

Children's play: principles and practice.

Section one:

Play is so important for children because they learn so much from it whilst they are playing, they are learning new skills throughout and having fun at the same time which is important for young children. As they are at such a young age you do not want the work to be hard for them otherwise, they will not understand; they would get bored when you want them to enjoy, have fun, learn new things, and understand. Play also lets the children use their own creativity and imagination. When children are at this age, they have an amazing imagination which they are allowed and encouraged to use. At a young age play is the best way for the children to learn because the children are interacting with everything and everyone around them. The children are using their own knowledge and developing their own understanding of what to do with the equipment around them. You also learn a lot about the child whilst they are playing: the adult would learn how they think and can assess what they enjoy doing. The role of the teacher is important as they need to make sure the children are having fun, being safe and careful at the same time as well as making sure that the children are learning and enjoying.

The role of self-directed play allows the children to experience independence. As a child, being independent can be an important key factor to growing up. An example of self-directed play could be if there is no adult there and the child is playing with some toys then they are teaching themselves what the toy can and cannot do which is a good role of self-directed play. By children using self-directed play there are many benefits for the child and the child can build up more self-confidence. It also encourages the children to have more independence for themselves and they learn about themselves: what they can do, what they must work at, what they like and don't like. Children have such amazing imaginations, and they use their imagination whilst they are at play. For example, if there are building blocks in front of a child, the child could use the blocks to build something, or, if drawing, they would use their imagination and produce a picture of something. By letting children use their independence and play you are allowing them to learn new things, whilst you learn about them. Allowing your child to use play also contributes to the child's holistic wellness which is important.

According to 'Family Lives' (No date found) *'Play is one of the main ways in which children learn and develop. This helps the children to build self-worth by allowing the child to learn their sense of their own abilities. This makes the children feel good about themselves. Play is especially important to a child's development. This is a part of the child's Early Years Foundation. Play helps to nurture imagination and give the child a sense of adventure.'*

Active play allows the children to interact with others (children or adults) which means they learn more as they are learning how the other people are thinking too. The children could be playing as a group and one child could be doing something differently, the children would notice to observe other people. When

children are in school, they would see how other children think and how other children behave, the children would pick up different skills of the other children. Children are always learning something new.

Adults can help support play by engaging with the children whilst they are playing and encourage them. For example, if a child is playing with some toys the adult could go over and join in and show the child some other toys or show them different things that the same toy can do or be used for. The adult should always be encouraging to the child playing, unless the adult can see the child in danger. If the adult could see a bad potential danger, then the adult should go over and help/stop the child but should also explain why. By the adults joining in and engaging with the child the child will therefore learn that the adults respect what they are doing. Adults should always let children enjoy play and encourage the children unless they can see the child in potential danger.

According to 'American Academy of Pediatrics' (2021). Play is essential to development because it contributes to their growing. Their physical, social, and emotional well-being of the child. Play offers an ideal opportunity for the parents, time for free play has been markedly reduced for some children.

Section two:

Risk is beneficial for children as they are experiencing the real world without someone telling them to be careful (although they are in a safe environment with an adult there to intervene if necessary). They are learning for themselves: what they can and cannot do without hurting themselves. If the adult can see that it is going to end up with the child getting hurt, then the adult should interfere and stop, but explain why. Although for example, if the child is just playing in the playground on the swing and falls off there is nothing the adult can do to prevent that (there will be other similar situations). Risk taking with children enhances emotional health. Risk taking helps children gain confidence, when they fail with something they try again and will eventually succeed and therefore learn a new skill. The child would then learn to be more careful. The child would be developing strength within themselves and body confidence. Children always tend to fall over, for example, when there is nothing an adult can do to prevent that from happening, whereas if a little child is trying to ride a bike without any safety an adult should interfere and stop the child because there would be a much bigger chance of that ending badly. Taking risks in life is important, but when you are a child you are constantly learning new things. Children learn self-regulation. This is when they learn about what is safe and what is no: although they are only young, they learn a lot. For example, if a child wanted to climb a tree, they would think about how high they can get before thinking about whether it's dangerous or scary. Allowing children to take risks allows the children to be in control of their own actions where they learn where the boundaries are and where they learn what is safe and what is not safe.

To be able to balance the child from having fun and stop them from getting hurt an adult should be watching and perhaps make rules. For example, in school the teacher always makes rules for the children to follow which is in the best interest of the children to prevent them from getting hurt. To keep them having fun they need to be playing and ideally, they would be laughing and smiling. A child is very easily pleased, for example, you could give a child a paint brush and they would be having fun and using their imagination whilst learning all at the same time. To keep the child safe the adult would just have to keep a close eye on the child. It is difficult, however, if you are a teacher with a class full of 2-3-year olds to keep an eye on all of them at once, and it is possible that someone could fall, perhaps, or get hurt at some point. Unfortunately, sometimes there is nothing you can do to prevent someone from getting hurt but you can do as much as possible to reduce the risk by always having the right adult to child ratio and make sure that anything which could cause potential danger is out of the child's reach so they child doesn't have temptation to reach the object or try to play with it and end up getting hurt.

According to 'Catherine Holecko' (2020). When you stop your kids from risk-taking, you are taking a risk of your own with your child's health. Kids really grow and learn when they have the permission and opportunities, they need to take risks. To climb high, to wander independently, to use grown-up tools, to bike down a hill as fast as they can. While it is natural to want to keep your child safe from harm, the chance of

injuries may be worth it.

From what Catherine Holecko said I think most adults would agree. From children being able to do what they want, for example, as said above to wander independently if the child is two – three years old then the child could fall over. From the child falling over the child would learn from that. Whereas if a child is climbing something high which clearly is not safe it would be your instinct to tell them to get down, because the outcome of falling from a high height compared to falling over on the ground is a big difference.

Section three:

The Foundation Phase was introduced to provide children with the best environment for development. The Foundation Phase was introduced by the Welsh Government. It was introduced because research has shown people that children do not benefit more from formal teaching until they are around six or seven years of age. Therefore, this being brought into place would benefit the younger children to learn in a more informal, yet more successful way. The Foundation Phase was introduced in 2010. Although this was introduced in 2010 it was not until 2012 that the Foundation Phase replaced Key stage 1.

The Foundation Phase encourages children to be more creative and helps them learn and makes it more enjoyable for the children. The age for early years foundation stage is between three years old and five years old.

According to 'The Foundation Phase Profile Handbook' (No date found). The Foundation Phase Profile has been developed as a summative assessment tool using observations and formative assessments to build up a holistic picture of children's development and abilities in key areas. Observation plays a key role in the everyday practice in the Foundation Phase.'

An important part of the Foundation Phase is in school. They learn a lot when they begin school: they meet other children the same age as them and learn from what other children are doing. The children also get taught the basic things you get taught in school. For example, the alphabet and counting. There are seven main parts to the foundation phase:

1. Personal and Social Development,
2. Language,
3. Mathematics,
4. Welsh Language Development,
5. Knowledge and understanding of the world,
6. Physical development, and
7. Creative development.

These seven specific topics are important for the children to understand and develop some of the basics of education, by learning about some important topics whilst having fun.

During the Foundation Phase the children get to experience the outdoors and the indoors: they get to play inside and outdoors as well. Some children are very adventurous and love to play outside running around, climbing trees, whereas some children prefer to play indoors with Lego or painting. Some children do not have access to these things in their home lives. During the Foundation Phase throughout school, you get to do both. When you are a child you would learn what you enjoy. Enjoying as a child is important because they are learning through play. This gives the child every opportunity to be at the centre of their own learning.

According to 'The Foundation Phase Handbook' (No date found). Foundation Phase outcomes have been developed for summative assessment of learning at baseline and at the end of the Foundation Phase. They describe the type and range

of attainment that children working at a particular outcome should characteristically demonstrate.

When children are at a young age they learn and develop holistically. This means that many areas develop at the same time. There are five different parts to holistic development. The five skills of holistic development which are essential and help the children develop different skills are:

1. Cognitive,
2. Creative,
3. Physical,
4. Social and
5. Emotional.

The meaning of cognitive is when someone *is involving conscious intellectual activity*. The meaning of creative is *relating to or involving the use of imagination or original ideas to create something*. The meaning of physical is *relating to the body as opposed to the mind*. The meaning of social is *relating to society or its organisation*. The meaning of emotional is *relating to a person's emotion, arousing or characterized by intense feeling or also having feelings that are easily excited and openly displayed*.

Section four:

It is important, and necessary, for an adult to observe a child during play. Whilst the child is playing, exploring, and learning, the adult can determine if the child is playing differently to others. This may show itself as a child having physical difficulties doing some things, for example they may have difficulties co-ordinating. There are many other examples: a child may find it difficult to interact and play with others and prefer to play along. It is sometimes easier to identify a child's particular needs when they forget they are being watched, in a less formal setting. If the child has difficulties the adult could pick up on it quicker and if the child needs some extra help the adult can provide the correct help for that child. Observing the child is important as you will learn new things about the child, with every new situation, and if the child does need other help you would be doing it in the best interest of the child. The identification and providing of extra help would all be aimed at helping the child to learn and develop new skills.

According to Churchill Park Blog (2018). *Observations are the key to good program planning. Observations help adults understand the strengths and needs of each child. Early Childhood Educators observe children to get to know them better and get a sense of their knowledge, needs, interests, skills and how they learn best. This information helps us know how to approach learning opportunities and what we as Educators need to do to shift or add to our planning to further support each child's learning and development.*

I think when you are observing a child during their play it gives you a more accurate reflection of where the child is during its development. All children grow and learn at a different pace. By observing a child during play you would pick up on what the child is good at and what the child is not so good at without them realising they are being assessed. For example, if you had twins, and they are both playing at the same time and one child can understand something more than the other child in everything they do you would realise that one child may need extra help and attention compared to the other child. Therefore, you would help the other child learn new skills so the child would be able to play like the other child. You would have realised that one child is developing quicker than the other child and you would know this because one child can do a few things that the other child perhaps struggles with.

Adults can support this by observing the child and noticing that perhaps some children are developing slower than others. Therefore, the adult can support this by giving extra help and extra attention to the children which are perhaps struggling more than others. By adults being involved with the children during play it is automatically showing the child that the adult is supporting the child by engaging with the children, talking to children and encouraging them. If you are a parent, you could show you are supporting them by also joining in, perhaps by doing activities together for example, teaching the child how to ride a bike.

In conclusion I think the Foundation Phase Profile does give a holistic learning towards the children. The Foundation Phase provides the children with opportunities which allows the children to develop their own knowledge. This allows the children to learn what is right and what is wrong.

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