

(Pexels, 2020)



Skye Stevens (2000785)

ECGE5002

Changemakers:
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Website URL:

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Introduction

While there are many different ways to help child development and growth, one way that has become more important in recent years is play based learning, play allows children to access the environment around them, by doing so they are able to learn new skills and have a greater knowledge about all that they do. (UNICEF 2017) by giving the child access to a range of toys or even being able to access that imaginative side they are able to learn in a way that's easier for them.

Play based learning can allow children to develop an array of skills which can help them in the future, some of those skills can consist of communication, teamwork, creativity, emotional any many. More. When allowing children to learn in a way that is understandable to them and enjoyable to them. A blog from Edmentum (2021) discusses how children prefer the option of play as it is a natural instinct for them. By allowing play in the context of the classroom children can take the skills they use from play and assert it into everyday practice.



(Province of British Columbia 2019)



Play Based Learning

Language and Literacy

One way in which play-based education is beneficial to schools is due to it helping improve children's language and literacy skills, a child can develop their language through different means such as storytelling, role play or creative writing. Children could create their own scripts or write their own stories to reform. Selmi (2015, p88–89) highlights in her book that practitioners need to be aware of the impacts play has on developing a child's literacy and language skills and that in order for children to continuously develop these skills they need to be participating in a conversation with other children allowing them to improve off of others and help those who may need assistance with things such as vocabulary.

Furthermore, The Department for Education (2022) blog states the importance of teaching children through the use of systematic phonics, this allows children to get a better understanding of pronunciation and recognition of letters and sounds. Children are encouraged to talk to others to get a better understanding of certain words or letters. Practitioners can create games with the idea of this could be through the use of an app on an electronic device, a written task where they are able to practice writing out different letters and words or even a speaking task where they are encouraged to find and talk about the environment around them.

However, Bandura disagrees with the view of only using play-based learning in order to teach children important skills this is due to his social learning theory Johnston et al (2018, pg 41) explain that children learn through the idea of observation, so allowing children to have complete control over their learning won't be as effective as compared to having a more knowledgeable other in the room to support and guide students in the right direction. While it's important to allow children to have some freedom, without an adult being a good role model in the room children may lack in key areas of learning.



(Twinkl)



(US Department of Education
2013)



Creativity

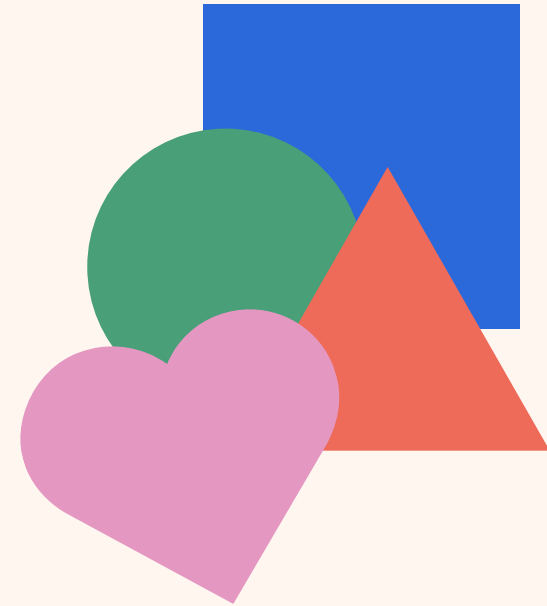
Another way in which play-based learning is an important aspect of education is through the development of a child's creative ability. Play-based education allows children to think for themselves and therefore allows them to build and access their imagination to create and think of new solutions to problems. Andrews (2012 Pg 9) suggests that when children are able to have control over the environment around them whether that be by being able to select their own task or being able to behave in a certain manner, it allows them to design new ideas feeling and pathways to take. By using a play-based approach more becomes available to the child as compared to a structured approach that is more rigid with rules about what children can and can't do.

Creativity is encouraged to be used within education by the Department of Education (2021)

In their framework for early years, within this framework they discuss the importance of having a creative outlet within education, advising educators that the child should be able to explore, think of their own ideas as well as think of various outcomes to link with their thoughts and feelings.

The Reggio Emilia approach is based around early years, its goal is to put the child at the forefront of learning allowing the child to choose the direction of how they learn, meanwhile the teacher is more of an observer. Nutbrown (2011) summarises that children are capable learners that are knowledgeable about different ways to express how they feel and think, the approach allows these emotions to come to life by being able to use it within their learning, by using their environment as a third teacher a child can become a powerful individual learner through the use of creativity.

While being able to allow children to be creative through their own means through play-based learning is important, it could also hinder a child's learning if not balanced correctly, due to the demand of tests and plans set by their higher up's teachers may find it difficult to balance allowing children to have full creative freedom while trying to keep their goals up to date. This clash in interest may cause for miscommunication or a lack of interest for the child to get involved. (Hunter et al 2017)



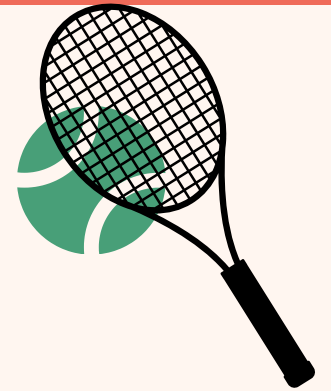
(Pennucci 2011)



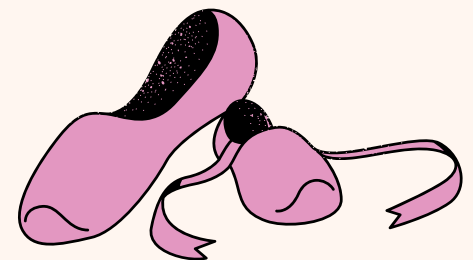
Physical Development

Play-based learning while it enhances skills like language and creativity can also benefit children with their physical development. By learning through play children are encouraged to be physically active, allowing them to run, jump and climb, using different means to explore the world around them, in turn, they can practice development in areas such as fine and gross motor skills. On top of that children can learn a range of new skills that may not be taught in lessons such as maths or English. Through sports, children can be taught sportsmanship and being able to take turns which develops teamwork and communication as well as leadership. (Ali et al 2018)

Fine and gross motor development are skills that every child develops at different rates to aid in their life. Play-based education allows children to develop all fine and gross motor skills, it's important to try encouraging developing physical development, fine motor skills can be developed through ways such as writing stories, and drawing pictures. On the Gov.UK website (2014) they discuss what types of practice need to be done to enrich a child's learning, they list different types of fine motor skills such as cooking, gardening and sewing. All these skills have similarities in the way that children would need to be precise, and practice accuracy and control. Whereas gross motor skills can be enhanced through outdoor play such as football, throwing and catching a ball or even as simple as running. The Gov.UK (2014) also suggests a range of physical activities, while also trying to improve more specific skills such as balance, strength or lifting items. However, an issue found within play-based learning and physical development is a child may feel more inclined to go in a certain direction due to environmental factors. Gender differences are still a prevalent issue in today's society which can cause children to be influenced and develop certain ideas on what they can or cannot, in turn as they grow older could make them insecure to do certain tasks as stated in Doherty and Hughes book (2013, pg 211-213). While boys may be encouraged to compete in sports such as football or rugby to build gross motor skills, girls on the other hand may be more persuaded to do activities such as sewing or ballet.



Ameruverse Digital Marketing Media
(2018)





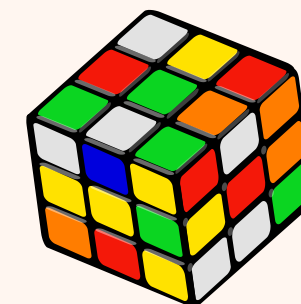
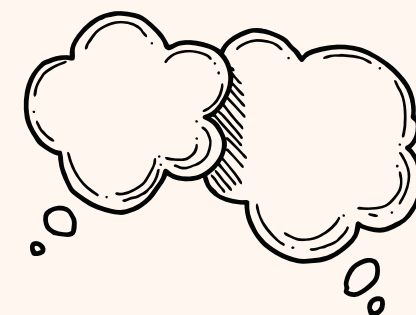
Critical Thinking

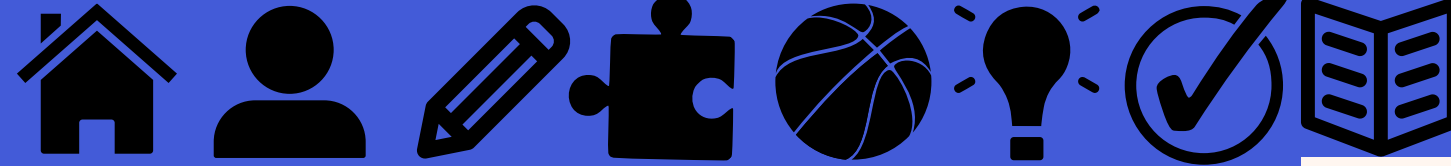
Finally, play-based learning can help develop critical thinking, by using play-learning a child can use roleplay to act out real-world scenarios and can apply critical thinking in order to think of solutions or outcomes to their behaviour in the situation. One article from Kamarulzaman (2015) found that through playing children can develop this skill of critical thinking, children are able to learn through their interactions with others, and they can develop social and emotional awareness of their surroundings and act in a manner that they deem appropriate.

Vygotsky is a social cultural theorist, Else (2014) discusses Vygotsky's 'Zone of Proximal Development' children's opinions and behaviours can be influenced by their community, the community can help develop children's ability to learn critical thinking as they can see jobs being played out and then use play-based learning to re-enact them. Roles such as playing doctor, or builder need some knowledge in order to be roleplayed by a child visiting the doctor when ill and listening out for the key information they may ask a child will then be able to use this new knowledge to play out a new role they have created.

Using the Mantle of the Expert (MoE) can build upon Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development while using critical thinking in a play-based setting. As stated in Farmer's blog (N/A), MoE is a play-based interaction with other children in which they can create scenarios and become experts in any field they like. By using the Mantle of the Expert children can take the lead in their own learning and create their learning, this can be through doing their research, creating their activities or improvising different scenarios. A child is encouraged to solve problems in their world where it's up to them to create solutions with the teacher acting as a supporter or guide to motivate the children.

While allowing children to do their own research by using play-based learning can be seen as a positive, it can also be seen as a negative due to the use of technology. Hedges and Cooper (2018) mention that now that children have access to a range of applications such as Wikipedia, children may need assistance from the internet to recognise false information. Due to how unreliable the internet can be, children could take the wrong routes in their learning which means they aren't able to learn the skill of critical thinking as it may be difficult to tell fake information from real information.





(Grey, 2018)

Conclusion

In conclusion, play-based learning is a great opportunity where children are able to develop many different skills for the future, while it develops skills it also impacts a child's social, emotional and physical development, without the element of play children wouldn't be able to learn for themselves and may lack in skills such as confidence and communication as they grow older. Children are brought up in a world surrounded by the concept of play, to discourage this in education would be taking away a form of self-expression or even a communication technique as this is how children are able to learn best as it's what's encouraged from an early age, navigating the world through exploring and manipulating objects to suit their needs. As long as the appropriate steps are taken to make sure children are still learning while making their own decisions, play-based learning is a great tool to help children understand themselves, others and the community around them.



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