

Contemporary Discourses in Professional Practice

Critically explore the role of creative approaches in professional practice and how these can impact on health and well-being of children and young people.

Slide* intro

Slide 1- What is Creativity?

- The term creativity has been difficult to define. Although there is no unanimous definition for creativity, it is still readily recognised in the field of education (Amabile, 1996).
- Creativity can involve the making of something new, discovering new ideas, the use of imagination, solving old issues with innovative skills and eliciting surprises which bring pleasure and joy (Pugliese, 2010).
- The Oxford dictionary defined creativity as 'the ability to produce or use original and unusual ideas' (Oxford Dictionary, no date, para 1). However, I feel that this definition lacks a little creativity itself. I prefer 'Building universes out of nothing' (Farnworth, 2016).

Slide 2- How is creativity relevant to health and well-being?

- Childhood is a unique period of time, which is often overlooked by an achievement orientated society. There is an intense focus placed on children to meet targets and pass exams as an introduction to formal education, which in turn causes significant stress and can impact their emotional well-being (Crain, 2003).
- However, a recent study suggests that the daily use of creative approaches by children and young people has the potential to have positive affects on enjoyment of life and happiness. The children and young people involved in the study also noted that being in a creative environment allows them to have greater enthusiasm and interest, and less feelings of loneliness (Conner, DeYoung and Silvia, 2017).
- Similarly, there is said to be a strong relationship between creativity and the overall feeling of being well. Links have been made between the psychological aspects of personality and creativity, as traits which are considered creative such as humour, playfulness, honesty and flexibility are also common in that of 'healthy personality'. It is believed that in order to gain a good sense of well-being, children should be encouraged to live creatively (Cropley, 1990).

Slide 3- Positive play support programme

So how can creativity be incorporated in mainstream education?

- The Derbyshire Positive Play Support Programme is a unique form of early intervention which was developed in order to improve well-being, as well as self-esteem.

- The programme started out as a flagship service in Derbyshire, and now over 20 years later can be seen in schools all over the UK
- It runs as a 1:1 session which take place in creative, sensory environments through the use of play.
- Sessions are able to be individually planned to meet the needs of the child or young person. Sessions can involve drawing, painting, singing, building, problem solving, sand play, lego play, etc
- The programme is suitable for children and young people of ages 3 to 21 (S4S, 2019).

Slide 4- Who's it for?

- The positive play support programme is useful for working with children who are shy or timid, disaffected and challenging pupils.
- Children with anger management and attachment issues are also well suited for the programme.
- As well as children who are struggling with changes in their lives, such as parental separation, bereavement, issues at home/school.

Slide 5- Main aims of the positive play support programme

- Offer children and young people a place to express their emotions and communicate their feelings using a range of different outlets.
- Encourage and help children and young people to boost self-esteem and feel good about themselves by offering opportunity to take part in activities which they enjoy and are good at, and by valuing and showing praise and appreciation for what they do.
- Offer a non-authoritarian supportive and safe relationship with the child or young person in their school environment.
- Give the child or young person the opportunity to gain experiences which are essential for education and socialising, which they might have missed if not offered. Such as resilience.
- Help the child or young person to obtain the variety of skills and attributes necessary to reach their potential.

Slide 6- Underpinning theories

- The positive play support programme is based upon theories of creative and sensory play.
- Through play children are able to develop a range of skills including discovering aspects of their social and physical environments, as well as developing competency and belief in themselves. It is believed that the things children are required to learn during their early years cannot be taught, but can be discovered through play (Wilson, 2008).

- It was the belief of Vygotsky that creativity is deep rooted in children's play, and the process of creating and imagination is intertwined with lived and imagined experiences. This has allowed children to transform experiences and view the world around them from a range of perspectives, for this reason creative play is said to be invaluable to children (Lindqvist, 2011).
- Similarly, Piaget believed that developmental stage theory, or play, offered opportunity to improve cognitive development with the use of environmental stimuli and experiences- otherwise known as sensory play. Not only this, but sensory play has also been said to enhance skills in a range of aspects of development, such as language development, enhancing self-esteem, social skills as well as physical development (Burgemeester, 2019).
- Many theorists over the years have expressed their beliefs on the importance of play, including John Comenius, Johann Pestalozzi, Froebel and Maria Montessori. All recognise the benefits that are presented throughout the use of play whilst learning about themselves and their environment (Gascoyne, 2016)

Slide 7- Our magic room

- The Positive Play support programme recommends offering a multi- sensory room in which children are able to play. There are themes which you are able to use which are magic room, rainbow room, enchanted forest, etc..
- In our school, this is what the magic room looks like.

Slide 8- Activity

- Give choices
- Strengths and valuing them
- Support
- Building trust
- Non authoritarian figure

Slide 9- Benefits and impacts

- Play has been viewed as an enjoyable feature of children's lives which offers opportunity to benefit developmentally, as well as initiating positive relationships between families and improving health and well-being.
- There is research to suggest that children are able to develop holistically through creative and imaginative play, with these developments aiding throughout life (Brown and Patte, 2013).
- Creative play gives children tools for exploration, and allows them to take control of their own experiences which helps to build self-awareness as well as self-esteem (Marano, 2008).

- Children are able to acquire skills to solve problems which gives them confidence and improves resilience, therefore helping equip them for future challenges (Thomas and Thompson, 2004).
- Studies suggest that play is essential for developing fine and gross motor skills in young children or children who have not necessarily met physical milestones (Gleave and Hamilton, 2012).
- It is suggested that sensory play opens the door for engagement in new experiences as well as people, by showing children that they can try new things which helps to build confidence and also builds empathy by understanding others (Nekitsing *et al*, 2019).
- Sensory play also has calming affects, which allows children to build trusting relationships with more ease (Nelincs, 2018).
- Research suggests that the type of play associated the positive play support programme is vital to emotional health and well-being as it allows children experiment with their own emotions and release these feelings, especially in the case of children who have experienced trauma (Emerson, 2017).
- Play allows children to work on their own self-control, and understand how to cooperate with others by taking turns (Glover, 1999).
- By having a safe space to release steam, shout, reflect and confide in others children feel a sense of inclusion which helps with confidence, aswell as releasing built up frustration (Thomas and Thompson, 2004).
- There is no right or wrong way to play, therefore the child or young person is in control of the outcome, and there is no pressure placed on them. Which allows them to simply have fun, and enjoy themselves which may be a welcome break from chaotic lives (Biddle *et al*, 2014).

Slide 10- Criticisms

- Through research, I have discovered that there are significantly more known benefits to health and well-being of positive play, however there are some criticisms.
- For example, this approach is often problem orientated as children are invited to take part as a result of a referral from staff or people who work closely with them. This approach is based on the belief that the child has the ability to solve their problems, they just need the tools to help them along the way (Sweeney and Landreth, 2011). However, some of these children may have deeper rooted issues, or multiple problems which can be difficult to resolve from purely play sessions.
- Considering this, it is also important to mention that although the positive play support staff are fully trained in the programme, they are not psychologists or therapists and therefore may not be fully equipped to understand the severity of these deep rooted issues (MacCormack, 2017).

Slide 11- Expected outcomes

- The university of Sheffield Hallam produced two evaluations of the positive play support programme and found that there is evidence which directly links the participation of the positive play support programme to children's positive behaviour changes.
- As well as this, a report by Ofsted found that the programme was significantly beneficial as an early intervention strategy, which is able to reduce disaffection as well as encompassing an inclusive education.

Slide 12- Conclusion

- In conclusion, this presentation has aimed to give the audience an insight into the Positive Play Support Programme as a creative approach to improve health and well-being of children and young people.
- The approach was discussed along with its aims, who its for and the underpinning theories from which it is based. As well as this, an example of how this approach can be set out was given.
- Importantly, the benefits and impacts were listed in detail, and although there were few criticisms of the programme, they were noted.
- Lastly, the expected outcomes of the programme were taken into consideration.

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