EAEE4004/C – Portfolio
2011069
Word count – 2917

Section 1

People say that play is difficult to describe as it does not get portrayed as one particular thing. Defining Play can be different by many individuals. Play Wales (2014), describes play being a spur-of-the-moment activity and being an active process where learners are able to think for themselves, touch where needed and also do what is necessary, which helps the learner to have a sense of freedom. Play Scotland (2021), portrays play being a universal language boundary for early upbringing.

Learners have a natural sense and determination towards play. UNICEF (no date), the UNCRC article 31, states that most learners have the right to play freely and participate in activities. UNICEF supports the fact that play should be a daily essential towards all learners.

Self-directed Play

Research has shown that there is no precise research or evidence stating in which way learners should potentially play. According to Housley-Juster (2015), learner-directed play develops when learners decide to what it is, they wish to play and how they make the choices and ground rules how to play. As practitioners it is our duty to support self-directed play. By giving learners permission and ensuring all learners, regardless of their ability to have downtime every day, this allocated time, and with zero adult-directed activities will encourage them to think more for themselves, and or to reflect on their daily experiences and achievements.

Shumaker (2018), states that genuine play can be learner-initiated and learner-directed. It can occur on a blank playground and it can with a few types. Learners can play – and do play – when they are all given appropriate area and with a time frame. Self-directed play is about the learner using their individual interests and key ideas. Learners have the ability and self-belief to enable them to choose what they wish to play with and how they want to play. Self-directed play requires learners to think and embraces provision for their self-worth. Montessori (2018) suggests that the significance of self-directed play is relative to the learner's self-assurance. This also indicates that discovering by themselves, makes learner mindful that there is a possibility they can be more independent themselves. An illustration of self-directed play can be a specific learner operating an item for several different things. Every learner has a diverse and an imaginative mind. A cardboard tube for example would and or could be portrayed as a tunnel for a moving vehicle, construction, which

possibly would be then a bridge, a telescope, or even a musical instrument. When resources are offered, learners will adopt a, 'What can I do with this?' or, 'What does this look like?' attitude. The learner will in their own time come up with an idea and will play with it how they see fit.

The role of the adult throughout self-directed play is to scaffold the learner's learning by providing the relevant resources to which this will support them in the moment creativity. Mcleod (2019), suggests that Vygotsky's theory regarding the zone of proximal development, to which adults or practitioners scaffold all learners to achieve their next goal or skill. Though, throughout self-directed play, it is vitally important that the adult is nearby though not directly involved in the activity or play learning session, except when invited to. If it is essential for example, encounter with another learner of a conflict behaviors and or for health and safety reasons. According to National Occupational Standards (2016), self-directed play is all about learner's free will to play. Indication, motivation and direction, all lead by themselves and their ideas and creative thoughts.

National Occupational Standards (2016) also states that all learners have different talents, personal preference, likes, dislikes and interests. Therefore, it is important that adults and practitioners, listen-out and appreciate learners throughout their play session. Jacobs, M.A, (2018) states how Montessori spoke about imitation of reality rather than practical role play. This can be explained, by imagining learners to be on the phone, imitating an adult. Role play can be a seamless play style which can be linked with self-directed play. Inside this particular area of play, learners become independent and make drastic decisions, with regards to who they are, where this is going to happen, they construct a time frame and what they are going to use. When learners play in groups, there will most likely be a leader, who takes charge of who is playing what role and how and when it is going to happen. This is supported by Hollis Montessori.org, (2018).

<u>Holistic Development</u>

According to Foundation Education (2018), holistic development is a method to learning, which involves various different skills, to which supports physical, emotional, and psychological welfare of all learners. For example, when a learner draws with a pen or pencil, they are refining their fine motor skills, and once completed their expression has all the answers. Also, when a learner counts to ten, their mathematical

development improves, and yet again their communication and knowledge changes. When holistic development is reviewed in young learners, most of the time you see that a learner is content and assured in what they are trying to achieve, they then display a high level of self-esteem.

Section 2

Life is full of risks, and every day will be a challenge for young learners and adults alike. Play Scotland (2008), states that learners enjoying moments of fun, pushing their own boundaries, is one of many risks that that learners get exposed to. Learners discover that taking risks in everyday play and it is how they learn their own abilities and limitations.

Play Scotland (2008), also suggests that learners using skills such as investigation can self-sufficiently solve the problem they are faced with. Learners are led to believe and are also encouraged to adopt a 'don't touch that' attitude. Most learners will look across, and for a moment think or react in a way that intrigues them, if this means they are taking a risk to find out the consequences.

Early Education.org.uk, (2021), implies that risky play would be learners who particularly want to learn and are not aware of the risks involved in many areas of life. For example, a young learner, learning and building up the knowledge from an adult or fellow learner to ride a bike for the first time, then without stabilizers. Welsh Government Assembly (2009) indicates that learning is more effective where learners manage real life objects such as tools to build in an indoor or outdoor area or realistic china tea sets. Many Learners being given the opportunity to take risks, in a safe environment, is beneficial, which then enables them to be exposed to the real world. Risky play opens countless doors to further learning and development of various other life skills.

Freud Museum London, (2017) suggests that Sigmund Freud saw play as a bridge between fantasy and reality. Other theorists saw it as an interesting and different way of linking learners play and the psychic life of adults. Freuds theories were completely different, he suggested that play was a way to understand the growth of learners. Anna Freud focused on the child's words and dreams, and not as much on their writing, drawing or play. Donald Winnicott and other theorists later measured play as a form of developing an awareness of self in relative to the outside world.

National Strategies, Early Years (2009), states that as practitioners, there are times when adults overlook the risk and knowing that there are methods in place to safeguard the learner. Learners will also overlook on occasions and take it upon themselves to develop where and how far up the tree the learner feels comfortable to go.

Play Wales (2018), suggests that the playworker training scheme has a clear understanding, and practitioners have stages that they should take before prevailing in a risky play. Play Wales (2018), also has an acronym, SLLRRRP which stands for Stop, Look, Listen, Reflect, React, Reflect, Practice. This is aimed at the practitioner and a method to which they follow to intercept during play and is also valuable for childcare practitioners to use.

Muddypuddles.com, (2017) implies that the author Roald Dahl once said, 'the more risks you allow children to take, the better they learn to look after themselves'. This supports the knowledge that permitting young learners to participate in uncertain or risky play improves their confidence and clear independence. According to Play Wales (2018), if learners are not visibly in risk then they may seek risks, which then could be potentially more harmful in the future to look for accomplishment. Permitting learners comes with potentially a lot of benefits concerning their development. Giving learners, the chance to resolve a problem and learn from their emotional and physical progress, while understanding that risky play has benefits towards learner's development.

Play Scotland (2008), argues the point that all young learners are uniquely different regarding to taking many and various risks, but there will be times where another learner could find the same activity puzzling. For practitioners it is essential that they consider the needs of learners with incapacities or low learning abilities, with risky play. All practitioners have a duty of care. Different procedures and legislation are in place for all settings, not just settings who have learners with disabilities. Settings have a responsibility to fill out and follow risk assessments which are in place. According to Britsafe.org (2020), risk assessments are orderly processes to identify threats and implementing control procedures to reduce or remove them completely.

EAEE4004/C – Portfolio
2011069
Word count – 2917

Section 3

According to Welsh Assembly Government (2008), observation is an important key focus element on childcare for practitioners' and their duties and role. It is critical that there is a strong understanding of the ages and key development stages of the learner's, learning and development process. Witnessing learners, gaining their trust and having that element of bonding, can help to understand their key focused stages in development. Practitioners can then build a strategy to scaffold the learning, well-constructed planning, based on the learner's specific requirements. This is also supported by Early Years Matters (2021), they suggest that observing the young learner is a fundamental importance and observation continuously starts with the learner. This will help and support both the learners and adult practitioners' reflection. Welsh Assembly Government (2017) proposes that observation is an essential percentage of daily exercise within the Foundation Phase Curriculum. This also recommends that by observing learners, adults or educational specialists can evaluate the progression in learner's learning and further support them in specific areas needed.

According to The Lego Foundation (2017), the well-being of young learners is shown when observation is undertaken. Learners are to be engaged and remotely happy within their play scenario, this also supports the learner's holistic development.

The Foundation Phase Profile or FPP is portrayed by Welsh Government (2017) as an assessment tool. This tool is to be used during a learner's educational time in Foundation Phase from ages 3 to 7 years. It is acknowledged in many early year's settings, such as Flying start nurseries, where learners aged 2 onwards are documented. The detailed skilled ladder is used to show progression of development over a particular time frame and is made up of 43 skill ladders. This is supported by Pacey (2017). Practitioners and educational specialists use this tool during the Foundation Phase curriculum, to which it looks at the learner's holistic development and in the following key learning areas:

- Literacy, language based and linked with communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology

- Health and Well-being
- Expressive Arts
- Humanities

Welsh Assembly Government (2017), states that the Foundation Phase handbook suggests guidelines on how to use the evaluation tool. It begins with an assessment, where you identify the learner's key stages of development and learner's entering the Foundation Phase Curriculum for the first. The assessment tool is to be used by practitioners and or educational specialists as an operational document and is kept up to date to show progression or reversion. The evidence base to support the assessment are usually assembled by written observations, pictures and images, video recordings during daily practice with learners. Parental and or guardian permission is granted before this is actioned.

EarlyYears.Wales (2017), suggest that by observing and evaluating learners in the four purpose areas indicates that learners who need additional educational support with their learning and development can be accessed easier and or in a time framed manner. With practitioners involving learners as active learners during their time in education, this will allow all learners from all areas of educational needs to learn at different paces and interests. Learners reviewing and knowing their strengths and weaknesses is a key focus and progression. Practitioners allowing them to reflect on their own learning can be a tremendously important aspect when reflecting after an observation and or a play session prepared in advance.

According to The Foundation Phase handbook, it states "Discussion of activities before, during and after helps learners reflect on their own abilities" (Welsh Government, 2017).

Practitioners are to be motivated and encouraged to listen to learners, to understand their curiosities and interests, to combine this into their everyday educational learning. UNICEF (no date), gives a clear statement, outlining that article 12 is all about the learners having the right to say, voice and express thoughts, their interests and feelings or emotions. Athey (1990) supports this statement by suggesting that learners, develop their learning in schema's and or patterns of learning. This supports the practitioners in their development and to customize or tailor their learning opportunities for each learner by simply observing their schemas and acting accordingly.

Some practitioners felt they were put under pressure when the FPP was introduced. The workload and paper trail entailed to carry out this daily practice with learners would rise. With this in mind Welsh Assembly Government (2017), argues that The Foundation Phase handbook would not force or put extra work on practitioners because the observations that were already made previously, were to be used within this observation tool to help and support the learner to intertwine their knowledge with each other. This was also supported by Welsh Assembly Government (2008).

Section 4

Kelly (2016) suggests that when practitioners are observing learners, it is important to gather relevant information about the learner's individual needs. Play is everywhere in the foundation phase settings, from schools and nurseries. Drummond (1993) states that learners throughout play is observed in everyday practice. Practitioners observe learners during various styles of play, and it is always in the best interests. The main objective of observing is to understand what the learners are mostly interested in, how they learn and how practitioners support further learning. This is supported by Neaum (2016).

Some adults battle to differentiate between what learner are seeking and what they can see the learners achieving. Leach (1988), spoke about a learner being incapable, not knowing the difference between play and learning. Learners will in time partake in various play activities, because it is seen to be exciting and not based around learning. Roden (1999), suggested that learners should play, and practitioners should only observe them. It will then become a lot more obvious to see the results by finding out and learning about the realistic world. Learners use their five senses every day, alongside formative knowledge and life skills, which then outlines to a clear understanding. All of this can be achieved while playing.

While learners play, practitioners can observe them, by taking part in observational play. This is where learners view the adults, learning why and how we do things differently. It may also become a strong form of understand, of how they can do it better next time or the reverse. This is supported by McLeod (2016), Bandura and his social learning theory.

Welsh Government (2008) suggests that when observations are being carried out, the learner's play is to be undertaken daily and within daily routines. Learners will then

become a lot calmer and more relaxed around practitioners' when being observed. This will then support the learners and then help the adult to carry out the observation giving a true reflection on their capabilities.

Furthermore, in article 12 of the UNCRC, it states the importance of learners being able to express their feelings and interests. All learners have the right to be asked permission, as to whether they are to be observed by practitioners and or other educational specialists. There will be times when a learner may change their behaviour, especially when knowing that they are being watched.

According to Keap (2009), practitioners overcome this obstacle by asking their permission and or by simply asking permission from the parents. Also, by explaining how and why it is being carried out. Daly, Byers, Taylor, (2004) considered that role play was important for learners to learn about their environment. Learners then move onto the bigger wider world taking on numerous roles such as parent or a car driver that would be suitable in adulthood.

Learners are diverse individuals. Holistically, it can ensure an overall view in every area of development. Practitioners are given the opportunity to then take these observations, put them into practice, use them toward future planning and developing scheme for the learners and other peers. At all times the practitioners will have the individual learner's needs or interests under consideration.

Howard and McInnes (2012) states that when learners enjoy different activities, their holistic development improves. If the learners are comfortable and happy then they are more likely to grasp their child-development outcomes without them even recognizing they were learning while they play.

EAEE4004/C – Portfolio
2011069
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