

E-Portfolio

Part 1

In Iceland and other Nordic countries, it is believed to be of utmost importance that children are playing outdoors frequently throughout their childhood. Government papers agree with and back this view, claiming that being outdoors is extremely beneficial for children.

In curriculum guidelines, there has been a huge emphasis placed on using outdoor learning environments as a way to encourage children to think positively about the natural world and learn to engage with healthy living and exercise (Norodahl & Johannesson 2013).

This emphasis on the importance of playing outdoors has been present for a long time in Iceland, with kids aged between one and six engaging in outdoor play every day in school, and kids aged between 6 and 16 being given the opportunity to play outside during their breaks within the school day. Whilst it is majoritively unknown what teachers are doing to support learning outdoors and this is likely to vary between teachers and different locations, there are signs and evidence that outdoor learning is being used by teachers across Iceland much more than in previous years. In Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, up to 70% of schools claim to use outdoor education often and frequently (Oladottir, 2008).

Part 2a

A definition of Forest School has been made by the Forest School Network stating that “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”. (Murray and O'Brien, 2006). People are beginning to grow concerned that young children in schools are no longer provided with the opportunity to visit and experience woodlands like their parents did. Murray and O'Brien (2008) suggest that this may be due to people's views that nowadays there is increased concern about the safety surrounding allowing children to explore these spaces independently, or that with the development of technology in recent years, time outdoors is being exchanged with time spent indoors. Research also proves that people who don't spend time outdoors as children are also unlikely to spend time outdoors as adults, therefore missing out on the physical and emotional benefits having access to nature gives us (Ward Thompson et al, 2004). The Welsh Government has caught on to the benefits of learning in different environments outside of the classroom, such as in woodlands, and are now encouraging teachers to introduce Forest School into their own schools, especially within Foundation Phase.

Reference List:

E. O'Brien and R. Murray (2006). *'A marvellous opportunity for children to learn: A participatory evaluation of Forest School in England and Wales'*, Farnham: Forest Research

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

C. Ward Thompson, P. Aspinall, S. Bell, C. Findlay, J. Wherrett and P. Travlou (2004) *'Open space and social inclusion: Local Woodland use in central Scotland'* Edinburgh: Report to the Forestry Commission

Part 2b

1. If you fail to acknowledge the source of your information in academic writing, you could be accused of plagiarism? Why is it important that students avoid this?

- It is important to avoid plagiarism as a student because it is considered a serious academic offence and can lead to serious consequences. It also means that other people aren't receiving credit or acknowledgement for their work that you have used and other people are unable to gain access to the sources you have used.

2. You only have to reference when you use a direct quotation. Is this True or False?

Explain your answer.

- This is false as even though you may be paraphrasing a quote from someone else's work, you are still using work that somebody else has produced and so need to reference, or this is considered as passing somebody else's work off as your own, also known as plagiarism, which can have serious consequences.

3. Wikipedia is a good place to search for information for your academic assignments.

Explain, with reasons and supporting literature, whether you believe this statement is true or false.

- This statement can be considered false. Wikipedia does not pass the CRAAP (Currency, Relevancy, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose) test used to test for how appropriate a source of information is to use in academic work. This is because there is no quality control because anyone can publish anything on Wikipedia. It is also believed 'it is illegitimate to cite Wikipedia as a source, because their articles do not have clear and identifiable authorship, and so it is difficult to verify their content' (Jaschick, 2007, cited in E. Aibar et al) and should therefore not be used to search for information to use in academic assignments.

Reference:

E. Aibar, J. Lladós-Masllorens, A. Meseguer-Artola, J. Mingullion and M. Lerga (2015) '*Wikipedia at university: what faculty think and do about it*' The Electronic Library, 33(4), pp. 668-683.

4. Write a set of instructions which could be included in a referencing guide which explains how to present a very long quotation.

- If you are using a direct quotation that is over two lines or thirty words long, to include this in your writing you should: enter the quote as a separate paragraph in your writing and then indent the paragraph and put the author's surname, year of publication and page number in round brackets at the end of the quote. You don't need to use quotation marks. To reference the long quotation in your reference list, you should list in this order: the author or editor's name, the publication year in round brackets, the title in italics, the place of publication and the publisher.

5. Explain how you can begin to conduct research for an academic assignment. Identify five sources which would be acceptable for academic study.

- To conduct research for an academic assignment you should first look at your reading lists. This will give you a baseline of sources to use and give you an idea of the sort of material you should be using, as well as how many references you should be including in your work. Begin by working your way through the reading lists, and then expand your reading to other sources which write about similar topics to gain more information. These sources could include your university library, your local public library, google scholar, journal articles and credible websites.

Part 3

In Emma Smith's article titled 'Schooled to Fail? The Underachievement Debate in Wales', Smith looks at considering the 'underachievement debate' from a Welsh perspective, focusing particularly on how comparing data from Wales and England is producing inaccurate and unfair conclusions for a wide number of reasons, as well as looking at the trends in Welsh student's exam results after compulsory education.

Smith's main findings in the article argue how the comparison of educational data between Wales and England is unfair for a number of factors, namely that there is a significant population difference, with 50 million people living in England and only 3 million living in Wales, but also that there are large economic differences between certain areas of both countries. These differences make comparing the two extremely difficult, as one has a significant advantage. As well as this, Smith argues that even when comparing Welsh data with areas of England most similar to that of Wales (North East England), no matter which way comparisons are carried out, "there will be those that are winners and those that are losers". Smith's purpose of the article appears to be to explain how these comparisons are problematic, and state how we are unable to get an accurate picture of the success of Welsh students simply by comparing education and exam results in Wales to those in England. Therefore the Welsh curriculum is not to be blamed until more accurate comparisons are made.

The structure of Smith's article appears very deliberate and intentional, with her two focuses honed in on, and very purposely titled under separate paragraphs to highlight the Welsh/English difference and make sure we as readers are definite about which argument is being highlighted and can clearly identify which point is being made. Smith structures her article into large paragraphs, which gel together into one another. This seems like a very intentional decision, as it keeps the article flowing and ensures the reader doesn't break concentration and can easily read through the article, therefore clearly conveying her message to us. Smith's aim to make her article flow can also be highlighted by her use of connecting adjectives, which help to join her sentences together, and by using descriptive language, emphasise what feeling she is trying to evoke from us. In order to make us as readers fully understand what it is she is trying to communicate, Smith uses an extensive list of statistics within her article. These statistics are threaded both within the article and in separate tables in between paragraphs going into more depth about what they are showing, which helps to provide clear evidence for the arguments within her article. As well as including a considerable amount of statistics within the article, Smith includes a vast

appendices at the end of the article which she references at various points. This helps to ensure the article isn't too filled up by statistics, but gives readers the option to explore more in-depth information and also provides evidence for any points in the article that aren't directly backed up with a statistic within the main body.

The language used by Smith is clearly formal, with a clear audience aim. This is because the article has been written as an academic style article, which demonstrates it has been purposely designed for those with experience or academic knowledge, perhaps students or specialists. Whilst the article flows in terms of sentence structure, its language is academic and sophisticated, making it a harder read in terms of the ability required in order to access some of the language. In terms of accuracy, Smith uses specialist terminology and a number of specific references, once again to highlight what type of audience the article is aimed at. In terms of the type of language used, Smith's article is designed to be informative, and therefore more impartial, objective language is used when facts or statistics are given, or a point is being introduced. However, as the article also gives an opinion, in certain parts more subjective and persuasive language is used, as a way to influence the reader and get the reader to form the same opinion as Smith.

Evidence and reasoning is used throughout the article to demonstrate the consistent clear argument being made (we are unable to judge how successful Wales' education system is by comparing educational data to that of England, as the differences are too vast. And in any form of comparison, there will be those that succeed and those that fail). Within the article, there is a heavy reliance on tables which compare various findings from England, the north of England and Wales. These sources come from the Office of National Statistics and are therefore a valid and reliable source of evidence, which are very effective at backing up and supporting the argument. The sources used back up Smith's argument in a number of different ways, as they help to highlight the difference between England and Wales, as well as showing that even when compared with the part of England most similar to Wales, the results are still inconclusive, therefore supporting the consistent argument used in a very successful way, resulting in a fair and justified conclusion within the article.

In conclusion, Smith's article is clear, concise and consistent. It gets straight to the point and provides a number of different statistics used to back up her points with evidence. The language is accessible yet sophisticated, and the argument can be clearly understood, supported by persuasive and subjective language. Smith also makes it clear where she stands at the very beginning of the article and sets out a clear aim, overall making this article appropriate and successful.

References:

Emma Smith, (2005) "*Schooled to Fail? The underachievement debate in Wales*", The Welsh journal of education., 13, 2, pp.84-102