

Section 1

Play is vital to a child's learning and development, and it supports their holistic growth. Play is linked to of the Article 31 of the UNCRC. Play encourages children to learn about the work around them. Play encourages their independence and supports their development. Play can be supported through real life experiences. Play can be an activity or behaviour that is controlled and structured by the child which offer engagement and opportunities. play has positive impacts on a child neurological development, it provides children with the opportunities to engage in the environment around them as well as engaging with adults and children. (McDonald, 2022, p. 4 and 5)

Ledendecker states that Self-directed play or also know as free play is an important aspect of a child's development. Self-directed play is giving the child freedom to choose in whatever way they want to play allowing them to be creative. This type of play is intended to be child led with having no outcomes that are adult directed. A challenge to self-directed play is that some specific toys can be intended for a purpose, such as a train or a doll as they look a certain way its difficult to extent its nature but are beneficial in imaginative play. Having natural resources such as twigs, toilet roll, giving children the opportunities to create something using the resources, for example the twigs could be a bridge, it gives multiple possibilities, and it also follows Montessori learning. Self-directed play can be beneficial to children as it helps to improve their confidence and independence. Self-directed play gives children the opportunities to explore, be curious and creative, it stimulates their imagination and allows them to learn at their own pace. (Ledendecker 2020)

Xobon states that Self-directed play is important as it allows children to be problem solvers, and think creatively, it allows them to take control and allows them to think outside the box. Self-directed play is important as it gives children the opportunity to interact with the world around them through play, and to work and interact together with other, for example learning to work together and share, and allowing them to resolve any conflicts. (Xobon 2018)

Williamson (2016) states that Structured play is about play experiences where an adult has input in the play making it more structured or adult led. Structed play often has an outcome, if the adult has an outcome visioned from the play activity. For example, prompting play or controlling the resources a child has to play with, or intervening with the play activity. When play is structured, it could mean the adult has specific outcomes of learning. Bruce (1999) states that an adult's involvement and intervention in a child's play can cause damage to a child's development. (Williamson 2016)

The previous source expressed that structured play can be damaging with adult interventions, however in this source Rock (2020) states that structured play can be beneficial to children in early years as it can help children to learn through play such as games. Structed play is play that has a purpose. Structured play can be activity mentally or physically that supports children in learning new skills, for example teaching a child about the months of the year, it has a learning outcome and the activity most likely would be let by an adult, with the outcome to have learnt a new skill. Expanding a child's knowledge and development can be supported through structured play. Structured play might not always be so organised and uniform, for example showing or modelling to a child how to through a ball, it is teaching them a new skill, but it is also seen as structed play. (Rock 2020)

Self-directed play where Children who move from one activity to another are exploring on their curiosity and follow their interests. Structured play can cause stress and anxiety for children and gives children less opportunities for free play. When children are undertaking structed play activities, they may lack interest and concentration, causing them to get frustrated and using less skills like problem solving and their independence. (Rees-Edwards 2022, p. 37 and 38)

Play is important in a child's Holistic development as play gives children the opportunities to explore their interest, build relationships and be curious learners. These factors play a large role in a child's development. Play also gives children opportunities to build on knowledge and skills to develop them further and also to learn new things. For example, if they know a game they can teach it to their friends, or if they can climb, can they climb higher next time. The holistic part of play is the

context of the environment and embracing all factors in their free choice of learning and development. (Canning, et al. 2022, p. 56 and 57)

Section 2

Adults play an important part in facilitating play, the adult's role differs throughout the variety of different plays. Play should be about feelings and enjoyment not about producing an end product. Adults should not control or direct play as this can have impacts on a child's development, however adults play a vital role in supporting a child's play and helping them gain the most out of their experiences. For example, adults need to have understanding on how to develop and extend play. As a practitioner having this knowledge is vital to support a child's development through play. Children outcomes and engagement are more positive if they perceive a certain activity as play that if an activity is not play. Howard (2002) stated that for play to be viewed as play the child must have the choice whether to engage in the activity or not. Such as free Play which should be in a large open space preferably not at a table and the adult can be near but shouldn't be directly engaged within the activity. (McDonald 2022, p. 9)

The adult's role in facilitating play is to create an environment that supports a child emotionally where children can express their feelings and behaviours in a positive way. Adults are role models for children and need to be consistent in caring for a child, they also should model a joyful approach into learning and allow children to use their curiosity which will enable children to be independent, develop their confidence and challenge themselves. (Welsh Gov 2021)

The experiences a child has should support holistic development by making connections between learning and experiences, learning should offer authentic real-life experiences and offer opportunity for deep and unerupted learning. (Welsh Gov 2021)

UNICEF states that Play is the core part of a child's development, children's learning and experiences of the world mostly come through play. Play helps children to explore their environments and build on their vocabulary as well as express their emotions all through the medium of play. Play is a natural thing across the globe for

children, and it's a really important factor for children's social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Free play gives children so many opportunities and many ways to express themselves whether it be independently or with other children. (UNICEF -No date)

Howard and McInnes undertook a study making links between a child's emotional well-being and play. Showing that when a child distinguishes an activity as play it has better outcomes on a child's wellbeing than if a child does not perceive an activity as play. Children aged 3 to 5 took part in the study and the cues children use to differentiate between play and non play were taken to create an activity that was play and an activity that was not play. There was a huge difference in the level of emotional well-being that was displayed by the children; this was shown through their emotions as well as behaviours. Children who undertook the play activity scored higher than the non-play activity. This study shows the value of enhancing children's play. (Howard and McInnes 2012)

The role of the adult in a child-focused environment is important in supporting and sustaining a child's holistic development through play. During play, a child needs to be free from adult interruptions but also for the adult to play along with them. This highlights the importance of the adult's role in being responsive to the child and making the right decision on supporting play. The play cycle shows the process of play and was introduced for adults to use in recognising when they can respond to a child in the moment in an environment. The play cycle can help adults who may want to observe children's play. The play cycle can support them in their observations by determining the potential issues that may hinder or halt the child's play. However, King and Howard (2016) states that free play might not be possible as in practice the provision children receive are limited to the resources available, as well as the adults' choices and beliefs. Children learn to differentiate between work and play through cues from the adults, such as saying play time, or work or tidy up. Children and adults often have different perceptions on their involvement and engagement in play. (Rekers, et al. p. 148)

Section 3

To support adults in understanding the developmental changes and needs of a child, a tool adults can use is observation. Observing a child can help an adult get a better understanding of a child and can support an adult's decision making. (Welsh Gov 2021)

The statutory framework for EYFS states that practitioners are required to complete observations on children. These observations will then give practitioners an insight into understanding a child's level on achievement, interests and learning styles. The observations should then be used to support a practitioner in informing them and to shape and set out future learning that supports a child's development. Observing children should help open up a practitioner's thinking and ideas, it should not be used as a tool to control or intervene in a child's play and or learning.

Observations are an essential tool in understanding the needs of children in the adult's care. Observations also help them to find out their interests, what skills they have but also the ways they play and learn. Making decisions without the use of observations could result in inappropriate learning opportunities and would not be putting the child's needs and interests at the heart of their planning. (Machan 2016)

Running records are an observation tool used in early years, they are written in the present tense, and they record the action as it is happening. A running record gives a minute by minute description of the events a child is undergoing in a specific setting. It gives the practitioners to record a child's behaviour, interactions, and conversations. The goal for a running record is to gain a detailed record of a child's behaviour without an adult interfering, or interrupting. The running record must be detailed and written exactly as the action happened in front of them. The positives of running records are that they show a detailed sequenced account about a child and the environment. It can provide a descriptive and objective evidence about a child's behaviour interests and abilities. Which can then be used to track a child's development. This type of observation can be more flowing and less structured, which gives the options to record the evidence formally or informally and it gives room to add on reflection after the observation has been written up. The disadvantages to running records is that they can be lengthy and time consuming. As this type of observation is highly detailed and wordy in recording the information in the moment it can sometimes be difficult to keep up with a child's actions for example if they are

moving from one activity into another. Taking the time to observe a child might not be practical in a setting if that adult is part of a ratio. Another disadvantage is that on the day of the observation it might not be a true representation of a child's behaviour compared to another day. (Lorina 2021)

Bilton and Crook states that when observing it is important to know who you are observing and why you are observing them. The more detailed and quantity observation obtained the more reliable the data would be. Observation helps to monitor a child's behaviour, learning and development over time. (Bilton and Crook 2016)

Sands states that the play cycle is used in early years to support adults in understanding and observing play. The play cycle supports adults in practice to understand play and notice cues or when to intervene and support play better. When supporting play the situations are always different, for example if a child extends a cue to join play is that adult ready to receive. Can adults adjust the play so they can carry on playing without an adult's presence, or does it make it less free play by doing this. (Sands 2013)

Twinkl states that continuous and enhanced provision is a process to ensure that children have free access to resources and play that promote their creativity and creating challenge to encourage problem solving. Enhanced provision is resources that a practitioner provides to a child's learning to create more challenging learning. They can do this by building on the observations they have undergone of the children playing in their continuous provision sections, enhanced provision can also provide themed areas as part of the learning in their everyday activities. (Twinkl no date)

Section 4

The Cambridge kids club talks about the play cycle and how it can be used to help adults to understand play and how play can be supported. The Metaludes is the inner reverie or contemplation that proceeds play, having stimulating spaces and objects that will initiate metaludes. The play cues are adding in person or something

into the environment. Play cues can be either a look, gesture, an expression, a verbal invitation, or the presentation of an object. The play return is the response by a child or a practitioner, or by the environment. The play frame is initiated by the child and it is to contain and constrain the play, there is physical, narrative and emotional. The flow follows on when there is a response and a frame, this step can last from a few seconds up to a few weeks. The Annihilation is when the child chooses to end the play and move on to something else. The Adulteration is the adult wanting to rescue, educate, control and improve to make the play better. Adults can support the play if they are invited into the play by a child. They can also support play by keeping the play cycle intact. (Cambridge kids club 2023)

PTUK states that play therapy is used with children where play and arts are used so children can express themselves. If a child may be struggling and can't get their feelings into words play therapy can help a child to experience their feeling and emotions through play in a creative and dynamic way. Play therapy gives children the opportunity to express themselves through drawings, painting, sensory, visuals, water, clay, sand, drama, music and puppetry. It gives children the ability to work through difficult experiences and express themselves. (PTUK 2021)

A play therapist can observe a child's play and gain insights into any issues a child may be facing and can help children explore their emotions and teach children coping mechanisms and how to redirect and channel their behaviours into a positive way. As trust and relationship go and the therapy develops it can be really beneficial for children to gain coping strategies, gain problem solving skills, relieve anxiety, and develop stronger relationships. (Gill 2019)

The adult's interaction with a child's play is determined on the actions of the child. Sometimes adults join in sensitively and extend or support play. The adult's role is to facilitate work for children indoors and outdoors in a learning environment. Observation is a huge part in facilitating a child's learning through play, and it's the observations that determine the action of the adult in the facilitating. Vygotsky promotes that adults should recognize and respond according to the 'Zone of proximal development. Scaffolding supports children in eventually acquiring the skill independently. (Early years alliance 2019)

In early years education play is at the centre of teaching and learning and play is beneficial when it's perceived as an approach to an activity and based on a child's perception of play. Children define play using cues within an environment, and it's shown that children are less likely to define and approach a play activity if an adult is present. This shows that adults influence a child's use of this play cue. Children use play cues to help them differentiate between play and non-play. McInnes study showed that the presence of an adult inhibited a child's learning and behaviours were more conducive to learning when the child perceived the activity as play. The language an adult uses can have an impact on the child's interaction with an adult, as a study showed that home and school life language spoken were different and language spoken by teachers are often more statemented and closed questions and that peers dialogue is more beneficial than an adult and a child. (McInnes, et al. 2013)

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