembly for Wales (2015).

In the first half of this assignment, a garden environment and its geographical areas was explored through active engagement as part of the John Muir Award experience.

The John Muir award is an environmental and achievement proposition that had started in the late 1990's (John Muir Trust, 2019), and is an experience that encourages all people from all diverse communities to participate in conserving sustainable matters by engaging, interacting and preserving the natural world.

For this John Muir experience, the active participation in discovering and exploring a garden environment to encourage a connection with the natural world and to conserve sustainability was inspired by Friedrich Froebel, a 19th century early years pioneer (Tovey, 2020) outdoor learning theory.

After establishing the first kindergarten, Froebel had placed a strong view on the importance of outdoor learning in his theory, underpinning his ideas on garden environments and suggesting that garden areas are suitable places for children to experience the natural world hands on (Tovey, 2017).

According to Tovey (2017), Froebel feels that children are active learners and are inquisitive people.

As well as suggesting that when children participate in direct experiences, children discover more, notes Tovey (2017).

In his hypothesis, Piaget agrees with Froebel's theory too by stating that the acquiring skills and knowledge children develop are influenced by their hands-on experiences and active participation (Reynolds, 2018).

Through hands on and experiential learning in outdoor environments, Froebel in compliance with Tovey (2020), have suggested that children can obtain a greater conception of the environmental sustainability attributes of life, for example about the different phases of life, mortality, growth, and degradation of the ecological systems, biodiversity and of mankind.

Encouraging children to develop a sense of respect and help them become considerate towards nature and of those around them (Tinney and Hirst, 2017).

When children are not provided opportunities that enable them to experience outdoor learning and become exposed to and engaged within natural environments, Prince (2010), Tinney and Hirst (2017) believe that children can become fearful towards nature impacting how it influences the way children can action of how to take care of the environment and other sustainability issues.

In their study, Borg, Winberg and Vinterek (2017), claims that the significance of the incorporation of Education for Sustainability in the early year's education had been highlighted ever since it first evolved in Brundtland's Report in the late 1980's.

The idea of education for sustainability according with Percy – Smith and Burns (2013), Borg Winberg and Vinterek (2017) is more about learning to actively conserve sustainable improvements than it being about just learning about the sustainable development matters.

Which is growing progressively in early childhood education explains Bergen, *et al* (2021).

As education for sustainability development is essential for providing high quality education (UNESCO, 2024) and having been acknowledged that children and education has an important purpose in changing and influencing the way individuals can act upon sustainable conservation and maintaining it fairly for future generations (Tinney and Hirst, 2017).

According to Tinney (2013), Tinney and Hirst (2017), it is mandatory that the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Wales sustainability development policy, prompted by the principles of the education for sustainable development global policy is implemented within all practices involving children and young people.

The Welsh Assembly Government (2008) claims that education for sustainable development and the Global Citizenship educational system helps children in preparation for the chances of survival in the modern world as well as supporting their understanding of global societies.

I would like to conclude my evaluation by stating that it is important for children to be involved in active learning as it enables them to obtain more knowledge and understanding

than they do when they are sat at a table and just listening. By physically doing and experiencing hands on learning makes the children's acquirements become much more meaningful to them as they have the lead and power of what they learn.

Early childhood education for sustainability is essentially important. This is because it educates and helps prepare the children in gaining the skills and the knowledge, they need to help with conservation sustainability and sustaining oneself and future generations chances of survival.

Developing a bond with natural environments and a close connection influenced through the opportunities of hands on and active experiences is the first steps required towards ensuring that children can conserve sustainably and fairly for both the present and the future life.

Thank you for listening

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