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An investigation into early childhood science within an emergent curriculum framework



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Abstract

A considerable interest in the concept of emergent curriculum has been generated by the early childhood centres of Reggio Emilia in Italy. This study traces the progress of a science project on spiders in an Australian early childhood centre which purports to have an emergent curriculum. In particular, this study sought to answer the question: What form does a science learning project take in an early childhood class that purports to have an emergent curriculum philosophy? What are the processes involved? What are the roles of the main players? Was this curriculum truly an emergent one? How did it fit with the different perspectives being taken to emergent curriculum in the literature? Did science learning take place? How did this learning fit with current views on science learning in the literature? Using a participant observation approach, this study looks at factors that characterise the processes and the players in this project and considers these in the context of current views on emergent curriculum and early childhood science. Results indicate that while the curriculum in this centre was clearly 'emergent', it differed in some minor aspects from both the Reggio Emilia model and the American model of emergent curriculum. The approach used was consistent with the social constructivist approach to science teaching and was clearly conducive to the children's science learning. The study shows that emergent curriculum is a very appropriate approach for science learning.

Keywords

child; children; education; early childhood; science; curriculum

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