Students placements.

Innovation during the practicum in the Early Childhood Educational Degree to improve the children’s participation and learning at nurseries and schools

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The basis of the Early Childhood Education degree is to promote quality care and education for all children.

The student’s placement gives them the opportunity to learn their professional role in real contexts.

In the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona we encourage the students to be innovative while implementing Service-Learning Projects (APS) that explicitly value the culture of social involvement and proactive professional training.

Our aim is to develop the future teachers as agents of social change.
This paper reports the results of the different projects carried out by 294 students over 100 nurseries and preschools in about 18 different areas in Catalunya.

Subject: Practicum IV (during the 4th year).

Data from students, teachers and university professors have been collected using a mixed methods approach, quantitative and qualitative.

Research aim: to improve the role of future teachers attending children under six years old.
Students placements during the Early Childhood Degree in the UAB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Placements</th>
<th>Centre and focus of attention</th>
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</table>
| 1    | Practicum I 6 ECTS | • School with children from 3 to 11.  
  |            | • Analysis of the school and its context. |
| 2    | Practicum II 12 ECTS | • Nurseries from 0 to 3 years old.  
  |            | • Observation, design and implementation of some activities (minimum 3). |
| 3    | Practicum III 14 ECTS | • Preschool with children from 3-6.  
  |            | • Design and implementation of a Didactic unit programme, with minimum 6 activities regarding one theme with a general aim, and specific objectives. |
| 4    | Practicum IV 12 ECTS | • The students can choose to go to a 0-3 nursery or 3-6 preschool class.  
  |            | • Observation of the school needs and then design and implement an educative project choosing from:  
  |            | a) Curricular specific area (for instance: maths, literature...)  
  |            | b) A Transversal project (such as: The water, the 5 senses...)  
  |            | c) Service Learning projects (APS) |
This research is centred on the results of student placements regarding the practicum IV during their 4th course. The placements start in October and finish at the end of January. Students will spend a total of 240 hours within the schools.

**Placement AIMS:**

- To learn about the educative reality of a nursery or preschool.
- To analyse the needs and design an innovative project within the institution.
- To implement an educational program within the classroom or the school.

The decision to choose which type of project will be designed, will be taken by agreement with students, teachers and tutors at the university.
Results 2012-2013

During 2012-2013, 60 projects had been implemented by 128 students:

- **26** Service-Learning projects
- **17** Curricular specific area
- **17** Interdisciplinary project
During 2013-2014, 62 projects had been implemented: there is an increment of APS and projects. Students choose to work more cooperatively and with a more clear community approach.

- **28** Service-Learning projects (80 students, most of them working in teams cooperatively)
- **22** Interdisciplinary project (62 students)
- **12** Curricular specific area (24 students)
An overview of the increase of the students' skills therefore their qualifications

Year 1 (154 students)

Practicum I
1. 10 : 8 students
2. 9/10 : 72 students
3. 7/8 : 69 students
4. 5/6 : 0 students
5. >4.9 : 0 students
6. No presented: 5

Year 2 (45 students)

Practicum II
1. 10 : 3
2. 9/10 : 21
3. 7/8 : 18
4. 5/6 : 2
5. >4.9 : 1
6. No presented: 0

Year 3 (142 students)

Practicum III
1. 10 : 7
2. 9/10 : 76
3. 7/8 : 55
4. 5/6 : 4
5. >4.9 : 0
6. No presented: 0

Year 4 (126 students)

Practicum IV
1. 10 : 7
2. 9/10 : 99
3. 7/8 : 20
4. 5/6 : 0
5. >4.9 : 0
6. No presented: 0

The students increment their skills and implication, becoming better teachers
Main Findings

The results showed that 46% of the students carried out APS, 32% involved in interdisciplinary projects and 22% involved in a unit program related to a didactic area.

The projects APS were developed to improve different areas: the outdoor area, creating libraries, experimental scenarios, music materials, etc.

The projects APS always involved the children during the planning and implementation.

Also we were aware of an increase in the students motivation and involvement during the forth year, leading to an increase of their skills, mainly related to the Service Learning Projects.

The schools evaluation demonstrated an increase in their satisfaction with the students placements and their work.
An example of a Service-Learning Project (APS)

Key elements for an APS

1) Identification of needs
2) Defining and planning
3) Implementing
4) Celebration

Also important is a process of reflection and guidance throughout the project
Example of a Service-Learning Project
1) Identifying needs

- Public School named Can Montllor (Terrassa). 3 students, one in a different group class (4 and 5 year olds). Analysis of the educative reality of the school and the context.

The students identify possible needs, reflecting on and discussing this with the teachers team within the school and consequently decided to **improve the school outdoor area**.

The students start to write the project and the theoretical framework to justify it.
2) Defining the project and planning for it

The students visualized the outdoor area as an educative context and started to reflect about it:

- Which functions should it provide for the children?
- How should the adults develop their role in this area?
- Analysis of different types of games and outdoor activities.
- Laws, security issues...
- Other schools 'experiences, etc.

So, the students make a detailed study in order to justify the need and value of their actions

But... how are we going to teach and get the children involved?
3) Implementation

At this point, the team formed by the students, the school teachers and the university tutor agreed to involve the children, who are aged 4 and 5 in the process and the decision making. The student asks the children: what do you have in your outdoor area? And children **draw and tell**: stones, trees, leaves and nothing else.
What we would like to have in our outdoor area?
This question guides the dialogue with the children to facilitate an agreement.

Nuria told us that she wanted to help us to think how to improve our outdoor area. Some of the children had an idea, to make a teepee.

¿How we want our teepee?
The 5 year old’s classroom agreed to make a teepee and
The 4 year olds a kitchen
Students AIMS during their APS

1. To increase the symbolic play at the outdoor area
2. To involve the children during all the processes and implementation.
3. To take advantage of the situation to design and implement teaching and learning activities of the curriculum.
4. To design the shape, materials, economical issues, and the calendar in order to implement the project.
5. To take decisions during the project, solving possible problems and adjusting to the school and children.
The future teachers work in two levels: in and out the classroom

1) Making calculations and studying the ground

“Sabent que faríem un tipi amb la base hexagonal, havíem de saber de quina manera marcar aquest hexàgon al terra, així que el primer que havíem de fer era un cercle al terra per poder fer l’hexàgon regular després. El tipi que volíem fer era de 2 m d’alt per 2 m de diàmetre i havíem de saber l’àrea total. Per esbrinar-ho vam utilitzar la fórmula per l’àrea del cercle ( \( A = \pi \cdot r^2 \)). En total, la superfície que ocuparia cada tipi seria de 3,14 m².”

how to draw a regular hexagon?
## Economical Planning

### Presupost Tipis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATERIAL</th>
<th>PREU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Pals rodons de pi cuperitzat 7x250cm.</td>
<td>69€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malla ocultació 2 rollos 2x10m.</td>
<td>84€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 claus 6x100mm.</td>
<td>0,72€x2 unitats = 1,44€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corda sisal 8mm</td>
<td>0,92€x6 metres= 5,52 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordill polièster 6mm.</td>
<td>1,44€x1,5 metres= 2,16€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordill alumini 6m</td>
<td>16,50€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broca 6x260</td>
<td>4,42€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 rollo cinta americana</td>
<td>3,62 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esprai florescent per marcar al terra</td>
<td>2,00 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arandeles planes 4 paquets</td>
<td>8,00 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 claus cromo CR3</td>
<td>1,18 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacs de formigó 6x25g</td>
<td>10,00 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tubs de PVC 3 metres x 75mm</td>
<td>15,00 €</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>223,44€</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the group class, What do we want to know about it?

2) Children ask several questions: Who are the Native Americans? What were their houses like? What is their music?
What is our teepee’s shape? Is it an hexagon? Are other figures similar?
We built the teepees with the families support and other community educational agents
The teepee has a pyramid shape! We build pyramids
We learn by playing
4) Evaluation and Celebration
The children, the school teachers and the families, thanked the students for their work and the students, were thrilled, and took the opportunity to thank everyone involved in implementing their service Learning project.
Conclusions

The results demonstrated how the APS allows the students to act as proper teachers, planning, designing, implementing and working cooperatively with other students and the school community.

Also the students learned how to involve the children right from the beginning of the project, respecting their right to participate and make decisions.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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