

The Green Playground

An ACES Vietnam Case Study

Introduction

The ACES playground (Green Playground) is constructed in Nguyen Tat Thanh School – Hoa Binh Education College, *Hoa Binh, a mountainous province in the North of Vietnam. It is part of ACES Vietnam’s Playful School model which features the use of Participatory Action Research and promotes the Playground as a pedagogical approach.

The Green Playground is an educational playground model that combines playfulness and streamlined education, which is different from normal physical playgrounds. It consists of four sections: (i) Physical space; (ii) Recycling space; (iii) Muong House and traditional games; and (iv) a Muong-and-local-herb garden.

This case study involves and mobilises resources from a wide range of stakeholders:

- ACES Vietnam Team: ACES model including Playful Learning and Frugal Education
- Anchor institution: Hanoi University of Science and Technology
- Local partners: Hoa Binh Department of Education and Training, Nguyen Tat Thanh School & Hoa Binh Education College
- Students from K1-K9, teachers
- Community Actors/Sponsors: a group of Muong teachers, a French sponsor and parents
- LBUM: an NGO design and construction group

**Hoa Binh is a mountainous province of Vietnam, located in the nation’s Northwest region. The province covers an area of 4590.57 square kilometres and as of 2019 has a population of 854,131 people. In 2020, the GDP per capita of the province was estimated to be \$2,625 (equivalent to 60.5 million VND).*

Target Audience

The project involved approximately 500 participants: 450 students and 55 teachers at Nguyen Tat Thanh School. In addition, it targeted a wider community of indirect beneficiaries, including 505 students and 86 teacher educators of Hoa Binh Education College, each school child’s family and young children in the neighbourhood. The Green Playground is also a model educational space for other schools/institutions in Hoa Binh Province, where all other related training and extra-curricular activities take place.

Aims & Objectives

The Green Playground can serve multiple purposes regarding students' well-being, environment protection, playful learning and frugal education, cultural awareness and promotion, etc. These also align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 3 – Good health and well-being; SDG 4 – Quality education; and SDG 5 – Gender equality. This project aims to provide both students and teachers with a Playful and Frugal learning space as a hybrid pedagogical approach, responding to the curriculum transformation via a series of training workshops and experiential learning. Participants are involved in the co-design of activities, facilitation and evaluation of the Green Playground in teaching the Muong language, the Local Education subjects, STEM, and other subjects in the curriculum.

Examples from the toolkit of activities include:

- Designing an ideal playground (Poster) and Squid Games (frugal education: using Lego to construct the playground);
- Decorating tyres (Muong cultural patterns);
- Collecting recyclable materials;
- Discovering traditional games and Muong culture;
- Describing the playground;
- Promoting Green playground (Poster);
- Using recycled materials to create a mini Babylon flower garden;
- Playground activities and Muong lessons.

Timeline

The case study has been active since April 2021 and is set to complete by June 2022. It consists of 4 major phases:

- Needs analysis and preparation for the Playground;
- Co-design and co-construct both the Playground and playful/frugal activities;
- Grand opening of the Green Playground and toolkits of playful/frugal activities;
- The Green Playground as a pedagogical approach.

Location

- **Nguyen Tat Thanh**, Hoa Binh City, Vietnam.

Lessons learnt

- Universities as anchor institutions.

- Encouraging teachers' commitment by providing on-going facilitation and school-based development programs.
- Involving all the stakeholders in all phases of the case study, from sense-making to decision-making, problem-solving and evaluating steps (using PAR).
- Considering Safety and Risk management for the construction and implementation of a physical learning space.
- Considering Financial/logistics issues.

Implications/Recommendations

- The Green playground and related pedagogical approach can be replicated in other sites.
- Curriculum transformation should address major changes in testing and assessment.
- Students' well-being should be taken greater consideration, addressing SDGs.
- Mobilisation of resources to support community resilience.

Detailed activities

Activity 1: Initial idea - a playground for school children (April – June 2021)

Stakeholder(s):

- Head of Hoa Binh College of Education and Nguyen Tat Thanh school.
- ACES Vietnam Team.

Aim:

- Discussions on the need for a playground that could first apply the ACES model and then combine the ACES model with a cultural/ethnic playground (Data collection - Cycle 1).

Consideration:

- How to build a playground that can serve both learning and playful purposes?

Intervention:

- Needs analysis.
- Drafts and a final plan for the Playground.
- Consent and involvement of all potential stakeholders; collective needs bringing perspectives together: sense making.
- Logistics preparation.

Activity 2: Need analysis of the Playground (June – Oct 2021)

Stakeholder(s):

- Head of Hoa Binh College of Education and Nguyen Tat Thanh school.
- ACES Vietnam Team (n=5).
- Community Actors/Sponsors (n=3)/ Designer (n=1).
- Parents (n=5).
- Students (n=90) and Teachers (n=40).

Aim:

- Discussions on the Plans/Drafts/Sketches of the playground, considering local contexts, resources, contributions of all the stakeholders and Preparation for the Playground.

Consideration:

- Functions of and resources for the playground.
- How to integrate the playground in the curriculum.

Intervention:

- School's support: land for the playground.
- A final master plan for the playground that combines traditional games, a local herb garden, a recycling area and a learning space.
- Logistics provision (resources mobilisation).
- Further discussions on the pedagogical approach: provision of teacher training.
- Problems of risks and safety: discussion between LBUM and the team.

Activity 3: Co-creation/design of the playground (Nov 2021)

Stakeholder(s):

- Students (Y6, n=25) – Poster activity.
- ACES Ambassadors (n=9) – Squid game.
- Head of Hoa Binh College of Education and Nguyen Tat Thanh school.
- ACES Vietnam Team (n=5).
- Community Actors/Sponsors (n=3)/ Designer (n=1).
- Parents (n=5).
- Students (Y8, n=90) and Teachers (n=40).

Aim:

- Students' and teachers' presentation on their ideas of their dream playground, and their co-creation of the Playground.

Consideration:

- The Playground as a pedagogical approach; construction issues, safety and risks.

Intervention:

- Co-designing toolkits.
- Further discussion on safety and risk management, construction details and logistics.

Activity 4: Stakeholders' co-construction and co-supervision the building of the Green Playground (Dec 2021)

Stakeholder(s):

- Hoa Binh College of Education and Nguyen Tat Thanh school.
- ACES Vietnam Team (n=5).
- Community Actors/Sponsors (n=3)/Designer/Engineer (n=1).
- Parents (n=5).
- Students (n=90).
- Teachers (n=40).

Aim:

- Stakeholders' engagement in co-constructing and co-supervising the building of the Green Playground.
- Designer/Engineer's perspectives of the use of the playground as a pedagogical approach.

Consideration:

- Construction issues, safety and risks.
- The Playground as a pedagogical approach.

Intervention:

- Further discussions on the pedagogical approach: provision of teacher training and evaluation of teachers' teaching demonstration for all the case studies.
- Problems of risks and safety: LBUM and the team.
- Stakeholders' reflection.

Activity 5: Grand opening of the Green Playground (4 Jan 2022)

Stakeholder(s):

- ACES Vietnam Team (n=5).
- Representative of Head of Hoa Binh College of Education (n=2).
- Designer/Engineer (n=1).

Aim:

- Discussion on the construction, safety, further improvements and maintenance of the Green Playground before the hands-on and Grand opening.

Consideration:

- Implementation and maintenance of the playground.

Intervention:

- Stakeholders' discussion and reflection.
- Further discussions on the pedagogical approach: provision of teacher training and evaluation of teachers' teaching demonstration for all the case studies.

Activity 6: Supervising the quality of the construction (26 Dec 2021)

Stakeholder(s): (n=300)

- All the mentioned stakeholders.
- Social Media.
- Department of Education and Training - Hoa Binh.

Aim:

- Promotion of the ACES model and The Green Playground as a pedagogical and a need-based approach for the curriculum transformation, i.e., the teaching of Local Education and the promotion of ethnic cultures.
- Stakeholders' perspectives of the use of the playground as a pedagogical approach.

Consideration:

- Promotion, implementation and maintenance of the playground.
- Pedagogical approach.

Intervention:

- Promotion on official channels (Case study 1).
- Stakeholders' discussion and reflection.
- Further discussions on the pedagogical approach: provision of teacher training and evaluation of teachers' teaching demonstration for all the case studies.

Activity 7: Evaluation of the Green Playground as a pedagogical approach (May 2022)

Stakeholder(s):

- Head of Hoa Binh College of Education and Nguyen Tat Thanh school.
- ACES Vietnam Team (n=5).
- Community Actors/Sponsors (n=3).
- Parents (n=5).
- Students (n=80) and Teachers (n=40).

Aim:

- Evaluation of the Green Playground as a pedagogical approach.
- Sustainable maintenance and development of the Playground.

Consideration:

- Maintenance and development of the playground.

- Pedagogical approach.

Intervention:

- Stakeholders' reflection.
- Further cascade training in ACES model.
- Evaluation of all the case studies.

Project updates:

<https://aces.gchangers.org/case-studies/green-playground/>

University World News:

- <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220527102138692#:~:text=Vietnamese%20universities%20are%20working%20with,part%20of%20the%20ACES%20project>

Activity 8: Revisit to the Green Playground (June – Dec 2022)**Stakeholder(s):**

- Head of Hoa Binh College of Education and Nguyen Tat Thanh school.
- ACES Vietnam Team (n=5).
- Coventry Team (n=3).
- Teachers (n=30).
- Students (n=25).

Aim:

- Evaluation of the impact of the Green Playground.
- Reflection on the case study.
- Recommendation.