

I have used AI in this assignment to understand the structure.

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**Section 1 – Evidence of a clear understanding of the importance of a variety of play types. The significance of holistic play should also be considered.**

**Importance of Different Types of Play**

Play helps children develop learning, social skills, emotional well-being, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and self-regulation (Uwtsd.ac.uk, 2024). Various play types contribute to children's overall development. For example, free play encourages imagination and independence, constructive play promotes problem-solving and aligns with the Reggio Emilia approach, play-like activities are structured by adults to support educational goals, and social play enhances interaction, empathy, and creativity (Uwtsd.ac.uk, 2025).

**Constructive Play**

Constructive play involves children using materials and objects to enhance their imagination, such as building structures with blocks or engaging in role-play (Loizou and Manto Olymbiou, 2023). It enables children to plan, collaborate with adults, and solve problems. Adults can support this type of play by offering verbal guidance, providing open-ended materials, and participating in play to strengthen the child's experience.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes the role of adults in supporting children's learning (Walker, 2015). While scaffolding problem-solving is beneficial, giving children the space to explore independently builds their confidence, critical thinking, and decision-making skills (Tunnicliffe, n.d.).

**Supporting Constructive Play in Practice**

Adults play an essential role in encouraging constructive play by observing and guiding when necessary (Park, 2019). Providing open-ended materials, such as unit blocks, stimulates creativity and problem-solving. Focusing on the play process rather than the outcome fosters both social and cognitive development.

## **Constructive Play and Holistic Development**

Constructive play supports children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. It nurtures creativity, emotional regulation and social interaction skills (Zosh, Hassinger-Das, and Laurie, 2022). The Reggio Emilia approach highlights child-led play, using familiar materials to enhance literacy, language, and engagement with the environment (Uwtsd.ac.uk, 2025). This approach encourages exploration, self-expression and a deeper understanding of surroundings (Senent, Kelley, and Abo-Zena, 2021). By focusing on child-led experiences in a safe, enriching environment, Reggio Emilia aligns with constructive play principles. According to (Proquest.com, 2025).

## **Stages of Play**

Mildred Parten's six stages of play outline the progression of children's social development. Solitary play occurs at age two, where children engage in play alone. Parallel play follows, where children play alongside others without direct interaction. By age three to four, associative play emerges, involving shared activities and interaction. From age four onwards, cooperative play develops, promoting social engagement, problem-solving and creativity skills. This is according to (Thomas, 2023).

## **Messy play**

Messy play is a stimulating and open-ended activity for children. The activity will have sand, mud, water, paint and materials provided for the children. The meaning of messy play is for children to have the experiences and not for creating something specific or for the result. By allowing the child to have messy play it will allow them to explore different textures, experiment with different objects and use their imagination and being creative. Overall messy play is not just an activity where the child will create mess, it encourages problem-solving and deep thinking as this is shown by (Rice, 2018)

### **Messy play linking to holistic development**

Messy play is shown by Gascoyne (2016) and Rice (2018), messy play supports cognitive development by inspiring their creativity and encouraging to use their ideas through using a range of materials. It will encourage physical skills such as gross and fine motor skills by encouraging a range of actions such as pouring, gipping and squeezing. It will improve gross motor skills by providing activities which will include running, climbing and balancing. All children will build their confidence through messy play by having the freedom to explore and make decisions in a safe environment. Finally, messy play will encourage social skills by sharing, communication and taking turns with other children.

### **Benefits of messy play**

When children explore, understand and use different materials it will improve their imagination and creativity play. For example, activities such as using paint to create different pictures, making mud pies or castles and using coloured chalks can promote different ideas and using their imagination. Messy play can improve maths skills when the child is pouring or measuring different ingredients in an activity. Lastly, sensory development can be supported by allowing the child to smell, touch, hear and see a range of different substances and textures in the activities. Overall, messy play activities will improve and enhance a deeper understanding of the environment around the child as this is shown by Park and Tayler (n.d.)

### **Jean Piaget linked to messy play**

Jean Piaget believed that children would improve their learning through interacting and exploring with the environment. By having hands- on experiences the child will deepen their understanding by adapting new information. Messy play activities can be linked to Piaget theories as it allows the child to engage and explore with different materials and this will encourage problem solving and academic progression as this is shown by (Blake and Pope, 2008) However, according to Kent, C. (2020) shows that Vygotsky disagrees with Piaget theory. Piaget believes that children will learn through independent play whereas as Vygotsky believed it is important for social interaction and direction from others to improve all children's learning.

## **Section 2- Evidence of a clear understanding of why it is important for children to choose their own play and the importance of the role of the adult in children's play.**

### **What is self-directed play?**

According to (Uwtsd.ac.uk, 2025) the meaning of self-directed play is when a child can choose their own activities and overall take control without any practitioner or adult interference. Self-directed play will allow the child to choose the activities they are more drawn too, what toys or objects to play with, the extended time to play and how they would like to play with the objects. The activities the child may engage with are block building, story time, messy play, role play or even outdoor activities. In contrast of structure play where the practitioners or adults will help and provide the child with instructions on how to play with the objects or even step in when the child is using the object incorrectly.

### **Why is self-play important?**

By allowing the child to have self-directed play, it will help the child to explore their interests, and the child can use different ideas as self-directed play encourages problem-solving, freedom, creativity and independence.

In this article (Dean, 2021) it shows that self-directed play can be linked in self-directed singing as this will help the children to structure and process their day to day experiences, express themselves, show their emotions and manage their emotions. This article expresses that the child may sing to themselves during moments throughout the day if they are idle. For example, at dinner times and periods where the child is waiting, by using their voice the child can be entertained.

The caregivers can use infant-directed singing for the child such as songs to go to sleep too and to help the children build social skills and learn communication patterns (Welch and Preti, 2018).

### **How can adults support self-directed play?**

According to (Uwtsd.ac.uk, 2025) Adults should foster self-directed play towards all children by creating a stimulating and safe environment that will contain a range of different resources for the children to have access too. Children require an

environment that promotes exploration and creativity; to achieve this the adults can provide different materials and resources to develop the children's self-government.

Adults should not directly intervene with the child's play, but they can provide help and guidance for the child when they are unsure as this enables the children to lead their own play. The adult should observe and consistently provide support to the child as this will foster the child's autonomy and independence by giving the children the freedom to make their own choices. Simultaneously, the adult should provide support when necessary to ensure the child feels supported and encouraged.

Problem- solving and critical thinking should be provided by the adult by asking different questions which are open-ended to allow the child to solve problems and think critically throughout their play. By having these important factors, it will improve the child's cognitive development and overall fosters independence.

By valuing children's choices and opinions throughout play, adults convey confidence and trust in their own judgment which stimulates and inspires to initiative and lead in their play.

Adults should ensure all children have sufficient time to fully engaged in their self-directed play without feeling rushed and pressured. Overall, this factor will support and foster self-directed play.

In this article (Proquest.com, 2025) there are key factors for the adults to support self-directed play with all children such as providing a range of opportunities, encourage children to take the lead in their play, the adult to have a balanced supervision, providing a safe and play- friendly environment and lastly supporting social interactions.

Adults can provide independent play for the children by allowing them to have the opportunities to explore in a flexible and unstructured environment. Playdates for the children are useful as it allows the child to use their imagination and ideas freely with the children around them. When children have the freedom to play independently, they can develop their emotional and social skills. However, if the adult is observing and watching too closely it can affect and restrict these opportunities.

To support self-directed play adults should allow the child to take control on the activities they would like to participate in. By giving the children freedom of choice,

they will continue to develop their problem-solving, independence and improve their overall confidence. Adult led play can impact the child's potential to explore and expand their play scenarios.

The adult must supervise the children as it is important for their safety and security, excessive monitoring and supervision for the children may impact the child's ability to manage their social connections. By the adult providing open attention it will actively promote independent play. It will enable all children to collaborate with peers, navigate social challenges, explore and engage in creative play independently.

By encouraging peer engagement, the child should have the opportunities to interact with the peers as it will help them to develop their social skills and create a special bond to encourage the child to express their feelings and emotions.

The adults should create an enriching and safe environment for play with open-ended materials as this will allow the child to explore and be creative.

### **Section 3 – In depth discussion and understanding of an observation method for young children. Choose from the following observation types**

#### **What are observations and why are they important?**

Observation in early years is an act of recording, watching and supervising a child on how they behave and learn in different scenarios. According to Smidt (2015) suggests that observations are important for the child and the adult because it will help the adult to understand the child's unique needs, identify their challenges and interests. By having this process in place, it will help the practitioner and adults to plan lessons and activities that are personalized and welcoming to make child feel valued. Adults should provide different observations for the child to track their progress and to identify if the child needs any extra support.

#### **Leuven scale Individual Child Observations and why it is important**

The Leuven scale is a type of observation where it can be used to assess and observe a child on their feelings and how the child participates throughout different activities. This type of observation directly focuses on well-being and involvement. Leuven scale examines on how happy, secure and safe the child feels. This observation identifies how involved, engaged and focused the child is with the task they have chosen to participate in.

Leuven scale observation operates and uses a five-points system where the higher score will identify improved and enhanced well-being. This type of observation will guide the adults to understand more clearly on the child's engagement and emotions, enabling the adult to adapt and adjust their approach and methods to more effectively meet the child's wants and needs. By the child having a low score on the observation it may cause the adults to assume the child is struggling in tasks, promoting unnecessary measures. Slow-motion film can be used in the observation to help the adult observe the children more closely. Although the scale encourages and fosters reflection from the adult, it is important that adults continue to be involved and engaged throughout the process and not to distance themselves from the child (MacRae and Jones, 2025).

### **Benefits of Leuven scale observation**

Leuven Scale method is used to help and recognize how interacted and engaged the children are into their learning. According to Wainwright et al. (2019) it shows there are several benefits of using Leuven Scale. One of these benefits is the impact of child-led activities where the child has the freedom to choose their own activities and toys that they would like to participate in. By the child having the freedom of choice it fosters motivation resulting in deeper learning.

Another positive aspect is the adults can support the child's overall learning by guiding the child rather than directing them, encouraging problem-solving and providing open and closed questions, as this will overall help the child to sustain their engagement in the activity.

Lastly Leuven Scale can provide numerical scores and written observations on the overall individual child's behaviour throughout their activities they have chosen. By having this combination, it will provide a clear understanding of the child's engagement and their interests throughout their learning.

### **The Limitations of Leuven scale observation**

According to Baxter et al. (2024) it shows several limitations on Leuven scale observation, such as cultural differences, subjectivity of the ratings and limited tracking over a period.

The Leuven scale may not be adequate in different countries as this observation was intended for use in western countries settings. Children may show and express their well-being and engagement in different ways that the scale may not be able to fully reflect and capture if the individual child has cultural backgrounds.

Using the Leuven scale observation method may impact the accuracy of the ratings for the child's engagement, as multiple adults with differing perspectives and opinions may assess and watch the child, which can overall lead to inconsistencies in the results.

Limited long-term tracking refers to watching and observing the child interaction and engagement in different activities over a short period. This limitation can affect the

adult's ability to fully understand and monitor the individual child's interests, involvement in activities and behaviour over a period.

### **Does Leuven scale provide a holistic view of the child?**

MacRae and Jones (2020) suggests the Leuven scale observation does not provide an overall holistic view of the children skills and development. The observation mainly focuses and directs on how involved and interacted the children are in an activity. This method is used as an indicator to measure the child's quality of learning. However, this individual focus may cause neglect of further essential aspects of the child's development including social interactions, emotional well-being and physical development such as fine and gross motor skills.

### **Welsh government curriculum**

The Welsh government supports and helps children through the several frameworks. The foundation phase curriculum incorporates all observations as a daily practice for the children. This ensures and provides practitioners and adults to observe the child's development, plan and create different activities and overall to understand, identify and support who may need additional help, including children with special educational needs (SEN). The SEN code of practice for Wales will provide adults with the guidance and recommended resources to progress the learning and development of children in their care. (Welsh Government, 2023)

**Section 4 – Demonstrate an understanding of the role of play when undertaking observations and assessments of children and consider how this affects the child's engagement and the accuracy of the observation.**

**When observing and assessing children why is play important?**

According to Moyles (2005) children can explore, recognize and acknowledge the world around them through natural play. By having play the child will extend on new skills, developing capabilities, formulate their thoughts and ideas, problem-solving and lastly socialize and interact with others around them. Through play the adult can develop and discover a deeper understanding of the child's knowledge, what they are interested in and explore their skills. Play allows adults to scaffold and enhance children's skills and development. In this article is emphasises that play may make the child feel encouraged and empowered to engage in new activities and explore different possibilities and to feel comfortable in the environment. Overall, it can create a stress-free environment for the children.

Smidt, S. (2015) agrees with Moyles (2005) as it discusses when the adults observe the children throughout their play it will provide knowledge of what the child is interested in, their abilities and their overall stages of their development. For example, child's creative play can show and demonstrate their cognitive abilities, problem-solving and their social interactions.

The article above shows that Vygotsky highlights observing the children during play provides insights and undercovers the children's abilities and developmental progress and stages. Through play, all children use social and communication interactions with others as this is an important way for the child to develop further with having the correct support from knowledgeable adults. Furthermore, Bodrova and Leong (2015) shows that Vygotsky theory highlights and provides important and valuable aspects of the child's cognitive, social and emotional development. For the child to develop and grow their symbolic thinking, self-control, progress and development within the (ZPD).

**How can adults support observing a child?**

Bruce, Louis, and McCall (2015) highlights observations are put into place as it allows and provides the adults and practitioners to understand the child's emotions, interests and their learning progress without the adult interfering too soon into their play. Adults observe the child's play by watching, listening and understanding the individual's wants and needs. Through attentive and purposeful observation, the adult will understand how the child makes their decisions and interacts with others throughout play. Observations will help the adults to understand the child and to provide the individual with the correct support. However, Smidt, S. (2015) shows how adults can affect the child's play and learning development when an adult observes the child too closely. The child may act or behave differently knowing they are being watched; this is also known as a Hawthorne effect. For example, when the child acknowledges they are being watched they may show certain behaviours or play more quietly as they may know this will please the adults. When the adult is present or observing the child, it can make the individual play and perform a certain way or making them feel self-conscious. Overall, the adult needs to be aware and mindful of how present they are in the child's play as it can affect the child's behaviour and the overall natural flow of play.

This article Howard, J. & McInnes, K. (2013) has shown that Howard and McInnes helps all children in watching, observing and understanding their play by focusing on how the child feels and describes their play activities and experiences. Howard and McInnes believe it is important to watch and listen to the child's views and understanding rather than using the adult's memories. By understanding children's view of their play, it can enhance and improve different play environments that will support the child's overall development.

**The importance of ethics when observing a child**

According to Carnevale et al. (2020) Ethics plays an important role in observing a child in play as it ensures the child's right, safety and dignity are respected throughout the child's observations. To ensure that the child's information is kept safe and private and they should have permission to be observed, the adults must respect and follow the rules for the rights of the child. It is also important for the adult to understand the child's family, background and culture. Overall, the adults

should treat the child correctly regardless of their culture, ability and gender as this will create trust with the children's families by asking questions and communicating to understand and support the child's learning needs.

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