

Children's play: theory and practice

Section 1

Creative play

Creative play is an activity that fulfils a child's need, to express their individualism, as well as their inventiveness and originality (Youll, 2023).

According to Red Monkey Play (2024) and Canning (2020) creative play such as building or construction, arts and crafts, dancing, painting, or drawing, fulfils a desire for personal expression and develops children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills, as well as essential communication and language skills. Early Years Matters (n.d.) and Kumar (2015) claims each child is unique and develop in their own distinct ways, which is supported by the UNCRC, who state under article 31 that all children have the right to play and partake in leisure pursuits and relaxation (Unicef, n.d.a). Therefore, Red Monkey Play (2024) maintains that creative play is fundamental, in allowing each child to have fun and express themselves in unique ways, as well as participating in positive experiences and providing them with opportunities, to articulate their creative flare and imagination, which is also beneficial for a child's wellbeing.

Creative play promotes a child's independence, encourages curiosity and exploration and aids individuals, in understanding their ideas and emotions, as well as the emotions of their peers. Such skills are vital, to enable children to communicate, show leadership, strategise and problem solve in the future (Red Monkey play, 2024 and Canning, 2020).

Challenges that early year's settings may face, when implementing play-based learning and incorporating creative play activities, are funding, a failure to recognise the importance of play as a basis for academic ideas and achievement, beliefs held by parents or caregivers regarding play-based learning, or inadequate professional development for practitioners (Unicef, 2018b and Gonsler, (2019). However, according to Unicef (2018b) such challenges can be overcome, if practitioners and management build strong relationships and raise awareness with parents and external agencies, regarding the importance of creative play, as well as offering parents continuous support and effective and consistent communication. Unicef

(2018b) allege that policies and legislation are vital, along with an enabling environment, to acknowledge the sincerity and value of play-based learning and to implement this, as well as a holistic and child centred approach. Essential funding for relevant learning materials, should also be considered in educational settings (Unicef, 2018b and Gonsheer, 2019). Rana (2023) suggests that utilising recycled materials at home and in the classroom, enables children to learn about durability and environmental issues, while also cutting costs and meeting strict budgetary constraints.

Connery *et al.* (2018) claims that Vygotsky believed play has developmental benefits, that continue throughout an individual's life and that creativity is a deliberately acquired mental capacity, based on his claim that children's imaginative play stimulates their creative thinking. Connery *et al.* (2018) also suggests that according to Vygotsky, children modify and combine ideas in context through play and creative thinking, leading to the creation of beautiful and practical discoveries. Foster (2017) argues that a percentage of children struggle with creativity, or inventing solutions to problems and that innovation can make children anxious, which may then lead to individuals not wanting to spend time or energy, that creativity frequently demands. Tutor doctor (2019) however, is convinced that by creating a calm and inspiring environment, fostering curiosity, and asking open-ended questions, providing unstructured time so that no child feels constrained, as well as showcasing your own creativity to children for inspiration, and teaching them that it is great to be different, we can help children develop their creative skills and express their imaginations.

Physical play

Physical play is any game or leisure activity that encourages children to be mobile and burn off energy, whilst using their entire body or targeted muscle groups (Twinkl, n.d.a).

Early Years Resources (2018) and Salcuni *et al.* (2017) are convinced that engaging in physical play, offers numerous health advantages for children and that exercise not only enhances a child's physical and general fitness, but it also boosts their mental and cognitive development and aids in the prevention of obesity. Early Years Resources (2018) also believe that physical play promotes the development of

coordination, muscles and bones and improves a child's self-assurance and social abilities.

Physical activities or games such as building with lego, moulding Play-Doh, animal imitation, running, hopping, skipping, or throwing and catching games, promotes the growth of fine motor, language, and communication skills, in addition to balance, mobility, and stability (Early Years Matters, n.d. and O'Connor and Daly, 2016).

INEOS (n.d. and World Health Organization 2021) suggest that to support children in the development of such skills, as well as promoting an inclusive environment, early year's settings should implement The Daily Mile activity, where children run, walk, jog or wheel outdoors, at their own speed with their peers, for fifteen minutes daily.

Play Wales (n.d.) state that in 2010, Wales was the first nation in the world to enact legislation, regarding playing opportunities. The UK Children's Play Policy Forum, work together with the local government, as well as the public and external agencies, to educate individuals, regarding the value of allowing children to play, provision of inclusive play environments and implementation of article 31 (Play Wales, n.d.).

Lynch (2023) claims that Froebel believed play was vital for a child's physical well-being, as it plays a vital role in growth opportunity and that Froebel's play theory was developed, after extensive study and testing, over many years. Such claims are supported by Starting Blocks (2020), who alleges that physical play encourages a child's passion for learning and is fundamental to children's language and numeracy development, as well as an individual's ability to collaborate. Should children not engage in a lot of physical activity, it may result in several concerns such as: inadequate academic achievement, elevated levels of stress and sleep disturbance, obesity, and incorrect posture (Allarakha, 2022).

Section 2

Ledendecker (2020) strongly believes that when children utilise basic toys creatively, without seeking guidance from an adult, this boosts self-esteem, ignites a child's imagination, promotes motivation and independence, in addition to developing problem-solving skills. Ledendecker (2020) also claims that seeing how children arrive at their own conclusions, can provide individuals with a fresh perspective on a process.

Allowing children to play independently, enables them to be curious and experiment with their surroundings and various materials, as well as developing strong resilience skills and helping them to mould how they interpret the world (Sensory Surroundings, 2020). According to Worsley (2023), by providing children with the chance to participate in play and child-led activities, Montessori adopted a holistic approach to fostering each child's social, cognitive, and physical development. For a child to learn, it is imperative that individuals move around and actively explore their surroundings (Anthony, 2023). Anthony (2023) also claims that children learn more effectively when they practise this method, which places them in a greater position, to comprehend the more difficult STEM topics earlier in life, as each child will have already developed the necessary skills required. Educators could also set up a space, where children can freely participate in STEM activities, like sorting nature boxes (A STEMful mind, n.d.).

According to Day Nurseries (2021) the Scandinavian outdoor learning approach, is to provide students with the opportunity, to engage with nature and have child-led experiences that they would not obtain indoors. Day Nurseries (2021) also allege that outdoor freedom is fundamental for children within early years settings, as it not only allows them to experiment with language, utilising volume, and pitch, but it also encourages collaboration and absorption of Vitamin D, which is essential for bone and muscle health.

Twinkl (n.d.b) argues that child-led play could possibly hinder a child's development, as individuals may not always desire to explore new things or take on challenges. Children do not typically incorporate academic ideas into their play, therefore without the participation of an adult, child-led play within an early year's setting, could result in insufficient significant learning (Twinkl, n.d.b). However, research carried out by

Byrne (2022) suggests that child-led, guided, and direct instructional play, can all be beneficial for a child's development and are all as effective as each other, as each child is unique and therefore develop and learn in individual and distinct ways. Such information is supported by Artful Teaching (2023), who claim that The Hundred languages of children, is a principle of the Reggio Emilia approach and refers to the concept, that each child develops in a number of ways. When combined with the assistance of a qualified adult, play-based learning opportunities for children should be highly regarded, valued, and protected by professionals, as they have a significant positive impact on their education (Byrne, 2022).

A STEMful Mind (n.d. and Bottrill 2022) believe that it is fundamental for practitioners, to observe children during free play and allow each child to assume responsibility for their educational journeys. It is also imperative that practitioners allow individuals to solve problems independently, whilst knowing that a professional is present to support them if required (A STEMful Mind, n.d.). By doing so, educators will be fostering children's independence and uniqueness, as well as providing practitioners with the knowledge of each child's interests (A STEMful Mind, n.d).

Amin (2022) believes that adult roles can change, based on the situation, the age of a child and the way in which each child learns differently, especially as children convey meaning through play by using sounds, actions, facial gestures, verbal cues, and mannerisms. Therefore, it is crucial that caregivers are highly knowledgeable, about the children within their care and that they scaffold each child's development through play, while offering encouragement and support (Amin, 2022). Amin (2022) suggests that a professional may need to intervene to simplify a play scenario, as some children may find it difficult to express themselves, in situations where communication can be more complex and challenging.

Whalley (2021) claims that adults take on three roles during play, the facilitator, where play is permitted by caregivers, who set up the surroundings, supply the resources, modify the opportunities so that each child receives differentiation, and are available to attend to each child's needs. The Scaffolder emphasises assisting in the growth of developing skills and expanding children's knowledge and thinking, by offering support and prompting each child when necessary (Whalley, (2021). The third role is the teacher, who creates strong, positive relationships with each child,

parents, and outside agencies, promotes a holistic approach, upholds an enabling environment that is supportive, records and monitors children's progress, to help encourage future successes and provide tailored support for each child (Whalley, 2021).

Section 3

Pacey (2016) and Sancisi and Edgington (2015) claims that observation is a crucial component of a practitioner's practice, as it enables professionals to comprehend the unique needs and desires of each child within their care, as well as an individual's current stage, in terms of education and growth. Professionals can then analyse and apply these observations to help children progress (Pacey, 2016 and Sancisi and Edgington 2015). Emotionally Healthy Schools (2019) state that Dr. Ferre Laevers, supervised a team at Leuven University in Belgium and created the Leuven Scale, which is an observational measure that emphasises involvement and well-being. The observational measure is a five-point scale, that can be utilised to concentrate on specific individuals, or groups of children and allows professionals, to contribute more to the development of each child, based on the levels of involvement and well-being that can be attained (Emotionally Healthy Schools, 2019).

The five-point scale levels, rate from extremely low to extremely high, low meaning that a child frequently appears reliant or anxious, which makes it challenging for individuals to grow and reach their potential (Cheqdin, 2019). If a child is rated as extremely high on the scale, this is an indicator that the child is comfortable, self-assured and has a genuine passion for what they are doing, which is linked to the list of qualities for effective teaching and learning, as presented by the Early Years Foundation Phase (Cheqdin, 2019). Professionals can address any lack of involvement and pinpoint areas that require support, by using these child assessments, and can effectively encourage holistic child development (Structural Learning, 2021). According to Structural Learning (2021), Leuven Scale observations guarantee, that each child experiences a nurturing environment that meets their emotional and academic needs, laying the groundwork for success throughout their entire lives, as educators can methodically monitor each child's advancement,

through the well-being levels, which offer valuable insights into the emotional state of children.

Cherry (2023) maintains that Piaget used observational studies to conduct naturalistic research, and his observations of his own three children served as a major source of inspiration, for his theory of cognitive development. However, Cherry (2023) argues that Piaget's methods were criticised for being problematic and biased, because he provided very little statistical information, about how he arrived at his conclusions and rarely described how his participants were chosen.

One of the main benefits of the Leuven Scale, is that as it is observation-based, it places the child at the centre of their own learning and has been repeatedly demonstrated, to be the most successful approach for teaching early childhood development (Learning Journals, n.d.). However, a primary critique of the Leuven Scale, is an inadequate consideration of children with special educational needs or disabilities, as the behaviours outlined in the scale, are frequently absent or less evident in children with SEND, particularly those who are non-verbal (Learning Journals, n.d.). The Leuven Scale also has a disregard for cultural diversity, given that children exhibit distinct behaviours in various cultures (Learning Journals, n.d.).

Copland (2022) suggests that there are various observation methods, each with advantages and disadvantages of their own, for example, narrative or running record observation, is a formative assessment and not only allows professionals to observe the strategies that children are utilising when reading aloud, but is comparable to writing a journal entry, as it includes broad findings about the entire observation, including subtle and intentional behaviours. Narrative or running record observation, is an effective method of keeping track of a child's growth and development, however anecdotal observations, are restricted to a single incident, or event that occurred throughout the period of observation (Copland, 2022).

A SOGS stands for a Schedule of Growing Skills and professionals can evaluate eight important developmental domains with children, from birth to five years old, at any time by using this individual assessment (Shropshire Community Health, 2022). In accordance with Shropshire Community Health (2022), each child is given multiple tasks to complete and is observed while doing so, however, a minority of children may not wish to participate, which can be challenging and may imply that this

observational method is unreliable. A more reliable observation method according to Durham County Council (2021), is the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which has been thoroughly examined on internal validity, test-retest reliability and inter-rater agreement and is a brief 25-item test, of behavioural and emotional challenges, that can be utilised to evaluate mental health issues in children and teenagers, between the ages of 4 and 17. It is vital that SDQ's are carried out annually, for educators to acquire the necessary knowledge and comprehension, of each child's emotional and behavioural needs, and to implement the appropriate support required for each child (Durham County Council, 2021).

Section 4

PennState Extension (2018) believes that observation, is a crucial component of continuous quality improvement and the assessment process, as it is a tool used by professionals, to record a child's learning, guide instruction, and encourage growth. Educators can reflect on observations, to plan school curriculum, evaluate individuals progress, improve teaching methods, and implement ideas, to strengthen relationships and learning (PennState Extension, (2018).

Play within an enabling environment, is essential for observation and evaluation, as it enables each child to view play as enjoyable, as opposed to educational, therefore children will feel happy, comfortable, and highly motivated, to self-express and entertain themselves at their own pace, instead of participating in adult-led activities (Homan, 2016). In addition to this, practitioners will gain an improved comprehension of each child's interests, it will enable professionals, to identify any issues or abilities that require discussion or additional development, as well as observing children in a way that is valuable to each child and maximises the time spent by professionals (Eaton, 2023). Eyworks (2023) and Ephgrave (2018) believes that young children, should always be observed in an environment that has significance for them, as accurate learning assessments will be carried out, from observations that are based on learning experiences that each child initiated. Thus, Eyworks (2023) and Ephgrave (2018) claims that it is essential, to have both indoor and outdoor learning environments of the highest calibre, if professionals wish to observe children, in real-world settings and during self-initiated play. Planning and observing, have a major

impact on every child's development and well-being, through individualised learning, caring surroundings, early concern detection, and enhanced parent-caregiver communication (Eyeworks, 2023 and Ephgrave, 2018).

Eurydice (2023) allege that in Iceland, preschools are cultural spaces where children learn generally through play, and it is advised that they adopt a holistic approach to teaching, caring for, learning and social and language skills. According to Eurydice (2023), preschools also tend to adopt, a diverse approach to various ideologies, tailoring them to fit the needs of the classroom, as well as prioritising play that is both organised and unstructured. In Iceland, there are no formal assessments or performance standards for children at this educational level, instead each child's well-being is the main priority, and regular informal assessments are done to reflect this (Eurydice, 2023).

Nursery Resources (2019) suggests child observations are vital and as each child is unique, observational methods available in various contexts, provide firsthand insight into children's abilities and talents. Educators, according to Nursery Resources (2019), can gather trustworthy information about children as individuals, by observing the activities children choose to engage in, each child's interests, and the resources individuals opt to play with. Discussing these with children, parents, and other professionals, serves as the foundation for an all-encompassing strategy, that will guarantee each child is at the centre of planning (Nursery Resources, 2019).

McInnes and Birdsey (2016) and Howard and McInnes (2013) maintain, that to best meet the needs of the child and enable appropriate play experiences, child-centred approaches are essential and according to earlier studies, children can distinguish between play and non-play, based on cues such as: the presence of an adult, where the activity is taking place, and whether each child has a choice. According to McInnes and Birdsey (2016), compared to the formal practice condition, children's development, and learning-supporting behaviours, significantly improved when each child was in the playful practice condition. Additionally, they showed an enhanced sense of well-being. (McInnes and Birdsey, 2016).

Hamilton (2018) claims that as a practitioner, understanding when to step back and observe and how to conduct assessments and support a child's learning, are equally fundamental, as well as allowing a child's imagination and creativity to roam free.

Childcare providers should possess strong academic skills, to translate observations into plans and to determine development trajectories (Hamilton, 2018). Pacey (n.d.b) suggests that professionals should consider, not just the physical surroundings both indoor and outdoor, but also the emotional surroundings, emphasising the value of relationships between parents and caregivers, as well as the children's sense of security and familiarity within the setting. The development and learning of children, are greatly aided by an enabling environment and it is commonly known, that children learn and grow most effectively in nurturing, accommodating settings, that cater to their specific needs, while allowing them play and explore (Pacey, n.d.b).

Tommies Childcare (2019) believes that practitioners, should foster positive relationships with the children within their care, parents, and external agencies, protect and promote the health and well-being of children, ensure that safeguarding protocols are followed and support each child's play-based learning and development.

Reference List

- A STEMful Mind (n.d.) *The Dos And Don'ts Of Free Play. A STEM Perspective*. Available at: <https://www.astemfulmind.com/the-dos-and-donts-of-free-play-a-stem-perspective/> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
- Allarakha, S. (2022) 'What Happens If a Kid Doesn't Get Exercise?' (February). Available at: https://www.medicinenet.com/what_happens_if_a_kid_doesnt_get_exercise/article.htm (Accessed: 21 February 2024).
- Amin, R. (2022) 'How adults can support their children in play', 11 October. Available at: <https://www.pentagonplay.co.uk/news-and-info/adult-support-for-childrens-play> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
- Anthony, D. (2023) 'How STEM and Montessori Work Together', 21 April. Available at: <https://primarymontessori.com/how-stem-and-montessori-work-together/> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
- Artful Teaching (2023) 'From Worksheets to Wonder: One Hundred Languages of Children', 15 March. Available at: <https://www.artfulteachingjoyfullearning.com/blog/hundred-languages-of-children> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
- Bottrill, G. (2022) *Can I Go and Play Now?* London: SAGE Publications.
- Byrne, E. (2022) 'Can guided play enhance younger children's learning?' 31 January. Available at: <https://early-education.org.uk/can-guided-play-enhance-younger-childrens-learning/> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
- Canning, N. (2020) *Children's Empowerment in Play: Participation, Voice and Ownership*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Cheqdin (2019) 'What You Should Know About the Leuven Scale for Early Years?' 23 September. Available at: <https://cheqdin.com/leuven-scale-for-early-years> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).
- Cherry, K. (2023) 'Support and Criticism of Piaget's Stage Theory', (November) article 2795460. Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/support-and-criticism-of-piagets-stage-theory-2795460> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).
- Connery, M.C., John-Steiner, V., and Marjanovic-Shane, A. (Eds.). (2018). *Vygotsky and creativity: a cultural-historical approach to play, meaning making, and the arts* (2nd edn). Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Copland, S. (2022) 'Types of childcare observation', 12 February. Available at: <https://www.himama.com/blog/types-of-child-care-observation/> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).

- Day Nurseries (2021) *'What are Scandinavia's secrets to outdoor play?'* (March) article 1645327. Available at: <https://www.daynurseries.co.uk/news/article.cfm/id/1645327/what-are-scandinavias-secrets-to-outdoor-play> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
- Durham County Council (2021) *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)*. Available at: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/30841/Strengths-and-Difficulties-Questionnaires-SDQs-Practice-Guidance/pdf/StrengthsDifficultiesQuestionnairesPracticeGuidance.pdf?m=637032864651930000> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).
- Early Years Matters (n.d.) *A Unique Child*. Available at: <https://www.earlyyearsmatters.co.uk/eyfs/a-unique-child/> (Accessed: 08 February 2024).
- Early Years Matters (n.d.) *Physical Development*. Available at: <https://www.earlyyearsmatters.co.uk/our-services/school-and-nursery-support/early-years-adviser/physical-development/> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).
- Early Years Resources (2018) *'The Benefits of Physical Play for Children'*, 10 April. Available at: <https://www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk/blog/2018/04/benefits-of-physical-play-for-children/> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).
- Eaton, C. (2023). *'Enabling environments and their impact on children's learning'*, 8 February. Available at: <https://early-education.org.uk/enabling-environments-and-their-impact-on-childrens-learning/> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- Emotionally Healthy Schools (2019) *The Leuven Scale*. Available at: <https://emotionallyhealthyschools.org/primary/the-leuven-scale/> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).
- Ephgrave, A. (2018) *Planning in the Moment with Young Children: A Practical Guide for Early Years Practitioners and Parents*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Eurydice (2023) *Educational Guidelines*. Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/iceland/educational-guidelines> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- Eyeworks (2023). *'The Importance of Planning and Observing in a Childcare Setting'*, 27 July. Available at: <https://www.eyeworks.co.uk/importance-of-planning-and-observing-in-a-childcare-setting/> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- Foster, J. (2017) *'What If Kids Avoid or Struggle with Creativity?'* (October). Available at: <https://www.creativitypost.com/article/what-if-kids-avoid-or-struggle-with-creativity> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).
- Gonsker, A.M. (ed.) (2019) *The Administrative Challenges of (Play) Therapy*. London: Hamilton Books.

- Hamilton, L. (2018) '*Stand Back And Let Children Play*', 14 August. Available at: <https://www.earlyyearseducator.co.uk/opinion/article/stand-back-and-let-children-play> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- Homan, E. (2016) '*Outdoor Learning and Play*', 20 September. Available at: <https://www.pentagonplay.co.uk/news-and-info/why-free-play-is-crucial-for-early-years-children> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- Howard, J. and McInnes, K. (2013) *The Essence of Play: A Practice Companion for Professionals Working with Children and Young People*. London: Routledge.
- INEOS (n.d.) *The Daily Mile In Early Years Settings*. Available at: <https://thedailymile.co.uk/the-daily-mile-in-early-years-settings/> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).
- Kumar, S. (2015). *Every Child Is Unique*. India: Partridge Publishing.
- Learning Journals (n.d.) *What Is the Leuven Scale and How to Use It*. Available at: <https://learningjournals.co.uk/what-is-the-leuven-scale-and-how-to-use-it/> (Accessed: 26 February 2024).
- Ledendecker, M. (2020) '*Why Encourage Self-Directed Play?*' 27 April. Available at: <https://www.berkshiremontessori.org/msb-blog/self-directed-play> (Accessed: 21 February 2024).
- Lynch, M. (2023) '*What Is Froebel's Play Theory?*' (May). Available at: <https://www.theeducadvocate.org/what-is-froebels-play-theory/> (Accessed: 21 February 2024).
- McInnes, K. and Birdsey, N. (2016) '*Play through the eyes of the child*', (November). Available at: <https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/play-through-the-eyes-of-the-child> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- Nursery Resources (2019) '*Tracking Development In The EYFS*', (April). Available at: <https://www.nurseryresources.org/articles/eyfs/tracking-development-in-the-eyfs-2/> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- O'Connor, A. and Daly, A. (2016) *Understanding Physical Development in the Early Years*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Pacey (2016) *Child observations and learning journeys*. Available at: [https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY%20member%20practice%20guides%20\(PDFs\)/PG05-Child-observations-learning-journeys.pdf](https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY%20member%20practice%20guides%20(PDFs)/PG05-Child-observations-learning-journeys.pdf) (Accessed: 26 February 2024).
- Pacey (n.d.b) *Creating enabling environments*. Available at: <https://www.pacey.org.uk/working-in-childcare/spotlight-on/creating-enabling-environments/> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).
- PennState Extension (2018) *Why Observe Children?* Available at: <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/news/why-observe-children> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).

Play Wales (n.d.) *Play policy and legislation*. Available at: <https://play.wales/play-policy-legislation/> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).

Rana, P. (2023) '*Children's Art Week: Making Something Out Of Nothing! Creating Art Using Recycled Materials In Early Years*', (June). Available at: <https://www.earlyyearseducator.co.uk/features/article/children-s-art-week-making-something-out-of-nothing-creating-art-using-recycled-materials-in-early-years> (Accessed: 20 February 2023).

Red Monkey Play (2024) '*Why Is Creative Play important For Children's Development?*', 30 January. Available at: <https://redmonkeyplay.co.uk/why-is-creative-play-important-for-childrens-development/> (Accessed: 08 February 2024).

Salcuni, S., Capella, C., and Mazzeschi, C. (2017) *The Role of Play in Child Assessment and Intervention*. South Africa: Frontiers Media.

Sancisi, L. and Edgington, M. (2015) *Developing High Quality Observation, Assessment and Planning in the Early Years*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Sensory Surroundings (2020) '*What is free play and why is it so important for children?*' 21 February. Available at: <https://sensorysurroundings.co.uk/blogs/news/what-is-free-play-and-why-is-it-so-important-for-children> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).

Shropshire Community Health (2022) *Schedule of Growing Skills (SOGS)*. Available: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjYvZbq882EAXV2V0EAHdzRALIQFnoECBQQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.shropscommunityhealth.nhs.uk%2Fcontent%2Fdoclib%2F14161.docx&usq=AOvVaw1ED-luKCxlssZ1Mfl-gXDW&opi=89978449> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).

Starting Blocks (2020) *How does play inspire children's love of learning?* Available at: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/videos/how-does-play-inspire-children-s-love-of-learning> (Accessed: 21 February 2024).

Structural Learning (2021) *What is the Leuven Scale?* Available at: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/leuven-scale-a-teachers-guide> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).

Tommies Childcare (2019) *What Is A Nursery Practitioner?* Available at: <https://www.tommieschildcare.co.uk/what-is-a-nursery-practitioner/> (Accessed: 28 February 2024).

Tutor doctor (2019) '*10 Ways to Nurture Your Child's Creativity and Imagination*', December. Available at: <https://www.tutordocor.co.uk/blog/2019/december/10-ways-to-nurture-your-childs-creativity-and-im/> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).

Twinkl (n.d.a) *What is Physical Play in Early Years?* Available at: <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/teaching-wiki/physical-play-in-early-years> (Accessed: 20 February 2024).

Twinkl (n.d.b) *What is Child-Initiated Play?* Available at: <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/teaching-wiki/child-initiated-play> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).

Unicef (2018b) *Learning through play*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/UNICEF-Lego-Foundation-Learning-through-Play.pdf> (Accessed: 08 February 2024).

Unicef (n.d.a) *How We Protect Children's Rights With The UN Convention On The Rights Of The Child*. Available: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/> (Accessed: 08 February 2024).

Whalley, C. (2021) '*National Week of Play: the role of the adult in learning through play*', 21 June. Available at: <https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/national-week-play%C2%A0role-adult-learning-through%C2%A0play> (Accessed: 25 February 2024).

World Health Organization (2021) *Promoting Physical Activity Through Schools*. Switzerland: World Health Organization.

Worsley (2023) '*Who is Maria Montessori and What is the Meaning of Montessori Learning?*' 3 October. Available at: <https://www.pentagonplay.co.uk/news-and-info/what-is-montessori-learning> (Accessed: 24 February 2024).

Youll, V. (2023) '*What is Creative Play?*' 10 January. Available at: <https://www.kidcoach.app/article/what-is-creative-play> (Accessed: 10 February 2024).