

A Practitioner's Guide to OUTDOOR PLAY BASED LEARNING PEDAGOGY

What is pedagogy? It's in all the documents but we are not really sure what it is..

This week we are shining a light on pedagogy. Why? The word pedagogy is a bit like Marmite, you either love it or hate it. How do we know? We asked you.

Over 20 practitioners from entry level ELC staff, to those with around-the-globe and around-the-block experience, including our academic friends with a PHD or two, all chipped in.

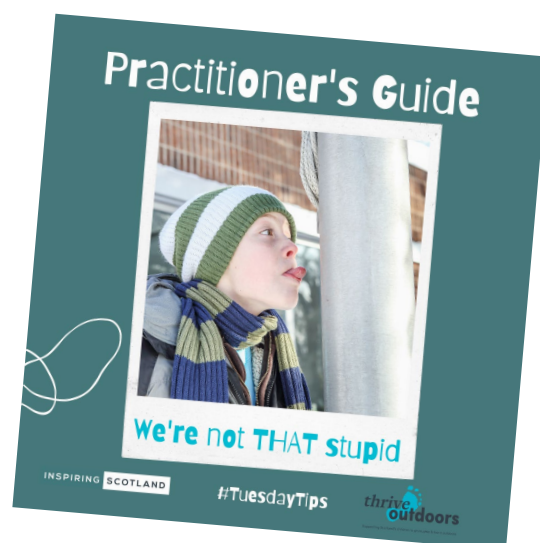
We asked what the term meant to you. The answers were broad spectrum; from being a normal part of everyday vocabulary, to those who think it's used by academics to make learning sound harder than it is.

Whether you love or hate the word it's peppered throughout our national curriculum documents (it has no less than 42 mentions in Realising the Ambition). We are shining a light on the word as a conversation, to embrace those who fear it, feel unworthy by not knowing what it means, and to make it a bit more accessible (should you want to know a bit more about it).

How it divides us and "how to say it"

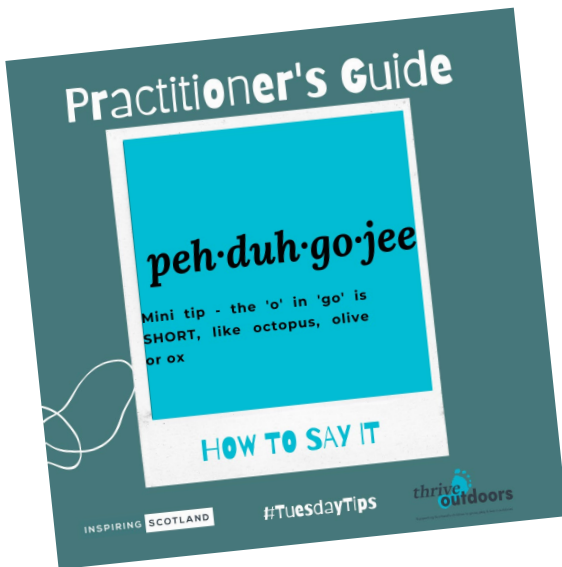
Getting this word out can be tricky. You told us that, putting all other things aside; not being able to say it makes you feel stupid.

So now, we have a word that's hard to understand, **and** hard to say. Hamish from Glasgow describes this as 'the dilemma between specificity and accessibility.'



What can we do about it?

Firstly, do you want to use it? There are some practitioners who believe that while they fully understand it, they simply choose not to use the term.



If you would like to use it, by saying it more often, it can get easier. Unless you are Welsh, then we are assured by our Welsh practitioners that it will always sound like 'Tamagotchi' (thank you Sarah from Wales).

You will hear different pronunciations – generally in Scotland it sounds like this

peh·duh·go·jee

with the 'o' in 'go' pronounced like the 'o' in Ox.

Now you can say it, (go on, yell it from your doorstep) fancy a little bit more.. ?

We popped a video in the 'Useful Links' section below by an Irish teacher from 'Team Satchel' that describes pedagogy. The first 20 seconds are funny, you can see a few ordinary people actually trying to pronounce it. Badly. You may actually like the rest of it. Why? The friendly video goes on to explain, in words we understand, pedagogical approaches/theories. This provides a useful whistle stop tour as an introduction to those early thinkers!

From this you can see that these thinkers do not agree, in fact, they love nothing more than to disagree!

Maybe even little bit more?

June O'Sullivan, CEO London Early Years Foundation (LEYF) sums up pedagogy in 52 seconds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WwNoW6pY4E>. LEYF even have a 'Pedagogy Rope' <https://leyf.org.uk/pedagogy/>

I'm STILL unsure about pedagogy

Working out what it IS can be as tricky as saying it. So, we will keep it simple (as much for us as for you!). First, let's take a look at the dictionary:

Definition 1: *The study of the methods and activities of teaching (Cambridge dictionary)*

Well that doesn't sound too bad? Where else can we find the definition in ELC?

Definition 2: Building the Ambition (2014)

“Pedagogy is about the interactions and experiences which support the curriculum and the process of how young children learn.”

Hmm... ok, now we can link it to what we do... and then this came along

Definition 3: Realising the Ambition, (2020)

In Realising the Ambition Stewart and Pugh, (2007:9). are cited defining pedagogy as:

“the understanding of how children learn and develop, and the practices through which we can enhance that process.”

Put even more simply, if you..

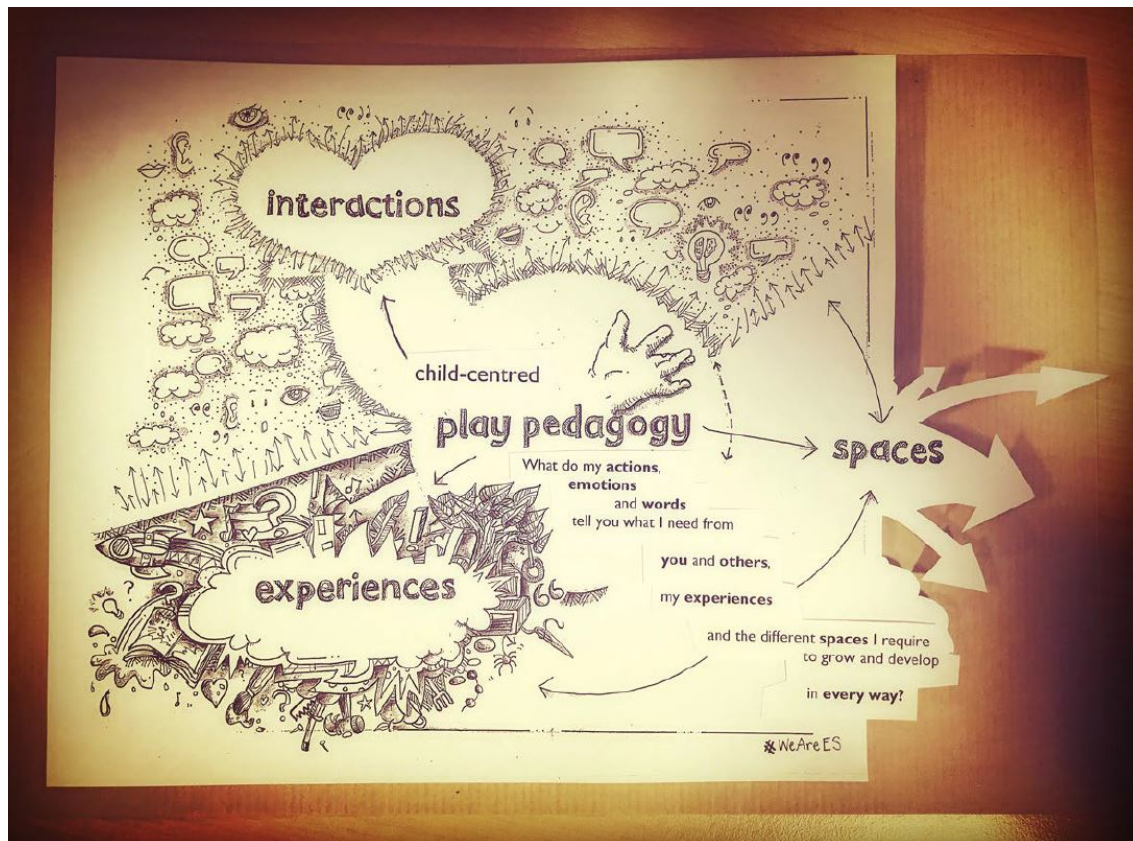


understand how children grow and learn, and you enhance (further improve the quality or value of) that by 'what you do' (your practice), you are 'taking a pedagogical approach', or, 'using pedagogical methodologies'.

You are probably using HGIOELC self-evaluation tool, and without realising it, by reflecting and improving you are 'doing pedagogy' every day!

Can you show us a picture?

Of course! This is the 'Play Pedagogy Sketch' by Education Scotland. Education Scotland also have a 'Play Pedagogy Toolkit' (see Useful Links) to help you unpack pedagogy a little more.



From the same toolkit, Realising the Ambition (2020), talks about 'growing and learning' through the **interactions**, **experiences** and **spaces** we need to

provide. These interactions, experiences and spaces apply not only to the children, but to us too.

The best bit ~ PLAY!



Now you know how to say it, you know a little bit about the thinkers behind the 'P' ideas, AND a bit about how we use it in our documents. While we are thinking about that it's easy to forget the best bit of pedagogy and how children learn – through play!

'...play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance'
(Froebel, 1826)

It might not seem like play to the children (or you sometimes), when you see complex testing, positioning, bargaining, sharing (or not), building, deconstructing, transporting,

movement and energy. What we know is that the spaces, interactions and experiences you provide enhance and improve opportunities for play based learning.

This is where you and pedagogy fit together



"All children and young people should enjoy high quality play opportunities, particularly outdoor free play in stimulating spaces with access to nature, on a daily basis in school, nursery and early learning & childcare." Play Strategy Scotland-Vision

How can we do better at Play Pedagogy?

Reflective Task

For play pedagogy to be effective, research has shown that a clear rationale and a shared understanding of the value of play is essential.

We need to consider our own beliefs and attitudes to play, learn about different pedagogical approaches and seek to understand the nature of play in today's world.

It is important to remember that the children in our ELC and school settings may not have the same rich experience of play as previous generations, especially outdoor and free play.

PLAY What impact could this be having on children's development and learning?

PLAY What could the implications of this be for current ELC and school settings?

From Education Scotland Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit: Play Pedagogy in Practice

If you have top tips you would love to share, please contact us on: Facebook @ThriveOutdoorsScot, Twitter @Thrive_Outdoors or by email Jo@inspiringscotland.org.uk

Useful Links

Realising the Ambition <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/realising-the-ambition/>

Education Scotland Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/early-level-play-pedagogy-toolkit/>

Cambridge Pedagogy Definition of
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pedagogy>

Satchel: 'What is pedagogy?' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcpwEoWluY8>

Famly: 'Pedagogy 101' <https://famly.co/blog/management/early-years-pedagogy/#:~:text=What%20is%20an%20early%20years%20pedagogy%3F&text=Most%20simply%2C%20pedagogy%20is%20about,with%20children%20can%20affect%20them.>

David Didau: <https://learningspy.co.uk/featured/pedagogy-i-hate-the-word/>

TES <https://www.tes.com/news/what-is-pedagogy-definition#:~:text=What%20are%20the%20pedagogical%20approaches,%2C%20social%20constructivism%2C%20and%20liberationist.>