### Assignment 3

**EDN470 Action Learning for Reflective Practitioners**

#### Final Report~ ePortfolio

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| --- |
| **Your Name: Sandra Murgia Student No: 31866079** |
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 |
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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Report Structure**   | Rank /10  | Comment   |
| The Report is well structured: * clear introduction
* well justified rationale
* clear aims, focus questions & strategies
* adequate conclusion
* professional presentation including correct referencing in APA style.

   |   |   |
| **Quality of Reflection**  | Rank /15  | Comment  |
| The reflective discussion: * considers ‘why’ you conducted your research and also ‘how’ you used this approach
* makes links to own teaching philosophy and teaching experience
* demonstrates ability to act on reflections;
* strongly related to the project’s aims and linked to relevant literature
* addresses research questions

  |   |   |
| **Action Research Methodology**  | Rank /15  | Comment  |
| Teaching strategies are: * implemented as part of Action Research
* strongly linked to the topic
* data collection is appropriate for the action research cycle;
* data is analysed and critically evaluated;
* modification of teaching plans is based on findings.
 |   |   |
| **Provision of Evidence**  | Rank /10  | Comment  |
| The evidence provided: * Is authentic and varied
* thoughtfully selected
* explained in the report
* respects confidentiality - permission forms
* **Appendices A-D are hyperlinked**

    |   |   |

 **General Comments: /50**

**Signature: Date:**

Assignment 3

Professional and Action Learning Research Project

E-portfolio Presentation

By Sandra Murgia

Student Number: 31866079

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**Project Title:** **What strategies can be used to develop children’s gross motor skills during Literacy Activities?**

1. **Introduction**

The following report will provide a detailed insight into my action research methodology, my teaching pedagogy of literacy and gross motor skills and how effective my research topic has been throughout a series of cycles. Within the following report, I will provide detailed information based upon my personal observations, items of evidence, the process I undertook and my findings which were made along the way.

1.1 Context

The context of this project has been conducted within a Kindy classroom, consisting of 30 students. The school is located in Parmelia and is considered to be a low to middle socio economic area. Within my classroom there is a variety of cultural diversity, with a percentage of students having English as their second language. The mentor teacher has designed a learning environment that is welcoming to all students and provides opportunities for the children to converse with each other and incorporate play into various learning areas and activities. Over the past 3 cycles, I have worked closely with 8 children, ranging in developmental levels and abilities in both gross motor and literacy development.

1.2 Educational Background

Before beginning my studies to become an Early Childhood and Primary teacher, I spent several years within the classroom as an education assistant. This allowed me opportunities to observe, learn and reflect upon the teaching and learning happening before me. Due to my previous background, I realised that providing children with adequate amounts of time to participate in gross motor play and skills would extend the children’s development in their cognitive and physical development. It was during my observational time that I questioned the effectiveness of integrating two learnings areas to provide extended opportunities for children to further their development.

1. **Rationale**

The desired outcome which had been set previously in assignment one, was to discover the benefits and effectiveness of integrating opportunities for children to learn literacy and gross motor skills parallel of each other. Often educators will glide past the teaching of gross motor development as it is not always considered as a high priority in children’s cognitive development. Gross motor skills are defined as “the movements involving the larger muscles of our bodies, development of gross motor skills begin from birth, with our abilities continuing to develop and improve as we grow” (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008; Williams 2015). Upon reflecting past experiences within early childhood classrooms, I noted that some educators lacked the time and opportunities for gross motor development as they saw fine motor development play a stronger role in children’s learning. I believe the integration of gross motor skills into a literacy program will allow for children’s ability to absorb information and have opportunities to learn more effectively due to the movement of larger muscles, which will stimulate children’s brain neurons (Hands, 2002). Knowing the importance of developing such skills and abilities, and reflecting upon my previous experiences within classrooms, I decided to focus my action research on developing a literacy program that incorporated both gross motor skills and play into the class literacy activities. To assist in my action research process, I chose to follow the model provided by Kemmis and Susman to guide me through my ongoing cycles which were implemented within the classroom in group, whole and individual settings (O’Brien, 2011).

As I commenced the assignment, I began my ongoing research which based upon my chosen topic, the aims and focus questions I wanted to be answered. I took it upon myself to find various sources and information which would provide me some insight on suitable teaching strategies and methods which may be beneficial to my teaching pedagogy when implementing my topic within the classroom. I began by reviewing the Australian Curriculum strands to understand what would be required in both Literacy and Physical Education learning areas and how these strands were linked into the National Quality Standards and Early years learning Framework (EYLF). Using this information, I begun the planning process of developing engaging and hands on learning activities which I felt would be beneficial and appropriate to develop both sets of objectives I had set for each cycle. Alongside engaging activities, both the EYLF and NQS provide information in their outcomes and standards that a learning environment should be inclusive and provide opportunities for exploration and learning in a play based setting (Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority, ACECQA, 2011). Although there are many ways to define play, the EYLF have defined play based learning as a context in which children are able to make sense of the world around them (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), when planning activities within the classroom, I took on this concept to design activities that allowed for children to learn in a play based environment with opportunities for explicit teaching of fundamental movement skills to occur. When designing intentional teaching environments, educators maintain a vital role as a mentor, coach and guide which aids children within their learning to question, discover, explore and create along the way (Leggett, 2013; Touhill, 2013). I believe that as early childhood educators we have a responsibility to provide the opportunities for children to learn in both play based environments as stated in EYLF outcomes and through engaging intentional teaching activities.

When conducting each cycle throughout the project, I used various forms of resources to engage the children and assist in their development. When selecting gross motor skills which I would use within the literacy activity, I referred to the Movement Starters Program which the teacher had been implementing into her daily programs from the end of term 1 *(Refer to Appendices, to view program).* The program provides educators with a weekly guide on skills that children within the 4-5 age group should be progressing to learn, observation checklists to monitor children’s abilities, participation and progress (Bullus & Coles, 2015). As written previously in assignment one, during this investigation, my aim is to develop a flexible program which would provide opportunities where the children stay active within a literacy program, and monitor whether a combine program will run in a successful manner, by using various forms of evidence to refer back to (Hands, 2002; O’Brien, 2011).

After reviewing the feedback that was written on the previous assignment, I have reflected upon the comments that were provided and analysed the findings that I had made within the first and second cycles. As written in my previous rationale on assignment 1, throughout the ongoing cycles I used a series of items of evidence such as skills and abilities checklists, feedback written by a mentor teacher, photographic evidence of each cycle, observational notes and copies of resource programs which have aided to both my preliminary and summative findings *(Refer to appendices link to view items of evidence).*

2.1 Aims

* It is my aim to determine which of the given gross motor skills and techniques will be effective in the development of a hands on gross motor literacy program.
* It is my aim to investigate the effects of implementing gross motor activities into a literacy program and determine whether they are benefiting child development.
* My aims are that the project will provide me with strategies which will ensure that the techniques I use in my teaching practises are effective in my lesson programs.
* It is my aim to establish the most effective way I can review the progression of my project through various assessment techniques, in order to improve my teaching practises within the classroom.
1. **Process**

Before commencing the project, I used various online resources such as websites, journal articles and education criteria’s to select a focus topic which interested me and had impact on my past and present experiences in early childhood classrooms. I took the time to understand the process of implementing a change of program within the classroom and ways I could extend my own reflective practises (Williams, 2014). To guide my project in the right direction I firstly took the time to develop an understanding of the Australian Curriculum standards that the year level I would be working within are required to achieve, the outcomes associated with the Early Years Learning Framework and the Movement Starters Program to gain accurate knowledge on skills and abilities which were appropriate to the children’s ability levels.

3.1 Implemented Plan

I began my original lessons by running a formative assessment to establish the abilities of the selected children in both literacy and gross motor activities. Before commencing the daily activities, I introduced various songs to assist children in learning a new gross motor and literacy skill along with engaging and keeping the whole class active. These included; Heidi DVD’s, Jolly Phonics, Alphablocks and online stories *(Refer to website to view resource example).* During these beginning stages, it was noted that many of the children showed varying abilities in both learning areas, with some requiring additional assistance in comparison to others. Using the movement starters program and information provided by the teacher I designed a series of combined activities which focused on the children recognising their initial sounds within their names and jumping and skipping as their gross motor skills. I then proceeded into the understanding of the alphabet letters and sounds along with implementing the Dianna Riggs SATPIN program with the children then developing their catching and throwing skills. To finish off the final cycle of my lesson I carried across the SATPIN and initial sounds program and integrated comprehension opportunities in class and group settings, along with children developing their balancing, climbing and crawling skills. Throughout each learning concept I ensured that each gross motor and literacy skills had a series of follow up activities to provide children the adequate amounts of time to develop the skill and gain a deeper meaning to allow for better understanding and recognition of the sounds and objectives been taught.

3.2 Action Research Methodology

Throughout this project, I have had the opportunity to further my own understanding about action research and how we conduct our own reports to discuss our findings through various cycles. Action Research is seen as a systematic way which allows for reflective actions and its effects within a working environment to be reflected upon (O’Brien, 2011; Riel, 2014). Throughout this project it has allowed for deep inquiry of my teaching pedagogy and my reflective practises on a selected topic I was interested in developing further knowledge on. Using various forms of research found on the cycles of action research, I have taken the information and process on board to firstly begin with a plan, turning it to action, collecting evidence and then reflecting upon the evidence to start the next cycle and review the findings (McNiff, 2015; Riel, 2014). Action research has allowed me to set a series of personal goals to allow for my own learning development to occur, using the forms of evidence, I hope to answer the aims which were set within assignment one and further my own teaching pedagogy for future teaching opportunities (Riel, 2014). After reading through McNiff’s *Understanding and Doing Action Research*, I used a variety of the types of evidence suggestions to collect the data I required to reflect upon the activities, my teaching abilities and the findings that were discovered, using these types of evidence I was able to record what was successful and what required changes to be made.

3.3 Preliminary Findings

After finishing cycle one of my research project, I looked through my observation notes, lesson plans, evaluations and the photo graphs I had taken (*Refer to appendices Cycle one Link)*. Through the formative literacy assessment observations the findings showed that of the focus children only two children were able to clearly identify the initial letter their names began with and recognise other letters within their names. These same two children were also able to identify the names/ sounds of the other letters within the alphabet with little to no help, when jumbled up. Other findings showed that majority of the children were able to visually recognise the letters that their names started with. A few of the children also knowing the name/ sound that the letter made. During the activities, I noticed that without visual guidance the weaker children who were previously unable to recognise initial sounds were unable to find the letter which had been called out to jump/ hop on, this required visual and auditory aids from myself to assist the children to progress through the activity. Throughout the beginning cycle I found the activities needed additional one on one time to provide extra guidance to children who required assistance. Through my observation notes and checklists it showed that majority of the focus children were able to complete the gross motor skills been taught by firstly having it modelled by myself, beginning attempts an ongoing practise within the duration of time provided within the cycle.

3.4 Summative Findings

After the completion of cycle 2 and 3 which extended the literacy activities further than letter recognition, children participated in various gross motor abilities such as throwing and catching, balancing, climbing and movement of various parts of their bodies. During cycle 2 although many children grasped the concept of throwing and catching, many of the children struggled to understand the alpha catch game and bean bag throw, which required myself to evaluate my teaching strategies, refer back to my previous notes and discuss with the teacher a new devise a new way of teaching the activity. During cycle 2 I had observed that several of the children struggled with the throwing bean bag pictures to the correct sound, as the resources required more visual guidance for the children. Due to these difficulties in understanding this concept, I carried the activity into cycle 3 to provide additional learning time and to allow for a change in resources. Through the carryover of these activities, the children were able to participate in the activity with better understanding of what was required, however when referring back to the photographs it was noted that some of the children still required additional time for solid understanding. When planning literacy activities for cycle 3, my teacher suggested a whole class activity, which required children to follow the events within the story such as climbing over bridges, crawling through tunnels, running around cones and imitating character movements. Beginning each literacy block rotation, the children participated in various forms of singing and dancing activities, using clips found on YouTube and the HEIDI DVD’s that were aiding our letter recognition *(Refer to website link for HEIDI Clips).* I noticed through observation that some of the weaker children were able to retain some of the letter names and sounds in this type of learning setting, rather more so than our group rotation activities. During cycle 2 and 3, some children further developed their letter recognition, while others require further assistance. Through the checklist observations the teacher and I noted that some of the children had advanced their gross motor skills and were becoming more willing participants in these types of activities *(Refer to appendices- teacher feedback/ checklist).*

1. **Reflective Discussion**

Before commencing my action research assignment, I reflected upon my past teaching experiences and thought about learning topics which I felt I could improve my teaching strategies within. Throughout the past few years of my degree, I have been learning about schools which are slowly within the transition of designing a balanced classroom which is filled with engaging learning environments and both opportunities for play and explicit learning experiences (Hendler & Nakelski, 2008; Leggett 2013). When selecting my research topic, I wanted to focus on a learning area which I felt was lacking additional opportunities within the classroom and design a learning program which helped develop children’s abilities in two vital learning areas. As stated earlier within the rationale, designing a focus topic requires deep inquiry into ones teaching pedagogy and as the action researcher of the project, it has provided opportunities to examine the results of integrating two learning areas together and how the teaching strategies used influenced the result of the project (Riel 2014; O’Brien, 2015).

Throughout the ongoing cycles, I used the available online resources to set learning objectives that the children I was focusing on would achieve within each cycle. I used the Australian Curriculum as it provides educators with clear indications of where children of varying ages should be achieving towards within their years at school (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authorities, 2015). After commencing the original cycle, I designed an integrated program filled with a variety of engaging literacy activities and gross motor skills that the children would learn. Before implementing the activities within the cycle time, I needed to decide which skills would work parallel with the literacy objectives I had set, in order for this to occur I referred to the Movement Starters program and my previous gross motor observation notes. I chose to use catching and throwing, hoping, jumping, balancing and crawling as they were all movements the children were familiar with and still required some assistance in learning.

Throughout the implementation of my action research project there were many times that I thought back to my focus questions which I had based on how a combined program would benefit children’s literacy development. Within my beginning cycle I had discovered a few hiccups in my project plan which require me to evaluate my lesson and its objectives and find a way to address the children’s individual needs to allow for an achievable result. It was during this original hiccup so soon within the project that I understood how the ongoing research spiral would be applied, as action research cycles are seen as a cyclical process of reflecting on the practise, taking action, reflecting and taking action further (Riel, 2014; McNiff, 2015). Through the successes and barriers I realised that the combined program was beneficial as it allowed for children to be engaged in two types of learning areas, English and Physical Education. I believe that throughout the cycles although there were moments of struggles the children enjoyed learning both inside and outside the classroom and to have the opportunity to be more physically active. Many educators know that children will always strive in their learning when they feel engaged and their interests are met (Barblett, 2014).

When working through the cycles of my projects, I found the best way to monitor my progress was to have ongoing evaluations which I reflected on after a certain amount of learning activities, this allowed me to work on my planning, observing and reflecting parts of my action research. As I continued to plan for each of my lessons within the three cycles, I would often reflect upon the previous lesson, to help plan activities which would allow for further success in my teaching and the children’s understanding of the activities. When thinking about which strategies would be beneficial for my teaching pedagogy, I took the opportunity to use past strategies I felt had been successful in my teaching and expand my own knowledge by trying new strategies. As educators we use a variety of teaching and learning strategies within our classrooms and lesson plans as they allow for children to reach their learning goals and objectives and expand their own cognitive development (Karakoc & Simsek, 2004). It was during an activity within cycle 2 which led me to take a moment to breathe and assess the situation as the children were showing no signs of truly understanding the objective as it was slightly too difficult. At first I felt frustrated as I had clearly explained the activity and had demonstrated what was required and was getting no results. I realised that the picture resources I had chosen to use needed to be more explanatory and required the children to not only view the object on the picture but to also see the way the word was spelt and see the initial sound to help find the letter they needed to throw the bean bag to. After realising a gap within my teaching during this activity, the change of resources and more coaching and modelling teaching allowed for children to gain better understandings of the activity at hand and begin to develop the skills that were required during this activity.

One of the focus questions I assigned myself was to establish which strategies would work best within an integrated program. When choosing effective teaching strategies I found that modelling and coaching were two strategies that benefited the children’s learning. Modelling is a strategy which is a form of demonstration which is then followed by imitation from the children. Coaching is a strategy which allows for educators to be the experts in learning and provide the assistance required (Dennen, 2015). Other strategies that were effectively used throughout the project included observations, critical feedback and the involvement of technology at the beginning of the lesson or within the main body of the lesson. With the advancing of technology in today’s society I felt that incorporating it into the program would provide additional opportunities to incorporate gross motor activities in a different and engaging way. Using feedback which was provided to me after each cycle from the mentor teacher within the classroom, it allowed for further reflection on my teaching pedagogy and to think about ways I could change my lessons to improve the outcome, this strategy provided me with additional assistance in my reflective practises.

When looking back over the timeline plan which I had set for myself and my project plan which was discussed earlier within assignment 1, I made changes to the activities which were originally selected as I had referred back to observation notes, photos and feedback realising I needed to repeat certain activities and scratch others which may have seemed to difficult. When planning at the start of the project I based the project around skills and activities that I believed the children would have some understanding and background knowledge on, my assumptions were proven both right and wrong, as the individual children’s ability levels varied with their literacy understandings. Many of the children required less assistance in their gross motor development as they have been practising their skills in their recent implement of a Pre PMP program. This allowed for more develop on their literacy skills as the children were engaged within the activities at all times, and enjoyed the combination of learning areas. Through the incorporation of action research, educators have opportunities to provide changes within a social and cognitive learning environment in hopes of creating a beneficial change for the learner and the researcher (Riel, 2014).

1. **Conclusion**

Over the last 5 months of developing my action research project, I have had the opportunity to expand my own knowledge by understanding the components of action research and how it provides me a chance to analyse my own teaching strategies and reflective practises. When first beginning this project, I felt that my research question would be a simple yes or no answer on whether I was able to answer my project question, as I reflect back upon all my learning and teaching experiences I am in a position to say that when deciding to integrate two separate learning areas it does have many advantages and disadvantages. I believe that the teaching strategies I chose to implement and the types of activities were suited to the appropriate age group, engaging individual students and over time with the influences of evaluation and reflection cater the learning needs of the varied capabilities of students. Using various forms of items of evidence such as photo graphs, checklists, rubrics and observational notes, I feel that although the children responded well to the activities, that I was often feeling very overwhelmed when conducting some of the activities as some children required more one on one time to learn the concept or struggled with the literacy aspect of the activity. I strongly believe that as educators we can still implement more gross motor skills into both literacy and numeracy rotations but there also needs to be a balance of both inside and outside explicit teaching opportunities.

With the help from my mentor teacher who provided me with ongoing feedback on my teaching practices and activities, I was able to create a series of engaging and exciting activities which challenged and focused children along the way. I believe that when I have my own classroom that I will take the time to integrate more gross motor skills into my programs as I feel it can benefit children’s development as they grow. When looking back over the last few assignments for the semester I am able to see the progression that has been made through the items of evidence which was collected, my ongoing reflections and the ability to answer the focus questions I had set for myself. Action Research has reminded me the importance of self-reflection and has allowed me to improve my own personal feedback, it has also allowed me to step out of my teaching comfort zones to try new strategies and to not fear if a lesson doesn’t always run accordingly, but to simply take a moment, evaluate and find a new approach to the same learning activity.

 Word Count: 4053

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1. **Appendices**

Appendix A- Link to assignment 1 with attached ethics checklist

**ETHICS CHECKLIST**

**Must be submitted by all students. Information must be typed not handwritten.**

**Student Name:** Sandra Murgia **Student Number:** 31866079

**Name of the course and course code that you are enrolled in:**

Bachelor of Education; Early Childhood and Primary School

**Please answer the following questions;**

1. Is your Professional Action Learning Project being conducted with students whom you are normally have teaching responsibility?

YES NO

2. Is your research based around activities that are the normal learning/teaching activities of the program that you are involved?



YES NO

3. In the box below please indicate who your students are including their age, what you want to research, and **one** sentence about how you want to do it.

Jacinta- 4 Ruby- 4 Alyssa- 3 Thomas- 4

Gabriel- 3 Niamh- 4 Olivia- 4 Lincoln- 4

I would like to research how a combined literacy and gross motor skills program would benefit children’s learning within the classroom, whilst being engaging and educational.

I would like to learn about my research plan through a series of combined games and activities which will allow me to access children’s progression or regression over the period of time I work with them.

**If you answer NO to either question one or two and your research involves interviews or surveys of students you will need to obtain written consent from the students and from parents or legal guardian. See Appendix C for an example of a consent letter.** 43

Appendix B- Link to Assignment 1 Project plan on page 4-5

PROJECT RATIONALE & PLAN

**Appendix B: attach to Assignment 1**

|  |
| --- |
| **Must be submitted by all students. Information must be typed not handwritten.** **Your Name:** Sandra Murgia **Student No:** 31866079 |
| **Your Email Address:** sandramurgia21@hotmail.com |
| **Course Enrolment:** Bachelor of Education; Early Childhood and Primary EDN 470: Action Research |
| **Classroom Details/Year Level where the project will occur:** Kindergarten Classroom with 29 students, ranging in literacy abilities. Play based classroom with small amounts of teacher directed activities.  |
| **Name of School:** Saint Vincent’s Primary School, Parmelia |
| **Name of Mentor Teacher:** Melanie Dusterhoft Mavrick |
| **Email of Mentor Teacher:** Mavrick.melanie@cathed.wa.edu.au |
| **Number of students involved in your project (no less than six):** 6 main students, may work with other students along the way. Yet to be fully decided |

**Previous Teaching Experience/ Teaching Background**

Area of Teaching Experiences (list previous teaching practicums)

* Year 4- Prac experience, two separate placements
* Year 2- First year Placement
* Kindergarten- Volunteer/ Education assistant
* Pre Primary- Volunteer Work

Any Professional or other information which is relevant to your project:

* Used a PMP program within kindergarten classrooms.

**Followed on Appendices:**

Appendix C- Follow the link to Parent Consent Forms

<http://integrationofliteracyandgrossmotorskills.weebly.com/appendix-c--parent-consent-forms.html>

Appendix D- Follow the link to Confirmation Form <http://integrationofliteracyandgrossmotorskills.weebly.com/>

Appendix E- Follow the link to Timeline of Confirmed Hours <http://integrationofliteracyandgrossmotorskills.weebly.comz/>

Appendix F: The following link will take you to the home page of Integrating Gross motor skills into a literacy program website, which will have further links to the various items of evidence. These pages include items of evidence, cycle 1, cycle 2 and cycle 3 web pages.

<http://integrationofliteracyandgrossmotorskills.weebly.comz/>