

Part 1

Play enhances children and young people's physical, cognitive, emotional and social, well-being, claims NI Direct (2018). Children start to learn about the environment and about themselves via play. They also pick up social skills, independence, confidence, and self-esteem, all of which are necessary for relationships, job, and education.

According to (Monkey, 2020), creative play is a crucial component of children's development as it fosters their holistic growth. Young children can benefit from early creative play experiences as they build the framework for their problem-solving skills. Creative play improves children's intellectual development by fortifying their cognitive capacities and helping them to pay attention, take in information, and analyse why things work. In addition to being adventurous and physically demanding, creative play also helps young children develop their capacity to take chances, boost their confidence, and take better care of themselves by stimulating their neurological system. Children can be more imaginative, messy, and noisy during outdoor creative play than they could be able to do indoors, which helps them to develop a sense of freedom and mobility (Archer and Siraj, 2015). Children who engage in creative play can guide their own learning without the assistance of adults. Loose parts play is another kind of play that fosters creativity and opens countless options. According to Better Kid Care (Penn State Extension), (2024), it fosters children's imagination, creativity, and curiosity by letting them utilise every day, natural things to construct anything they choose. The study also looked at how affordances of loose pieces might foster the formation of schemas. According to Bruce (2011), children exhibit their intellect in play at the maximum degree to which they are capable. Creative play helps people think creatively and builds the emotional intelligence necessary to control their emotions. Deepening relationships and one's sense of self are aided by it. Vygotsky (1896–1934) subsequently repeated Froebel (1782–1852) in emphasising the need of creative play in early childhood education.

The idea of loose pieces by Nicholason (1971) is explained by Fraser Brown (2013), who claims that the quantity and kind of variables in an environment directly affects the degree of inventiveness and creativity as well as the likelihood of discovery. The idea behind holistic development is that children's learning and development should be seen as an integrated and interrelated whole, encompassing all their physical, cognitive, social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual domains. Practitioners should always consider how each area of learning and development relates to the others. As a result, educators should work to build on and consider the abilities that students already possess in each subject area. Hargraves (2019). Children's play and overall development can be enhanced by loose parts in an outdoor setting (Boulton, p., Thomas, A., 2022). Children and nature Network, (n.d.). states that the idea that young infants build their knowledge through cognitive frameworks called schemas is the basis of most early childhood pedagogy. Young children who repeatedly act and behave on materials and things in their surroundings form schemas. A case study performed by children and mature network (n.d.) showed the use of schemas by children to build knowledge in an outdoor learning setting was investigated.

According to Pathways (2019), there are six phases of play that a newborn and young child will go through as they explore the many stages that they encounter. Unoccupied play, which occurs between birth and three months of age, is the first stage of this process when a newborn starts to move and learns how their body works. Babies between 0 and 2 will also engage in solitary play, which is when they play by themselves and have little interest in interacting with other children. When a baby reaches two years old, they will start to watch and observe other children play without joining in or interfering. We refer to this as spectator behavior. A young child will start playing with another child in parallel once they are two years old, but not together. While they do associate play with other children and begin interacting with them during play, 3–4-year-olds do not exhibit much collaboration. Children start playing together and showing interest in each other's activities when they are four years old and older, which is referred to as cooperative play. Cooperative play is the most advanced play, according to Mildred Parten, as children are ready to study math's, reading, and English at this age. However, she adds that the most crucial thing is being able to acquire social skills like teamwork and cooperation (Gregory, 2024).

Part 2

How can adults support self-directed play

Montessori, (2023). discusses self-directed play, Dr. Maria Montessori is credited as saying that "play is the work of children." All areas of a child's learning and development are enhanced by play, but especially the cognitive and emotive domains. Instead, then directing or regulating a child's play, an adult should be present and involved in the play to support the child's play experiences. This is due to the fundamental tenet of play, which is that children should lead their own play. Play loses its importance and experience when adults get involved. Children are then prevented from freely exploring play. Giving children lots of chances to play will therefore enable them to become involved in the game, identify their interests, develop as individuals, try new things, and broaden their experiences. When it comes to self-directed plays, an adult's responsibilities include organising, assisting, and reviewing the play. It's crucial to keep in mind not to get involved and interrupt a child in play (staffadmin, 2020).

Ledendecker, (2020). Implies that During self-directed play, children cannot help but be creative. By allowing children to participate in self-directed play, practitioners are enabling them to use their creative muscles by providing them with these possibilities. As they play, they will discover possibilities no one else has thought of and create original plots. It teaches how to solve problems. Solving problems naturally flows from creating one's own rules. Children will have to learn how to make things function the way they desire. Children may learn at their own speed because of self-directed play. There is no time limit or academic requirement when engaging in self-directed play. Every day, children get the opportunity to expand their own knowledge in ways that make sense to them, it fosters motivation from inside. When children do not have adults defining what constitutes a successful activity, they will be forced to discover intrinsic delight in play. They will inherently tend to push themselves to attempt novel, creative concepts, and they will take pleasure in the process engaging in creative activities allows practitioners to

focus on each child individually, but it also helps practitioners to recognise and appreciate the diversity and individuality of each child (Ledendecker, 2020). (www.pbs.org, n.d.) talks about how self-expression is an essential component of all creative endeavors. When children are creative, they have a better emotional expression and management system. By seeing children's artistic endeavors, practitioners can get more insight into the thoughts and feelings of the child in question. In addition, creativity fosters children's mental growth by providing them with the opportunity to explore novel ideas, problem-solving techniques, and thought processes.

McInnes and Howard (2012). According to the report, a play-based strategy that prioritises the child's perspective is more beneficial. A child's perspective on play not only emphasises the observable act but also highlights the interior, emotive aspect of play that is crucial for both learning and fun. It is thought that playfulness is a mental attitude that describes how one approaches an activity. According to research on effective pedagogy in the early years (REPEY) project (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002), successful settings combine adult-led and child-led activities. Adults must interact and engage with children to expand their activities.

Part 3;

According to Stetson et al. (2009), observation is the process of learning about a specific child by seeing and listening to them. To understand each child's unique development and determine what and how each child is learning, practitioners observe and listen to children and families. On the other hand, observation is defined by Gronlund (2016) as closely observing every aspect of a child's development and paying attention to their behaviors, interactions, activities, and interests. Despite the differences between these two descriptions, they both emphasise how important it is to observe children with intention and learn about them.

In the early years of schooling, a variety of observational instruments can be employed, such as time samples, work samples, running records, and photos. Every instrument has advantages and disadvantages, but it's crucial to figure out what works best for each child and practitioner individually. Marketing, 2022. explains that observation, which promotes awareness of a child's growth, abilities, interests, strengths, and play, is a crucial teaching technique in early childhood education. For early childhood instructors, parents, and kids, observation in nursery is essential. Observations for individual children or small groups of children can be done as part of a continuous cycle of evaluation and planning. This helps practitioners understand the play, behavior, and learning styles of children and modify their methods as needed.

Technology is one of the new observation instruments that is gaining popularity. According to Peterson and Elam (2020), busy practitioners may gather observation evidence considerably more efficiently by incorporating technology into regular activities. Children's play, discovery, and learning experiences may be captured in real time through photos, videos, and audio recordings. Practitioners may relive significant moments in a child's day using this kind of documentation to identify interactions, play patterns, developmental milestones, challenges, and successes. By using this method, practitioners may record real conversations between children and their friends to monitor language development in those children. Practitioners may record both extraordinary and ordinary occurrences and watch how the children handle challenges.

According to A. Roller (2019), there are a few benefits of technology that allow both adults and children to enjoy seeing what their children have accomplished over the day. Children have the chance to see their work displayed and experience a sense of empowerment when their work is appreciated.

It will be more difficult to maintain objectivity and remember crucial information while recording behaviors or evaluating growth, according to Plymouth, (2023). Furthermore, it is harder to obtain reliable data with the passage of time. After employing technological instruments to observe children, writing up the observations might take a lot of time. The cost burden associated with equipment purchases is another disadvantage of technology. Using technology to film and take pictures of young children might potentially be disadvantageous due to concerns about confidentiality.