

ECEY4003 – Charlie Burman

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Developing child development has many different aspects, play is a significant part of child development. Children benefit from a range of play activities since they each support in the development of particular skills. These abilities support children's social skills development and mental and physical wellness. Using a variety of play types, such as imaginative play, physical play and cooperative play in childcare settings encourages exploration and supports children in meeting their developmental milestones. Play's potential to improve and deepen learning comes from involving children in real, intentional, and first-hand experiences. The value of play is the foundation of many modern teaching strategies and conventional theories of child development. It's truly quite challenging to define "play" given that there are so many different scenarios that could be engaged in the definitions. (Waters-Davies, Jane, 2022) It is possible to make the idea of learning through play appear more plausible by understanding some of the theories of child learning. Learning is the focus of several theories, which are assumptions about how things work. Jean Piaget speaks on "Play is the work of childhood." Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which centred on the phases of play that children go through, was established based on his observations of his own children. The four phases of cognitive development that make up Piaget's theory always occur in the same order, are never skipped, and progress gradually to the following stage. These stages are the sensorimotor phase (ages 0–2), the stage of preoperation (2–7 years old), the stage of concrete operation (7–11 years old) and the official stage of operation (age 11–adulthood). The first stage of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, known as the sensorimotor stage, covers from birth to roughly two years of age. Babies use their perceptions and motor abilities to learn about the world throughout this time. Understanding that things exist and things happen in the world regardless of one's own activities is the primary development throughout the sensorimotor stage. Babies can learn object permanence at this time, comprehending that their actions have consequences and that their environment and body are interconnected. The preoperational stage is the second stage in Piaget's theory of cognitive development. It begins around age two and lasts until roughly age seven. During this

period, children are able to think symbolically and play pretend. Children remain egocentric and struggle with logic, even as they develop language and abstract thought. Children are able to think symbolically, representing words, objects, images, people, and ideas using symbols. Because they can think symbolically, they can also write and sketch, act out scenarios, and copy behaviour. Based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the third stage is known as the concrete operational stage. This stage, which spans from seven to eleven years of age, is marked by the growth of structured and logical thought processes. Children start to understand the fundamentals of logical reasoning during the concrete operational thinking stage, displaying capabilities like decentration, reversibility, and other conservation abilities. This is supported by a variety of activities, including building block play, object size comparison, and helping others. Around the age of twelve, the formal operational stage starts, and it continues into adulthood. Adolescents can think abstractly as they progress through this stage, manipulating concepts in their minds without the need for physical manipulation. Children are more likely to reason abstractly, methodically, and reflectively when they are in the formal operational stage. They are more inclined to weigh the potential outcomes of any action before taking it out using logic. (Mcloed, 2024) (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958).

Children play in four ways, according to Piaget. These kinds of play take place at various developmental stages. These phases include games with rules, symbolic/fantasy play, constructive play, and functional play. The first kind of play activity children do is called functional play. Functional play includes language, object manipulation, and repetitive physical acts. Children learn from an early age that they can act on their things and have control over their bodies. Repetitive behaviours, such as swishing a rattle, splashing in the water, or dropping toys repeatedly to get a reaction, are how infants play. When a child intentionally participates in these simple activities for enjoyment, they transform into play. Children can watch and take pleasure in functional play all through their childhood. Children engage in functional play as they learn and practise new motor abilities like climbing, sliding, leaping, bouncing, and stacking. (My teaching cupboard, 2021).

To demonstrate how controlled play helps in learning, Piaget provided several examples of rule-based games. One well-known example is "tag," where players have to follow rules on who is "it" and how to

get "safe." Another example is board games like "Monopoly" or "Snakes and Ladders," where players have to understand and abide by the rules of movement, turns, and goals. These games promote social engagement and player negotiating in addition to enhancing cognitive abilities (pgpedia, 2011) As well as

Constructive play, which Piaget saw as a crucial aspect of children's development, involves active participation in building and construction. Constructive play includes activities like building with blocks, where children test their balance and stability, or creating art using a range of materials. These activities provide children the opportunity to use their imagination, develop their spatial awareness, and hone their problem-solving skills as they figure out how to construct the required outcomes.

(Community play things, 2015) According to Bruand and Timmons (2021), research has consistently demonstrated that self-regulation is essential for the development and maintenance of health and well-being in the early years and throughout life.

Researchers have identified the essential components of "play," which include making it enjoyable, giving children options, maintaining their interest, and letting them switch up the activity. Not only can play be specifically used in education and therapy to foster learning and mental health, but it may also be self-selected. It is crucial for children to choose their own play since it fosters independence as well as discovery. Children are more likely to participate fully, develop their interests, and gain confidence in their ability to make decisions, when they are allowed to choose the activities they want to do. Play autonomy also promotes their overall growth and education. (Howard, 2020) By participating in the activities and assisting children in the proper manner, adults can encourage self-directed play. The development of a child's play might be impacted if an adult or instructor makes no attempt to

encourage or support them. By providing a variety of open-ended, creatively stimulating materials and activities, adults can support early childhood self-directed play. It's critical to create a warm, secure atmosphere where children feel comfortable taking risks and trying new things. Because it immediately meets "physiological needs," which are the most fundamental human needs, including food, drink, shelter, and a sense of physical security, a comfortable environment is crucial. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of wants, humans cannot progress to higher levels of wants if these basic needs are not satisfied. (Bloemhoff ,Stroebe and Hay, 2019)

Additionally, parents and childcare workers can watch and listen to children's interests while letting them take charge of their play experiences and providing

guidance and support when necessary. By determining when to step in and when to step out, adults may provide a balance of guidance during play. It's essential to understand how to differentiate between encouraging and supporting without taking over the play. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky's educational theories are the foundation of the idea that learning is established. In early childhood education, this concept highlights the importance of play and exploration as essential components of successful learning. "Learning is embedded" refers to the notion that learning occurs naturally within the context of everyday events and relationships rather than being restricted to formal educational settings. It emphasises how children learn new things through play and social interactions. This approach recognises that learning is more than just memorising facts or obeying directions; it's also about incorporating new information into a child's current knowledge and experiences. (Hargraves,2021)

According to Piaget, children actively construct their knowledge through interactions with their environment, and learning occurs when they work through problems and engage in novel experiences. His studies highlight the importance of developmental milestones and the ways in which children's thinking evolves throughout time. Jean Piaget believed that play was essential to cognitive development. He asserts that play helps children explore their environment, test theories, and develop their problem-solving skills. Children can practise symbolic thinking through play, which is crucial for their cognitive development. Piaget asserts that play gives children the chance to express how they perceive the world and learn new abilities in a safe and imaginative environment. They are able to analyse their experiences and produce knowledge through this process. There are several important ways that play promotes cognitive development, including

Through play, children gain knowledge about their environment, which helps them understand how things work. They explore with different materials and circumstances in order to practise problem-solving strategies. Play frequently involves role-playing and object representation. The development of language and abstract reasoning depends on this kind of symbolic play. Through play with their peers, children can develop social skills including empathy, cooperation, and negotiating. Children' cognitive abilities are enhanced by these interactions as they learn to appreciate a variety of perspectives. Through play, children can learn how to manage their emotions and express them in a safe setting. This emotional understanding is linked to cognitive processes. Ultimately, play is critical to cognitive development.

The process of watching, listening to, and recording the interactions and behaviours of the children is known as observation in childcare. It helps teachers understand how children develop and is crucial when working with children. Observation is one of the most straight forward yet effective methods for assessing the development of young children. Rather than the object that the child utilised, the primary focus of attention is how they got there. Observation is a really easy technique. When an early childhood educator observes a child, they begin by noting how the child behaves, learns, reacts to new situations, and interacts with others. Following the collection of this data, an educator creates skill-development tasks, documents the mastery of those skills, and then reflects and assesses. (Spreeuwenberg, 2022)

Anecdotal records are often thought to be the main source of childcare observation. This method is used to write short stories on certain child behaviours or incidents. It allows carers to document important events and offer context for understanding a child's development and relationships. This type of observation is helpful since it focusses on real-life situations and can highlight a child's skills, interests, and possible growth areas. (Bates, Madison and Hoover, 2024)

In-depth insights are one of the main benefits of anecdotal records; this type of observation can provide specific examples of a child's behaviour in a certain situation, which helps carers better comprehend each child's individual development. Because anecdotal recordings are easy to make and require no training, they can be used by any carer. It is a very flexible method that may be used for many purposes and in many situations, such as organising activities and assessing developmental milestones. By enabling teachers to adapt their teaching methods to the unique needs of each student by recording memorable moments, it also promotes customised learning. All things considered, anecdotal records are a helpful tool for tracking and supporting children's learning and development.

Detailed insights that give carers a better grasp of each child's development by placing specific examples of a child's behaviour in context are one of the main benefits of anecdotal recordings. Because anecdotal recordings are easy to make and require no training, they can be used by any carer. Moreover, Planning activities and assessing developmental milestones are only two of the many settings and goals for which they can be used. By retaining special moments, they help tailor

teaching tactics to each child's requirements. This method works particularly well for recording a child's progress throughout time, allowing for reflection and developmental evaluation. All things considered, anecdotal records are a helpful tool for tracking and supporting children's learning and development. (Prevost, 2024)

Subjectivity is one of the disadvantages of anecdotal records, which might be affected by the observer's personal biases or interpretations and jeopardise the accuracy of the observations. It may take some time to write comprehensive records, especially if multiple observations are needed to fully capture a child's behaviour. This is a disadvantage of this strategy. If different witnesses record the same event in different ways, the data collected may vary. In the absence of numerical data, anecdotal recordings may make it challenging to track progress or compare behaviours across time. Although they are helpful for understanding particular behaviours, it is essential to integrate them with other observation techniques for a more comprehensive assessment. (Lornina, 2021)

Because anecdotal recordings focus on specific incidents, they might not provide a comprehensive picture of a child's overall behaviour or development. Anecdotal recordings typically don't provide a complete picture of a child's growth. Because they focus on specific events or behaviours, they could miss the bigger picture of a child's overall growth and development. To get a more complete picture, it's useful to combine anecdotal records with other observation methods, such as developmental assessments or checklists, which can document a wider range of skills and behaviours. (Sandor and Miklósi, 2020)

The goal of creating observations of young children using the anecdotal recording approach is to record particular behaviours or situations that are noticed. In this situation, play plays a very important role. When childcare workers watch children play, they can get real-life insights on their social skills, problem-solving abilities, and emotional reactions. This will result in more accurate recordings. Childcare providers can document instances of cooperation, conflict resolution, and communication skills by closely monitoring a child's interactions with other adults, caretakers, and other children. Play is crucial to learning because it allows children to experiment, test their limits, and learn new skills. By documenting these moments while watching, you can learn a lot about a child's development and interests. When observing, educators or childcare providers can better reflect on their observations and think through how to

support each child's needs by using the anecdotal recording method. This allows educators to plan ahead and customise learning experiences based on the knowledge they gain from play.(Mcfarland, 2008) Additionally, it facilitates the identification of recurring patterns in behaviour and development, which can be helpful in organising subsequent activities. Play is essential for obtaining insightful anecdotal evidence because children who are playing provide more accurate observations. In a fun and secure setting, children are more likely to show off their genuine personalities, abilities, and social connections. Children's interactions and observations can be observed in a rich environment thanks to these recordings. In the end, this approach improves the learning process by guiding instructional strategies and fostering children's development. Because children are frequently demonstrating their developmental milestones—such as cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development—play also provides a more realistic picture of their entire growth. This is demonstrated by a number of studies, such as those by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky in child development, who emphasise that play is a fundamental component of learning and that children learn best when they actively engage and explore. Since parents witness personally how children express themselves, play is a crucial indicator of a child's developmental progress, according to both practical observation and educational methods. child care workers experience many development mile stones during play first hand, this then gives them greater judgement of where the individual is in their development journey. (Storli and Sandseter, 2019)

Adults can facilitate observations in a number of instructive and developmental ways, in addition to offering structured opportunities like creating activities and assigning particular tasks. Adults can also support observations by encouraging more in-depth thought and offering constructive feedback. By using any observation techniques, adults can significantly increase their quality and efficacy in a range of situations. (Foreman and hall, 2013) Teachers and adults can also refer to the Howard and McInnes publications to enhance their observations in educational contexts. Many of these articles discuss teaching and learning frameworks and strategies, which can provide teachers who wish to enhance their observational skills with useful information. These papers, which include techniques for gathering and evaluating observational data, can help educators and childcare providers make well-informed decisions regarding instructional strategies by offering new methods for evaluating children's engagement and comprehension and enabling them to observe learning

processes more effectively. (Papatheodorou ,2013) Researching these papers can overall enhance the quality and depth of observations across various disciplines by introducing new techniques, frameworks and considerations. Applying the knowledge gained from the Howard and McLnnes research will ultimately enhance children's learning and developmental outcomes and observing practices. (Bruce, Lewis and Mccall, 2015). In general, play is an essential component of child development and observations. Because it emphasises a child's natural behaviours and interactions in a relaxed setting, Play offers an accurate observation of a child's growth. Children demonstrate a wide range of capabilities, and this real-world setting gives adults and educators important insights into a child's strengths and challenges. giving observations greater significance and relevance to their development.

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