AIESEP SIG Early Childhood Education Pre-conference Session
Wednesday, 8 June, 12.00-17.30
Corbett Building Room

Purposeful Physical Play in Early Childhood Education—Research, Practice, and Professional Practice

Introduction
This pre-conference session is designed to highlight the significance of purposeful physical play for all children in the early years to ensure that educators promote informed practice and significantly raise the current low levels of physical activity in children.

Aim of Pre-conference Session
Researchers will explore how an international collaborative network of research and professional practice in early childhood education can be developed to promote physical literacy. The aim of this AIESEP SIG is to create an active network of researchers/academics with an interest in issues related to early childhood education, physical activity and health, with foci on: (a) teaching physical education for professional working in early childhood education; (b) early years physical activity, physical development, and health; and (c) children’s development through play.

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PRESENTATION 1
Arja Sääkslahti, University of Jyväskylä, Finland; Len Almond, St. Mary’s University, England

**TITLE**
Introduction of AIESEP Early Years SIG

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**PRESENTATION 2**
Len Almond, School of Education, Theology and Leadership, St Mary’s University, England

**TITLE**
A Conceptual Framework for Delivering an Early Years Programme in England

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction**
In England, 91% of children fail to meet the UK Physical Activity Guidelines. Practitioners in early years settings have not been provided with a:
- clear vision of what could be done;
- sense of direction of what needs to be done;
- sharp Focus on what can be achieved; or
- sense of what needs to be planned and organised.

**Aim**
The aim of this presentation is to outline a framework for promoting purposeful physical play in early years settings in England.

**Research Findings**
As a result of working with early years practitioners from four local education authorities, we have developed a purposeful physical play framework to create a coherent programme for all early years settings. This presentation will outline in detail what the framework requires them to put in place and how to do it.

1. **Targeted Provision**
   - Introduce the 25% Rule – 45 minutes of purposeful physical play in 3 hours aspiration.
   - Increase
     - the number of bouts of purposeful physical play each session;
     - energetic purposeful physical play (e.g., action rhymes); and
     - sustained purposeful physical play (e.g., walking to a green space).
   - Decrease prolonged sitting and waiting time.

2. **Provide an Entitlement for the Four Domains of Purposeful Physical Play**
   - Exercise play
   - Object play
   - Dance and activities leading to Expressive Movement
   - Outdoor Education, Adventure, and Deep Play

3. **Enabling Environments (affordances and scaffolding to generate action possibilities) and Stimulating Purposeful Physical Play**
   - A comprehensive guide has been developed to support this work.

**Conclusions**
The Purposeful Physical Play Framework will enable delegates to evaluate its relevance for their work in early years settings.

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**PRESENTATION 3**
Debra M. Vinci, DrPH, MS, RDN, Christopher Wirth, PhD, & Alexandra Venezia, University of West Florida, Department of Exercise Science & Community Health, Pensacola, FL
Training Childcare Teachers to Promote Physical Activity in Childcare Settings: A U.S. Experience

ABSTRACT

Introduction

In the Prevention Status Report 2013, Florida received the lowest rating (27.7%) of the 47 recommended components of for nutrition and physical activity (PA) standards of licensed childcare facilities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Since experts agree that childcare teachers need specific training on how to integrate PA into the childcare setting (Kreichauf et al., 2012; Ward, Vaughn, & Hales, 2010), the Florida Department of Health - Escambia County collaborated with UWF to implement the Promoting Physical Activity in Childcare Settings (PA-CS) intervention.

Aims

This presentation focuses on the delivery and evaluation of a training curriculum for childcare teachers on PA strategies for children that could be incorporated into classroom activities. Thirty-two childcare teachers working with three to four-year-olds attended a two-hour Let’s Wiggle: Promoting Physical Activity in Childcare Setting. Training included didactic presentations on the importance of PA in early childhood and linked PA strategies with Florida Early Learning Standards. The workshop provided childcare providers with experiential “hands-on” activities using Physical Activity Curriculum Cards (PACC), developed specifically for this training. The PACC demonstrated how to incorporate PA into scheduled classroom lessons, transitions, and center time activities. Participants completed a post-workshop evaluation and 20 of the 32 classroom teachers were provided coaching for six weeks post training.

Research Findings

All of the teachers that attended the training valued including PA during the classroom setting. Findings suggest training can increase childcare providers’ knowledge of best practices in promoting PA in the classroom. The teachers receiving coaching described it as a valuable experience and were able to integrate suggestions into their classrooms. At the end of the intervention, the majority of these teachers requested continued follow-up.

Conclusion

Training is needed to encourage teachers to incorporate PA during classroom time. Children are often active during outdoor play time, therefore incorporating PA during indoor classroom time may be more effective in increasing overall physical PA.

References


The Scandinavian Perspective on Early Education and the Role of Physical Activity

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Europe contains many subcultures, a variety which can be seen in people’s lifestyles as well as in the ways children’s physically active play is supported by parents and educators. The physical environment (e.g., terrain, temperature, and seasonal variation) modify people’s lifestyles and their attitude toward physical activity.

Aim

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the characteristics of Scandinavian early education and the role of physical activity in it.

Research Findings

Research findings from Finland have shown that in a typical week approximately 70% of 3-year-old children spend eight to ten hours and five days per week in day care. Day care centers have structured daily programs with morning and afternoon outdoor play sessions. The role of outdoor play has been shown to be important for children’s total amount of physical activity (Soini, 2015). Unfortunately, children are made to sit down and be sedentary in indoors (Reunamo, Hakala, Saros, & Lehto, 2014). Seasonal variation in outdoor play reveals major differences in activity levels, the winter period being the least physically active period (Laukkanen, 2016). Traditionally, winter activities have been a stimulating variation for children’s physical active play, because snow and ice offer inspiration for special equipment such as sleds, skis, and skates. Scandinavian countries have a close relationship to nature. Most day care centers are built next to a forest. This natural playground is seen as the children’s best playground.

Conclusions

The example of Scandinavian culture in early education could encourage all other cultures to increase the role of outdoor play in physical activity during children’s early years. For teachers, this means that they should learn to see the outdoor environment as an open space with interesting affordances. The weather, instead of being an excuse to stay inside, simply poses the question of what to wear.

References


PRESENTATION 5

Ingunn Fjørtoft, University College of Southeast Norway, Faculty of Arts, Folk Culture and Teacher Education, Norway

TITLE

The Theory of “Affordances” – A Theoretical Approach Implemented into Practice: Learning Landscape – The Materiality and Contexts for Learning with the Environment

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Motor learning is presumed being the most fundamental of all learning in children. Children learn movements and gain bodily experiences by exploring different environments. Through bodily experiments, children explore details and quality of
movements such as speed, agility, force, and weight. Motor learning is not a process of maturation. It is a process of learning through experiences and activities where “nothing comes by itself” but rather by experience. Experience is therefore fundamental for motor learning in small children. Children develop perceptual-motor skills through natural spontaneous interaction with the environment. The materiality of the environment affords challenges and experiences that promote motor learning and the children respond by exploring, discover and face the challenges by mastering perceptual-motor skills in context with the environment. These perspectives include a dynamic systems approach to the development of motor behavior, putting attention to the total development of motor abilities of the child including biological abilities, the tasks to learn and the environment in which the child learns and develops.

Aims
Implementing this theoretical approach into practice will be illustrated by two case studies showing the contextual environment-child relationship in learning fundamental motor skills. The case studies indicated high level of physical activity and improved motor development as a consequence of playing in outdoor environments. The children seemed to be active through free play in complex environments as well as the environments challenged their motor behavior. Consequently, the importance of environmental impact on physical activity and motor behavior will be analyzed and discussed in relations to theory of “Affordances” and a dynamic systems approach to motor learning.

Conclusion
Theoretical perspectives applied on children’s motor behavior may help understanding the importance of learning motor skills in context with the environments. Multifunctional and natural environments seem to have promotive effect on children’s motor development and should therefore be encouraged as a didactic approach in motor learning.

References

PRESENTATION 6
Boris Jidovtseff, Anne Delvaux, Manhattan Mornard, & Mary Vandermeulen, Department of Sport and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Liege, Belgium

TITLE
Modifying Indoor Facilities Appropriate to Children

ABSTRACT
Introduction
Physical literacy development during childhood is critical not only to favor sport performance outcomes but also to develop long term physical activity. It’s very important for children to move in a thinking way. Diversified activities are important to develop a
large panel of fundamental motor skills and to stimulate perception. It is important for children to move, but it has to be done in a thinking way.

Focus on Inquiry
With young children it is important to maximize active time, to develop fundamental motor skills and perception, to take into account inter-individual differences, to favor enjoyment, self-confidence and to guarantee optimal security. Most of these pedagogical challenges can be reached by appropriate instruction and by an adapted environment.

Contribution
There is clear evidence that modifying exercise facilities influence children’s behaviour with consequences for motivation, activity level and motor development. For 25 years a reflexive approach has been used at CEReKi (Liège, Belgium) in order to determine how indoor facilities can be modified with the aim to meet children needs and to favor motor development. Attractive circuits have been developed to stimulate specific motor skills (gymnastic, athletic or ball circuits). They were created to afford action possibilities and challenges for children to explore their own abilities for exercise. According to the children’s age and level of ability different pedagogical conditions can be provided: spontaneous play, guided discovery or structured games. Circuits have to be organised in such a way that children can do most exercises on their own. The arrangement of equipment offers multiple possibilities for movement, favouring active discovery for all children. The autonomy of children allows the teacher to move throughout the circuit and assist children by scaffolding their learning.

Conclusion
Our experience confirms that modifying indoor facilities is relevant for 3 to 8 years old children activities.

PRESENTATION 7
Mary Vandermeulen, University of Liege, Belgium, and HELMo Sainte-Croix, Preprimary Teacher Training College, Liege, Belgium; Anne Delvaux, Manhattan Mornard, and Boris Jidovtseff, Department of Sport and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Liege, Belgium

TITLE
Water Familiarization for Children from 3 to 6 years: The CEReKi approach

ABSTRACT
Introduction
According to many authors, the degree of development required to learn a swimming style is not reached before the age of five to six years old (Pedroletti, 2004; Moulin, 2007). However, before that age, it is very interesting to explore the aquatic environment to develop specific skills like entering into the water, immersion, floatation, breathing and propulsion (Parker & Blanksby, 1997; Moulin, 2007).

Focus of Inquiry
The kinanthropology research and study center (“CEReKi”) of the University of Liège, in Belgium, wanted to develop an aquatic activity adapted to children aged from three to six years old. Unfortunately, the swimming pool in the sport centrum had no paddling pool and was too deep for toddlers.

Contribution to the Field
To facilitate the water familiarization activity, we adapted the environment with specific equipment (net, floating mats, bars, cages, slides) in order to build a water familiarization circuit adapted to every child, aged from three to six years old. The circuit was developed in order to stimulate the five water familiarization skills (entering into water, immersion,
floatation, breathing and propulsion). Using circuit organization appears to be a very successful pedagogy and organization. Children can do most exercises on their own with only a little support (about twenty children for two monitors). Furthermore, the arrangement of equipment offers multiple possibilities of movement in order to favour active motor discovery adapted for all children. The autonomy of children allows teacher to move throughout the circuit and support children in their learning. Scientific research has confirmed that the CEREKi water familiarization innovative approach was successful for young children (Mornard, 2012).

Conclusions
Environment adaptation and specific pedagogic methodology has enabled us to develop a successful water familiarization circuit in a swimming pool that was previously unsuited to young children.

References

PRESENTATION 8
Kristine De Martelaer, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium, and Universiteit Utrec

TITLE
Water Safety Competencies: Real and Perceived Skills and Risk Cognitions

ABSTRACT
Introduction
There is a need for valid and reliable measures, especially among children of perceived physical competence in accordance to movement skills that children often execute in a variety of movement and physical activity environments (Barnett et al., 2016). As the aquatic environment offers popular leisure time activities, (young) children are stimulated to learn to swim and survive. As a consequence realistic perception of competencies and risk is necessary for drowning prevention. However, little research has explored both motor skills and risk perception in water safety.

Focus of inquiry
The Spectrum of Prevention, as developed by Cohen and Swift (1999), has six elements with each targeting a different group. In this contribution the focus will be on the two individual dimensions, the child and the parent or caregiver. Some studies focus on the problem of unrealistic parental expectations about the role of swimming ability. For specific water competencies that build on movement efficiency and breath control (Stallman, Moran, Brenner, & Rahman, 2014) unrealistic beliefs concerning swimming distance, aquatic movement qualities (like orientation and stability), seem to be a problem. Overestimating the own swim ability and underestimating the risk of drowning is gender (boys more problematic) and age related (puberty). Another important aspect is the underestimation of swimming skill performance in open air, compared with what is learned indoor.

Both these individual and environmental factors indicate the relevance of tailoring a decent water safety program that is professional developed and implemented in efficient and child-oriented approaches in combination with age relevant safety messages.
Conclusions
Future research can examine tools like the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Movement Skill Competence (PMSC) to assess young children's perceptions (Barnett et al., 2016). The combination of valid and reliable tools for (young) children and parents or caregivers are a relevant contribution in the Spectrum of Prevention.

References