Can the implementation of Physical Literacy impact on the development of motor skills?

**Rationale**
For the purpose of this assignment I endeavour to investigate how the implementation of Physical Literacy impacts on the children’s development of fine motor skills. Through my research I have discovered that children’s development of fine motor skills and subsequently have a positive impact on their writing progress. If so the implementation of this could be valuable to take into my future teaching practice.

I want to investigate if it would be worthwhile to use the Physical Literacy activities relating to balance and core strength with Foundation Stage and Key Stage One children during a weekly PE session.

**Physical development linking to Physical Literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

With the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS) in 2006, children’s physical development is no longer seen as an isolated area which focuses on physical development and is split into key aspects of Motor Development and Physical Development. It is through the implementation of well-planned activities which immerse young children in a rich language of movement that children are provided with the opportunity to develop a sense of well-being, confidence and independence. They are enabled to contribute to the achievement of the co-ordinated movement skills. This is supported by Maude (2001) who suggests that:

- for children to become knowledgeable and skilled motorists they need to be immersed in a rich language associated with movement, particularly that they hear and begin to recognise words linked to physical actions and make connections to these with their bodily movements. (p.21)

Ashore (2003) concurs with Maude (2001) stating that:

Children decode language through the intimate integration and subsequent relationship of language and bodily movement. (p.3)

Returning to the Idea of Physical Literacy this complements the EYFS as aspects of physical development teaching children about their body and exploring physical movement in order to become competent physical learner. Maude describes this style of teaching as fundamental physical literacy and explores the important impact that physical development has in early childhood further highlighting how the physical literacy can impact on the holistic child.

**Physical Literacy**
Physical Literacy is defined by Whitehead (2006) as:

To achieve these outcomes children need to develop their core body strength so that they can be physically active for at least three hours a day, throughout life. (p.7)

The motivation, confidence, physical competence understanding and knowledge to maintain physical activity at an individually appropriate level, throughout life. (p.8)

Reflecting on this theory, it is evident the important role that physical literacy (PL) plays in influencing young children’s physical development and capabilities. Therefore it is my perception that primary teachers of PE need to enhance and encourage the early development of physical skills and confidence in order for children to become competent in this aspect of learning.

As well as enhancing their development of fine motor and gross motor skills, the use of Physical Literacy activities could enhance the children’s engagement with physical activity and provide them with an opportunity to begin to comprehend the impact of such movement and exercise on their body. This will hopefully assist in addressing the health needs of an ever increasing sedentary society as highlighted by PHE (2011) and a reduction in obesity statistics in relation to the nation’s children.

A child who physically thrives develops good muscle control over all his or her body and also develops core body strength. He/she is able to safely and carefully hold a balance or stance and produce legible written work from a reasonable age.

As a teacher of this and the next generation this is what I strive to achieve, ensuring all children are active and healthy with core skills which are embedded in the programme, children will develop in all aspects of physical literacy.

Children need years to develop their core body strength and are embedded in the programme, children will develop

Children develop good muscle control over all his or her body and also develops core body strength. He/she is able to safely and carefully hold a balance or stance and produce legible written work from a reasonable age.

A child’s core strength develops this has an impact on their gross motor skills when implementing Physical Literacy activities could enhance the children’s development of fine motor skills.

As a teacher of physical literacy I want to investigate if it would be worthwhile to use the Physical Literacy activities relating to balance and core strength with Foundation Stage and Key Stage One children during a weekly PE session.

How significant are the development of the child’s gross motor skills when implementing Physical Literacy?

**Gross motor skills are regarded as those needed to make large body movements for example walking, running, climbing, balancing and climbing**. These all require coordinated large muscle movements as, therefore gross motor movements.

From very soon after birth babies begin to develop their gross motor skills, moving their head and legs (although, at this stage, these are not coordinated movements). As the baby grows and becomes stronger these movements develop and become less sporadic and more controlled. Between the ages of six and nine months babies can sit unsupported and begin to reach for toys and things around them. As their upper body strength develops they enjoy swinging, hanging and squatting with their arms and legs extended in the shoulders and arms. These gross motor skills continue to develop as they learn to crawl and walk.

This improvement of gross motor skills begins to impact on their early development of fine motor skills. The child develops hand-eye co-ordination and begins to grasp objects of interest. As they develop this has an impact on their fine motor skills.

**Conclusion**
Through the implementation of this assignment and an extensive amount of background reading about how children become physically active, my findings suggest that there is paramount importance that needs to be emphasised in children being physically active to a healthy body and mind. It is vital that they learn and develop fundamental movement skills and have many opportunities to contribute to their lives as a means to achieve this. Children also need to develop their gross and fine motor skills so they can control their body and physical movements. I believe that through the use of a Physical Literacy programme, as the Physical Literacy framework is based on Physical Literacy, which is linked to the development of fine motor skills, it will promote the development of fine motor skills and later on improve the children’s development of fine motor skills. Through my research I have discovered that children need to develop their gross motor skills and fine motor skills in order to develop their core body strength and are embedded in the programme, children will develop in all aspects of physical literacy.

I believe teachers it is our responsibility to educate children to the best of our ability in all areas of the curriculum so that they can lead healthy, happy and knowledgeable lives.

**References**

**Fundamental Movement Skills: A developmental approach**

Much research suggests that Fundamental Movement Skills are key to a child’s development and they do not happen automatically therefore need to be taught. This is advocated by Balyi who recognises the vital importance of fundamental physical development as children have a future athletic success.

Pickup et al (2009) imply that there needs to be an emphasis on fun for children to successfully develop Fundamental Movement Skills; therefore the curriculum needs to engage children with enjoyable, repetitive but challenging physical activities which are appropriate for their age and phase of development. Early movement milestones between the ages birth to two (reflexive movement and rudimentary movement phases) are the foundations for the first phase of Fundamental Movement Skills, which children usually develop between the ages of two and seven years. These are identified as locomotor and consist of learning to crawl and to become independent, to walk and to run and to jump. The child then develops being able to combine two or more of these elements including walking and jumping. This improvement of gross motor skills begins to impact on their early development of fine motor skills. The child develops hand-eye co-ordination and begins to grasp things of interest. As they develop this has an impact on their fine motor skills.

For the purpose of this assignment I endeavour to investigate how the implementation of Physical Literacy impacts on the children’s development of fine motor skills. Through my research I have discovered that children’s development of fine motor skills and subsequently have a positive impact on their writing progress. If so the implementation of this could be valuable to take into my future teaching practice.