



Froebelian Futures

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Practitioner Inquiry Project report template

Use this template to write up your project report, before sharing it with froebelianfutures@ed.ac.uk by your given deadline (if applicable). If it is returned to you marked "Approved for publication" you should then proceed to copy/paste your responses into the identical fields online - under the New Project Form which you will find via your profile at Froebel.ed.ac.uk. This is required before you can be certificated for your participation in the programme.

You are welcome to write your report in your own language.

Project title

8 words maximum

What stories does the soil tell us?

Subtitle (if applicable)

An outdoor observation between the interaction of children with the environment and soil.

Project summary (for website search results)

Briefly describe the topic or key issue(s) your project was looking at (30 words maximum)

Example: An observational study of whether 3 and 4 year olds of different genders favour similar or different schemas in their block play.

An observation study on the way that the imagination of 7 year olds works at a primary school in an outdoor environment.

Introduction

Summarise the key focus of your project and the main issues you cover. Why do they matter? (100 words max)

Example: This project looks at ABC... It takes into account XYZ factors / principal literature or policies. This enquiry matters because... My purpose in undertaking this work was to learn...

The project looked at ;

- children's' imagination and creativity
- the impact of manufactured/natural/outdoor environment on children's imagination and creativity
- children's desire to be outside and function either freely or after setting them a certain question

This project takes into account that the school participating in this project is located at the province of Greece known as a "tourist" destination, many of the children spend time outdoors but also are exposed to technology through laptops, smartphones etc. The project is important because, as a new teacher at this school teaching theatre, both observation and results will help me understand what motivates children's imagination, causes their enthusiasm and be able to use it in my teaching.

Context

What was the situation of your setting, practice or research subject before (or when) you **started** this project, in relation to the question you were exploring? This might point towards demographics, pedagogy, current policies, an individual case study, the day-to-day experiences of children or adults, or other key contexts (200 words max)

When I started teaching in this school, I discovered that many children had never seen a professional theatre show or even amateur projects. From the first days of my teaching I understood that for them theatre was just memorising words, going on the stage and saying those words. They were not used to theatrical playing, with the main aspects of theatre such as transforming, exploring, "getting out of one's skin". It was difficult for them to form a circle and stay in that form. Also it was challenging to "wait" their turn for every other activity. At the same time they showed great enthusiasm about my teaching, about me wanting to teach them something new, about revealing to them that theatre has a lot to offer. I was almost unable to teach freely, calmly and in a way that would really express me, my feelings and also my creativity. Taking into consideration Froebels' main idea about children's freedom in education made me think that maybe an outdoor activity and soil is the answer for the issues in this classroom.

Methodology and ethics

What unique things did you have to consider, and what choices did you make, about **how** you would carry out your project (200 words max)

I informed my colleagues and the Headmaster of the school about this project and that my study would be completely anonymous. We all agreed that I can conduct the research and carry out the necessary activities.

Secondly I thought about the group of pupils that I wanted to work the project with and realised that the second graders are more likely to participate with enthusiasm and eagerness. I also took into consideration the specific issues that all groups have and decided that the two groups of second graders will benefit from the project.

I explained the project with simple words to both groups, clarified to them that no names are to be used and no data are to be exposed. Some from the first group didn't want to participate. They would rather participate in their normal class of theatre, explaining to me that they don't want to miss our lesson. It's only one hour-45 minutes-every week. I rejected the idea of explaining a second time to them and carried on with the other group.

We visited the outdoor environment of the school two times and on the second visit I challenged them with the question, what stories does the soil tell us?

Both times I observed the pupils and then recorded what they had to say to me. I also took pictures of their findings and of their gifts to me.

Findings

What did you learn? What did you observe first-hand? What did this reveal, or what new questions does it raise? If anything changed as a result of your research, please give evidence by indicating how things were before and after. If possible, please include the “voices” or expressions of some of the children involved to evidence your work. (400 words max)

The front yard of our school has trees, soil, basketball and football courts. In the backyard one can find the remains of a small building, broken branches, garbage, a lot of grass, many trees, some ropes, mud and bathroom tiles.

The group headed straight for the backyard, very eager to interact with the environment. Some headed straight for the remains, while others observed the trees, the mud, the flowers, etc.

They were also very eager to bring me the things they found, give them to me as a gift, break even further the sticks that were already broken, gather flowers, tiles “because they were shiny” or “reminded” them “of a shoe”, go near the trees and observe some of the creatures that they found there and imagine “how they live”.

The second time I let them be free in the backyard and reminded them of my question, what stories does the soil tell us. They repeated the exploration of the first time but after a few minutes gathered things or observed and were coming back to talk to me. “I found worms in a tree and can’t understand how they got there because I know that worms live in the soil”. Another informed me that “trees and soil are friends, so it’s only natural to find worms in the trees and the tree called me to dig in the mud”. “The grass reminds me of the rabbits, because this grass is straight”. “...from one side the soil is straight, from another is wobbly, and it’s funny because I saw soil on trees and tried to clean it so that the birds will not fall”. “The soil told me to meditate, and feel calm”.

I intentionally did not ask any questions as I wanted to record their initial thoughts and also not to force “confessions”. I wanted the whole process to develop calmly, spontaneously and gently.

I believe that their imagination set to action. I could understand it by the way they talked to each other, sharing information, making suggestions etc. So their main goal was to explore the environment and bring back what they found to me, the teacher, the “outsider”.

At the same time it was as if they kept my question in consideration and their narrations were more about how those things got in the backyard, what they think, what they do.

The observations above made me realise that what I have in my mind as story structure, is completely different from stories the children imagine, think and tell. In my mind a story needs a start, a development and an ending.

It is important to stimulate with questions and thoughts - I intend to do so next time-, also include natural environment when scheduling lesson involving storytelling, traditional fairy tales, myths etc. I will certainly use the ideas on <https://www.teachoutdoors.co.uk/outdoor-learning-for-national-storytelling-week-4-ideas-to-take-your-learning-outside/>, especially the Story stick, as it would set the ground for developing

stories. In the spring, I intend to repeat the whole process by creating mythical creatures from the findings outside, so that we develop not only a story but also a short improvisation.

Conclusion/coda

In a nutshell, what was the overall lesson? What might you do next? (100 words)

I am absolutely sure that children need to be outside more and need to interact with the environment. A lesson conducted outside is far more interesting and provocative than a lesson indoors.
Adults need to understand that children's world is completely different from theirs. Children think and talk in a different way. It is also essential for adults to leave children outdoors for free play even though they think it's not safe. We, as adults, have to overcome our fears.
I already take advantage of Greece's good weather and teach many of my classes outdoors.

Add one standout quote that captures the essence of your experience/project (optional, 50 words max). This could be from relevant literature or an anonymised participant.

"I like it a lot now that we are outside. It's nice."
The quote above made me understand that there is room to develop children's imagination and creativity in absolutely natural ways. Taking them outside and letting them free is an important stimulation for creativity, imagination and knowledge.

We would like to include an image with your report when you come to publish it. Please attach this to the email when you submit. You should secure permission from anyone featured in the image, and any images of children should be obscured/taken from behind, so that they are not identifiable. Alternatively you may choose to photograph objects, or choose a free image from unsplash.com

- CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS -

Have you secured all necessary consents, and anonymised all the data relating to participants and settings in your responses above, including for any photograph submitted with this report?

YES

Your name	Ilektra Mitsoura
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Name of institution where your research took place	Nydri Primary School
Date submitted / revised	29/11/2023

The following page should be left blank for University and Local Authority feedback.

University of Edinburgh feedback (please ask colleagues or use an app to help translate this feedback into your own language if you need to).

<p>Project strengths</p>	
<p>Questions that might be useful to consider</p>	
<p>Changes required by The University before publication (typically relating to the anonymity of research subjects or settings)</p>	
<p>Approved for publication by The University of Edinburgh? <i>Approval must be granted by BOTH the University of Edinburgh <u>and</u> your Local Authority Lead – see below.</i></p>	

Not approved?

If your project has NOT been approved, please make the changes that are required and resubmit. We should come back to you within 10 working days or less. If not, please follow up.

Approved?

Has your project been approved for publication by the University of Edinburgh? Congratulations! You have passed a major milestone on your road to qualifying as a Froebelian practitioner researcher.

WHAT NEXT?

If you have been working with a senior manager or colleague in your research setting, share your final report with them and invite them to write a short paragraph - **Leadership opportunities and reflections** – to accompany your online submission (optional).

Next – required:

1. **Copy/paste approved your project text (above) to Froebel.ed.ac.uk (Log-in > My Profile > New Project form).** Attach your image (if you have one), and if available/applicable your senior colleagues' *Leadership opportunities and reflections* (as a

separate document). Once you have saved *and* submitted your completed project on the website we will be alerted to review and publish it. Publishing is a requirement for your certification. You are welcome to submit your report in your own language.

2. Peer review 3 projects by fellow practitioners – we will send you a link to find these soon.
3. Make sure you have added your address to your profile (in the box above the map, under “Edit profile”) so you can appear on our Network map, AND a picture of yourself, or an image which represents you.

Ideally:

- Share your work! Don’t let your hard work fall down the back of the sofa! Start to plan and create your dissemination material/activity, so that you can share your findings in the most effective/appropriate way(s) with both your research participants (an ethical obligation) AND any other stakeholders who you would want to know about (and *act on*) your findings. This could include creating something with children which represents/responds to key findings, hosting a discussion for colleagues or with other agencies, making a short video, organising a demonstration event, arranging a policy meeting with managers etc. We strongly recommend that your emphasis is on active rather than passive dissemination.
- Return to your Profile > Project > Edit, and add the final section “Dissemination/Impact” to share a very brief account of what you did / images / video. (100 words max).