

Children's Play

Section 1

Messy/Sensory Play

According to Suparno (2018) messy play is when children are exposed to materials and substances, which when experimenting creatively results in them becoming dirty. This in turn stimulates sensor gross and fine motor skills, contributing to holistic development. Duffy (2007, cited in Suparno, 2018) maintains that messy play does not entail structure or planning, but materials need to be provided which will result in the play area getting dirty. Tuleri (2009, cited in Suparno, 2018) states that intrapersonal intelligence can be affected by messy play. It is the skill children develop to comprehend their own strengths, desires and emotions. Also, being aware of vulnerabilities and regulating their lives by using knowledge effectively.

Forbes (2004) and McLeod (2022) believe that young children use their senses to begin to understand the world and start to construct ideas and information through sensory play. If babies experience rich sensory play experiences the hard-wiring and neural connections begin to build in the brain. Sensory play is important for babies going through the Sensorimotor Stage - from birth to two years, which was identified by Piaget. They learn about object performance during this stage, which requires the capacity to create a mental schema or representation of the item.

According to Gascoyne (2017) some children use messy play to self-regulate and express how they are feeling. It is significant for children that have suffered trauma or adverse childhood experiences. Messy play can be used as a communication channel.

Coulthard and Sealy (2017) claim that giving children direct opportunities to smell, handle and see foods, in a play environment, enables them to familiarise themselves with them in a sensory way. This can be used as a strategy to encourage children to increase consumption of various foods for example fruit and vegetables.

Gascoyne (2018) points out that to provide quality messy play opportunities there needs to be an enabling physical and emotional environment. Children's autonomy, relatedness and competence grow to both the adult and the materials if the environment is emotionally accepting. Messy play can be applied at the Microlevel

suiting the individual adult and child, by assisting the planning of material encounters. Also, the Macrolevel which balances the adult and child-led activities, supporting planning by practitioners. This links with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Cleveland Clinic (2022) says that sensory play develops motor skills and language skills. It fosters social interactions, aids cognitive growth and encourages experimentation.

Risky Play

Sandseter (2010, cited in Sandseter, Kleppe and Sando, 2020) states that risky play can be defined as physical play that has potential risk to cause injury. It involves uncertainty and is an exciting and thrilling type of play. Risky play is broken down into six categories; great heights, dangerous tools, high speed, rough-and-tumble, dangerous elements and disappear/get lost.

Little and Eager (2010, cited in Maynard and Waters, 2014) state that 'risk' is often referred to as a 'danger'. A risk can be a positive or negative situation, with the outcome being potentially good, but uncertain. Gill (2009, cited in Maynard and Waters, 2014) believes people experience risks daily, preparing children to manage risks themselves through risky play will build up their resilience to mistakes and setbacks. However, according to Little *et al.* (2011, cited in Sandseter, Kleppe and Sando, 2020) practitioners being liable for accidents and injuries affects the level of intervention whilst children partake in risky play, causing restrictions and lack of self-directed play.

Froebel Trust (No date) and Bruce (2012) suggest that a significant Froebelian principle is 'the importance of play'. It places emphasis on the significance of adults promoting 'freedom with guidance', resulting in enriched play and learning. Children should experience this with risky play. Another principle is that 'children engage with nature through authentic experiences' which links to risky play.

Willoughby (No date, cited in Barnardos, 2011) points out that managing risks is important. Practitioners should inspect equipment to ensure it is in working condition and model how to use it appropriately. Also, advocating children to make their own risk assessments and judgements by asking appropriate questions. Settings should

have policies and procedures in place stating the position on risk assessment and safety, ensuring easy access for parents.

The Forest School Association (No date) and Harper (2017) state that Forest School originated in Scandinavia, the learning process is child-directed and facilitates holistic development. There is a focus on supported risk taking, play and exploration whilst developing intellectual, spiritual, social, physical and emotional skills. However, according to Harper (2017) in Norway a constraint to quality risky play has been that ground surfaces have not been meeting recently introduced safety standards. In some settings they have had to remove physical features for example trees to avoid risk of injury.

Durant (2018) believes that outdoor risky play gives children the opportunity to become independent learners. It develops children's social skills, self-esteem, enables physical activity and it gives them time to consolidate the skills that they have learnt.

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Section 2

Unicef (2019) point out that all children have the right to play, relax and participate in various artistic and cultural experiences. However, Brown (2014) believes that children's rights are frequently ignored, many people do not value and promote Article 31 – the right to play.

Welsh Government (2014) and Brown (2014) believe that play refers to children's freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed behaviour. They receive no visible goal or reward, and it plays a significant part in healthy development for both individual children and society. According to Vygotsky (1980, cited in Aminpour, Bishop and Corkery, 2020) a form of autonomous play known as 'self-directed play' develops when children independently decide what and how to play according to their own self-driven, genuinely motivated interests.

Howard and McInnes (2012) state that children who believe the activity they are partaking in is play, rather than not play, receive more benefits to their emotional well-being. Evidence shows that children also had deeper engagement, better focus, seemed happier and moved more freely. When practitioners plan play opportunities

they should take into consideration whether the children will view the task as 'playful', if they do it will contribute more to holistic development. Lester and Russell (2008, cited in Hobbs *et al.*, 2019) state that play is significant to a child's holistic development, covering lots of specific areas such as emotional, social, physical and intellectual health and wellbeing.

Brown (2014) points out that adulteration is when adults step into a child's play to take control of a situation, for example sorting out a dispute or intervening to prevent a child being injured. This is not always beneficial to the children as they need to develop their social skills by learning to compromise and move forward from their arguments, also learning through risk taking. Sturrock and Else (1998) believe that sometimes adults contaminate the play objectives of the children by their appetency to 'teach' or by the individuals own unplayed out material. Playworkers should carefully consider their involvement, influence and intervention in the child's play.

Rinaldi (1998, cited in Maynard, Waters and Clement, 2013) believes that the Reggio Emilia philosophy promotes that communications, interactions and relationships children form with practitioners, parents and other children, have a significant effect on the learning and teaching process. Kinney (2007) and Rinaldi (2006, cited in Maynard, Waters and Clement, 2013) state that a Reggio pedagogy that bares significance is the 'pedagogy of listening'. This should be engaged in as it is one of the main aims of their practice, with children's learning processes and strategies closely linked.

According to Whitebread (2012, cited in Howard and McInnes, 2013) it is the role of the adult to create a well-resourced play space for children in their care. These should fulfil children's individual desires and needs. The equipment provided should be varied, giving children opportunities to experiment with different materials which can facilitate children's play and holistic development.

Howard and McInnes (2013) point out that to maintain the cycle of play adults should reflect on their reaction to a cue from the child, questioning - is the response for the benefit of themselves or is it based on the child's play intent. Play activities can be deeply engaged in by children if the adult response is associated with the play intent. Howard and McInnes (2013) maintain that communication and positive relationships with children are important for meaningful play opportunities. To engage in

purposeful communication adults need the ability to understand nonverbal cues, for example through actions, expression and touch to gain an understanding of how children are thinking and feeling. Verbal cues are also significant and may be displayed in the form of the type of language used, who initiates the language and the questions asked.

Nilsson and Ferholt (2014) say that Vygotsky believed that relationships and social interactions significantly effect children's cognitive development. Children's imagination grows through play. Vygotsky maintains that with the correct level of adult guidance, children develop and learn through play.

Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002, cited in McInnes *et al.*, 2011) maintain that the results of the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years project show that quality childcare settings incorporate both child-initiated and adult-led activities, not relying on purely child-centred practice. Welsh Government (2017) suggest that the Foundation Phase aims to encourage children to develop perception of themselves as learners by planning and monitoring their child-led activities. It is the role of the practitioner to extend the children's learning by giving them opportunities to practise new skills that they have learnt, incorporating them in all areas of learning. This enables them to consolidate and evaluate their learning.

According to Bottrill (2018) if children are highly absorbed and engaged in play, this is called 'deep-level play' and the session needs to be more than forty-five minutes. It is a developmentally damaging action to stop children when they are in full flow play. Play Wales (2015) state that the Playwork Principles must be considered as a whole because they establish the ethical framework for playwork. They describe what makes play unique. They are based on the recognition that providing children with access to a diverse range of environments and play opportunities will increase their capacity for positive development.

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Section 3

Welsh Government (2017) suggests that the Foundation Phase Profile provides a baseline assessment which is consistent across the nations, linking with outcomes that aim to be achieved by the end of phase. By carrying out observations and

assessments, a holistic curriculum can be delivered, ensuring it is developmentally appropriate.

GL assessment (No date) states that using a standardised assessment can provide supporting evidence for children who are in the process of being identified with an additional learning need, enabling appropriate support to be arranged for these children. Golding (2013) believes that clear targets and action plans can be created to meet each child's individual needs, due to the observations being carried out and interpreted effectively.

According to Welsh Government (2022) practitioners believe the pedagogical principles of the Foundation Phase align with the Foundation Phase Profile. Most of the end-of- phase, baseline assessments, were able to be carried out through play observation. Smidt (2015) points out that Vygotsky believed that in the early years play is a primary mode of learning, when practitioners watch children playing, they gain an insight into what they can do both independently and with support.

Welsh Government (2022) maintains that assessments are carried out to provide continuous support for individual learners. To identify, capture and reflect on each child's progress, also reflecting on practice with an understanding of group progress. Every child develops and progresses at their own, appropriate pace and should be challenged accordingly. Beckley (2012) points out that observations should be used to inform planning and provision for the setting, ensuring each child's holistic developmental needs are met, having a positive effect on future practice.

Welsh Government (2022) states that the compact Foundation Phase Profile provides evidence of children's overall ability. The observations and assessments are based on a broad range of skills and assess the level the child is working at, it is a helpful tool for practitioners to use when identifying next steps and setting targets. Welsh Government (2017) believes that the outcomes cover all four areas of learning; Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity, Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, Mathematical Development and Physical Development.

Welsh Government (2017) maintains that during the first six weeks in their Reception class, unobtrusive observations should be carried out forming a baseline assessment. The skill ladders for the baseline are easily observable and highlights

important information, to support the children's early development. However, this may not be a true reflection of the child's abilities as they may still be settling into the setting and routines. Also, there may be an age gap of a year between some of the children, which therefore has an impact on development. Welsh Government (2015) says that at the end of the Foundation Phase teachers must assess each child to track their progress before they move up to key stage two. There is consistency of when the assessments are taking place for every child.

Welsh Government (2022) says that to assess specific skills that could not be observed through play, focussed tasks needed to be set up. Howard and McInnes (2013) point out that task performance, well-being, problem solving and engagement is improved when children perceive the activity as 'play'. When a focussed task is set up by a practitioner, children often perceive it as 'not play' therefore the observations may be inaccurate.

Welsh Government (2015) maintain that results from a study show that practitioners undertake observations and assessments more often than teachers. This may cause poor continuity due to a high turnover of staff and possible misinterpretation due to lack of training or secondary training on observations.

Welsh Government (2022) point out that completing the observations and assessments is time consuming. It is also a tick-box process which results in it not being well adapted to each individual learner. Smidt (2015) maintains that observations and assessments are not reliable if they take place on a one-off or occasional basis, ticking a box provides no concrete evidence that the children have achieved the skill.

Welsh Government (2022) believes that not all children with additional learning needs are considered due to the Foundation Phase Statements being too vague and broad, making it difficult to identify learning difficulties. Also, children that attend Welsh Medium schools but predominantly speak English at home, experienced some language barriers. As a result of this baseline assessment outcomes may be poorer.

Welsh Government (2015) states that in the Foundation Phase there should be continued support for higher adult-to-child ratios. This would make observations easier to carry out. Evidence shows that practitioners carry out outdoor observations

more than teachers, some skills on the profile may only be achieved outdoors, therefore teachers may not always assess skills accurately. Durant (2018) maintains that some children feel restricted indoors and play with more confidence outside, therefore they may display more progression when outdoors.

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Section 4

According to Andrews (2017) and Hewes (2010, cited in McInnes *et al.*, 2013) to gain an understanding of children's play intentions, observations and reflections need to be actively engaged in by practitioners. It is important to view what is happening from the child's perspective. Detail should be captured with the aim to find out and reflect upon the actions of children when they are at play.

Bruce, Louis and McCall (2015) maintain that when observing children there should be a focus on deepening where they are in their learning and securing it, there should not always be a focus on planning next steps to take the learning forward. The New Zealand curriculum Te Whariki recognises the significance of a period of learning plateau, consolidating their current stage of learning. Walker (2014) states that Bruner developed the spiral curriculum theory which highlights that children need time to play and master their skills before moving on to the next stage of development with a practitioners support. Also, emphasising the importance of revisiting concepts and exploring them in more depth.

Welsh Government (2022) point out that children can be observed in both indoor and outdoor environments, during collaborative play and in solitary play. Observing children in a range of contexts enables practitioners to understand the child's interests and motivations, friendships, levels of involvement, skills and competencies and emotional states. Practitioners should analyse what they see and hear, followed by a response to guide progression. Observations should be used to inform future and current planning.

Wilson (**No date**) suggests that intrinsic motivation is decreased if controlling actions and language are shown. If an adult puts a child under pressure to behave or act in a certain way, it decreases their own control and lowers intrinsic motivation. If children participate in play for an external reward, intrinsic motivation can also decrease. It is

important that children play due to an internal locus of causality, resulting in them wanting to participate in play, displaying high intrinsic motivation. Walker (2014) points out that Jerome Bruner believes that teachers should build on intrinsic motivations including curiosity, the drive to achieve competence and reciprocity.

According to Mehta *et al.* (2020) Peter Gray defines curiosity, sociability and play as natural drives which enable children to learn and self-direct their learning. He believed that in school, children are deprived of time for curiosity and play, resulting in creativity being suppressed. Standardised schooling does not ignite learning and creativity as it goes against the natural processes. This can have a negative effect on their wellbeing and progression. Adults should enable the natural drives of sociability, curiosity and play to thrive whilst undertaking observations, this will improve the accuracy of their observed progress.

Howard and McInnes *et al.* (2011) suggests that practitioners should engage in a pedagogy, using a framing style that is not strong or weak, as well as co-constructing activities with children. This gives them both control and choice and will benefit children's holistic development and learning. If children approach activities in a playful manner this contributes to improved performance and the behaviours displayed will facilitate learning. Therefore, it is more beneficial to observe children in child-led play than adult-led activities.

Howard and McInnes *et al.* (2013) maintains that one of the main cues a child will use within their environment is adult presence. If an adult is present, it is less likely a child will approach and define an activity as play. Practitioners should ask open questions and use language that ensures the child feels like they have a choice and are in control. Also, sharing initiation of interactions. This results in the children not using the cue of adult presence to adapt their approach to the activity and performing in a manner that is more conducive to learning. When conducting observations, adults will be present, therefore they should aim to ensure the cue of their presence does not affect the child's goals.

Swansea council (2022) state that every council in Wales must undertake a Play Sufficiency Assessment, to assess if play is 'sufficient' in their area. They score themselves on a 'set of matters' which enables action plans to be put into place and

targets to be set. This promotes the importance of play, observations and assessments.

According to Gaikwad (2015) observation plays a significant role in play therapy. During nondirective play therapy children use play to work towards their own solutions to problems. This is beneficial for children because it gives them the opportunity to freely explore the world, without interruptions and instructions and play the way they want. The child is likely to be more engaged in the play if they initiate it themselves and solve more problems due to their innate ability to do so. Play therapy enables children to express their feelings and emotions and manage difficulties in everyday life.

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846, 830, 803, 806

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CHECK:

REFERENCING

HOWARD AND MCINNES IN TEXT REFERENCES??

PROOF READ SECOND HALF !!