Play

Two types of play and how these can be supported in practice

Play is all about creativity, it is about risk, collaboration and interpretation and has many different meanings, play should be open ended, provide opportunities and possibilities with continuous interpretations. (Bottrell, 2018) Play Wales (2018) explain that play is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. They believe that play is play and is there for the child's own sake, this should not be used as a reward.

Object play- play Wales (2017) explain that object play involves the Hand-eye movements of objects, an example of this could be looking at shells and turning them round. Children can become fascinated with any object, this goes further than toys that adults believe are suitable for children, they state that objects can symbolise a child's emotions and interests and this can provide an opportunity for communication between the adult and child, other benefits are exploration, discovery and further play. Object play allows children to explore objects and question the use of the object, the child will usually wonder how it works and what it does, this will allow the child to develop on their hand- eye co-ordination and fine motor skills as they explore the objects to find out its use. They explain that examples of objects could be tools, balls and paintbrushes, these objects can all provide opportunities for the child to explore the possibilities of them. It is known that children enjoy playing with and exploring objects that are new to them or unusual. They explain that objects that have multiple uses such as cardboard boxes are more interesting to the child than limited ones and whilst children are involved in working out how to use a specific object, it is important that practitioners do not intervene and explain the true use of the object to the child as this can quicken the procedure which prevents the child to discover and learn, this may result in broken objects, they explain that the use of inexpensive materials are beneficial when a child is learning through object play. In relation to this, King (2020) talks about loose parts during the child's play cycle and similarly to play Wales, uses the cardboard box as an example in the Childs learning, he explains that children can use loose parts to explore and interpretate different objects and imagine them to be anything they want and by playing with loose parts and different objects it can provide the opportunity for the

child to invite the adult into their world of play by discovering alongside them. When thinking about the practitioner not intervening on the Childs exploring during object play, The Welsh government (2015) talks about the balance between structured learning through child led activities and activities directed by educators and the importance of children being involved in their own learning on what they can do and what they know and what interests them.

Role play- play Wales (2017) explains that this is a form of play that explores roles that are not normally experienced on a day to day basis, this could be driving a car or washing dishes, many children are known to imitate their close relationships, such as teachers, family members and people they see on television, role playing is usually how the child perceives the person and they may act out an exaggerated or stereotypical role of the person/ character. It is also shown by the level of understanding the child has of that character. They state that role playing encourages children to explore and try out different roles to gain understanding of what is going on and the reasons it might be happening, Examples of encouragement of role play could be dressing up clothes, make up and role playing toys. Gray and Macblain (2014) discusses Freuds views on play and role play, they state that Freud believed that play has an important role in the child's development and has the capability to let children process their traumas and memories. Similarly, to this, The Anna Freud Society (2022) comments on the link between play therapy and role play and explains that play therapy allows children to role play through their traumas which allows them to move on and cope with their struggles, this helps them to deal with conflicts in more appropriate ways as they grow older whilst also reducing anxiety, raising self-esteem and improving relationships. They state that Children communicate through play and do this at their own pace, so that they do not feel interrogated or threatened. additionally, Vygotsky believed that social interactions and positive relationships are important to have as this will enhance children's cognitive development, this can be shown through role play. (Nilsson and Ferholt 2014). Play Wales (2017) explains that role play allows children to see themselves from a different angle and this can help them come to terms with the differences as well as similarities in all people. In addition to this, the Welsh government (2015) talks about the curriculum framework and talks about the need for children to develop on their self-esteem and self-image, they explain that through

play children need to experiment and play with ideas and believe that through first hand experiences children can develop an understanding of themselves and the world that they live in, this can be done through role play.

Why is it important for children to choose their own play and what is the importance of the role of the adult in children's play?

Welsh government (2015) explain that the child should be at the heart of the curriculum and the educational provision should be holistic, they state that practitioners should be understanding, challenging and inspirational towards the Childs learning and believe that children learn through concentration and perseverance and that play is crucial for children to become self-aware, play is beneficial to the Childs social and intellectual development, they state that practitioners following the foundation phase framework should offer choice and move with the Childs learning, they talk about curriculum and explain how it should be flexible in order for practitioners to plan for children's future learning. In comparison to this, Berg (2021) discusses the Reggio Emilio approach and explains that this approach puts children in the centre and sees them as curious individuals who have the capability to learn from their environments and develop, Fisher (2016) also talks about the Reggio Emilia approach and the beliefs in the hundred languages the child has and explains how the adult steals 99 of them and tells the child the 100 is not there, Berg (2022) explains that the Reggio Emilia approach prioritises the child over the curriculum and that practitioners observe the child play which then allows them to plan the emergent curriculum based on the Childs interests. Similarly, to this, Welsh government (2020) discusses the new curriculum for Wales and talks about the importance of the child's choice, the new curriculum includes four purposes which aim to encourage learners to become capable, ambitious, ethical, creative and healthy individuals.

Play is one of the most natural ways to learn in the world and educators need to ensure children have endless opportunities to engage in play and other playful experiences, play has power and expands on the child's learning as it allows them to learn from first hand experiences and allows them to learn based on what they already know and are able to do. (Moyles, 2009) In addition to this, McInnes *et al.* (2013) talks about McInnes experience whilst visiting a setting and explains that when the environment provided choice for the child, the child saw the adult as more

playful and did not refer to the adult as the cue to play as they had taken a step back and allowed the child to lead. Vygotsky believed that with the support of adults to a certain extent, children can develop through play. (Nilsson and Ferholt 2014). However, McInnes *et al.* (2013) believed that when an adult is present in children's play, the child's performance and perception of play is enhanced, however they later reported that the child viewed the learning activity as play when the adult was proximal rather than directly present. McInnes *et al. (*2011) talk about Bruner's views that children are active learners and discuss the need for the child to learn with hands on experiences, similarly to Vygotsky's views, Bruner believed that the role of the adult is important when supporting a child's play.

Play is a type of communication where children find their own ways to enjoy and learn about the world (loizou, 2017). The British psychological society (2019) talks about the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and discuss article 31 of the rights of the child, this states that all children have the right to rest, leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities. They believe that child led play is an important enabler towards children's holistic development and wellbeing. Lester and Russell (2010) state that children believe play is one of the most important aspects of their lives and explain that play promotes many areas of children's development such as their physical, emotional and social wellbeing. Smidt (2017) talks about Piaget's theory and explains that Piaget was intrigued by children's overall cognitive development, he generalized learning as noticing what the child cannot yet do and believed in only moving onto the next stage to support the child's development when the child has achieved the prior learning stage, however he also believed that children are active learners and was interested in play and the link with plays active role in a child's learning.

Individual child observations

Observation is a way to bond with children and to help understand their relationship with others and the environment. (Psicologyanswers, 2022). Pacey (2016) states that observations on children are only useful if you make something of it, they are done in order to assess the child's learning and development, they talk about the option to have a next step in place for the child to continue to extend on their learning, by doing this it will allow the child to enhance on certain areas and

participate in activities they are truly interested in, this will avoid situations where a child is continuously being observed in the same area and not gaining any learning opportunities from it. An example of this is Swansea university Student Union Day Nursery's (no date) individual observation learning journeys which consists of images, observation writing space and a next step section which was put in place to avoid repeated activities and targets that the child is already capable of, this encourages the practitioner to focus on moving on to the next stage of development.

Fisher (2016) states that children have the ability to chow us what they are interested in, what they can do and what they know. Psicologyanswers (2022) talks about individual observations and discuss the tracking method, this method can begin at any point during the day and is a method that collects proof and evidence on the Childs current interests. The observation lasts for as long as the child is interested and finishes when the child is showing signs they are no longer engaged or enjoying, this is a thorough and an in depth way of observing. Smidt (2017) talks about the negative impacts with continuous focus on targets and goals for children and explains that practitioners can unintentionally fall into a cycle of teaching to meet the targets rather than focussing on the child's personal needs, they believe that a good practitioner focusses on the Childs interests. An advantage of the tracking method is that it tends to avoid set targets and focuses on what the child truly enjoys participating in. on the contrary to this, pacey (2016) talks about the importance of engagement and believes that practitioners should not be spending time away from the children by focussing more on observing and planning, a critique for individual child observations such as the tracking method could be that they are quite time consuming and require a large amount of writing time which results in time away from the children. Frank slide (no date) also talks about the child Tracker observation and explains that this method is used to observe an individual child or a group of children and shows how they explore their environment, this results in the practitioner understanding how the child moves around the setting and helps them to notice what activities interests the child. Similarly, to psicologyanswers, they talk about the importance of only continuing to observe when the child is engaged and also noticing the length of time that the child is focussed for.

Lorina (2016) explains that when observing children, it is important to have a variety of observational methods as this can help you when observing children's individual

needs, skills and strengths as this will create a holistic image of the specific child. An example of another type of method used within individual child observations is a running record, this method creates a story of the Childs behavior when being observed and is usually used to notice why the child is acting a certain way, this is observed over a shorter period of time and is written up in past tense after the activity is over. Fisher (2016) shows indication that she agrees with this method and states that writing throughout observations is a way of preventing interactions as the child feels that what they were looking to say is no longer of interest to the practitioner and that when the practitioner is writing, they feel they are being judged and reported, this results in the child potentially feeling reluctant to get involved when the practitioner is involved, to avoid this the practitioner should wait until the observation has ended to write the interaction down.

The role of play when observing and the affects on the child's engagement and the accuracy of the observation

McInnes *et al.* (2013) states that studies have continuously shown that practitioners tend to feel more uncomfortable with play and child led activities where the child takes the lead in their own learning. In relation to this, King (2020) talks about the play cycle and the six elements involved, these are the pre cue, play cue, play return, flow, play frame and annihilation. He explains that a child will have an inner thought which is a pre cue and will then give a play cue to other children and if the children respond this is called a play return, this cycle then repeats which is known as the flow of the children being lost in their play, this is the play frame. Finally, he mentions annihilation which is when the play ends as it has no meaning left for the children involved. He mentions that another form of annihilation could be from an external factor such as an adult interrupting, this is known as adulteration. Cambridge kids club (2022) states that many practitioners and educators tend to show adulteration and this is common because they want to rescue, improve, educate, play themselves and make it better, although this can potentially stop the play cycle and interrupt the child's learning. In relation to this, Jones and Reynolds (2011) talk about the role of the teacher as the observer, facilitator and participant. however, Hadley (2002) believes that there should be an awareness and consideration for a practitioner on understanding the flow of the child's play. Fisher () talks about the difference between interacting and interfering in a childs play, she

states that being directly engaged in the child's thoughts is the highest form of interaction and doesn't need to involve talking, she believes that observations are a form of direct engagement between practitioners and children. loizou (2017) believes that adult- child interactions during play can have many sides to it and that teachers develop a unique role during the Childs play. She also talks about Vygotsky's theory and talks about his idea on the importance of play on a Childs social development, this creates the zone of proximal development. She discusses that many other researchers that agree with the socio-cultural aspect of Childs play show that children who play have a higher level of confidence and analyzation of their environment.

Hakkarainen et al. (2013) talk about creating a set of steps such as observing to understand the idea of play, developing on joint play and fulfilling the togetherness of children and practitioners, additionally, Bredikyte and Hakkarainen (2011) state that play will only promote a child's development if the child moves onto a mature form of joint play, they believe the child needs the practitioner to develop. Smidt (2015) states that observing children is part of something you do on a daily basis as a practitioner, she discusses that in order for you to be able to successfully observe a Childs development in your care, the process needs to be more organised and aware of the cycle and place of observation.

UNICEF (2007) states that A UNICEF report showed high levels of unhappiness in children in the UK. In addition to this, Howard and McInnes (2012) talk about when children experience play deprivation, they show levels of developmental delay, this can be improved through play based interventions and experiences, they discuss that when children perceive an activity as play, they show higher levels of emotional wellbeing in comparison to children who view the activity as a task. They talk about a study in a school where children aged from 3-5 took part in two activities, one perceived as play and the other activity which was classed as not play, the children who participated in the like play activity scored significantly higher in the leuvans scale measurement which was focusing on testing their emotional wellbeing levels, this came to the conclusion that children are known to have a higher level of positive emotional wellbeing when viewing an activity as play and they believe this means practitioners need to understand children's views on play and use this to create playful environments and experiences for the children when observing and discuss

that children use cues such as the location and the presence of the adult to determine whether something was play or not. In addition to this, Grindheim (2017) similarly talks about their findings in a study, and they also concluded that children involved in activities and observations considered as play are more engaged and involved.

Howard and McInnes (2012) discuss that when children talk about an activity they would class as play, they explain that the adult is close however not assisting and that the child has an active involvement in their choice of participation and when the child discusses a not play situation, they state that the activity was set out by the adult and the adult was directly present. Finally, they talk about the importance of the practitioner's involvement in observing the child and explain that they need to create playful and meaningful experiences for the child in order to see their full potential and undertake training on play as an approach and giving them the skills that they need in order to reflect on the child in their care.

Reference list

Berg, V (2021)*what is the reggio emilia approach to early years education* available at What is the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Years Education? - daynurseries.co.uk advice accessed on 5th February 2022

Bottril, G. (2018) *Can I go and Play now? Rethinking the Early Years.* London: Sage

Bredikyte, M., and P. Hakkarainen. 2011. "*Play Intervention and Play Development*." In Play and Performance, edited by C. Lobman and B. O'Neill, 59–83. Maryland, USA: University Press of America

Cambridge kids club (2022) *the play cycle* available at The Play Cycle - Cambridge Kids Club accessed on 5th February

Fisher, J (2016) *interacting or interfering,* Oxford, UK

Frank slide (no date) *what is a child tracker observation* available at What Is A Child Tracker Observation? - Frank Slide - Outdoor Blog accessed on 12th February 2022

Gray, C., & MacBlain, S. (2015). *Learning theories in childhood* (Second ed.) London: Sage.

Hadley, E. 2002. "*Playful Disruptions*." Early Years: An International Research Journal 22 (1): 9–17

Hakkarainen, P., M. Brėdikytė, K. Jakkula, and H. Munter. 2013. *"Adult Play Guidance and Children's Play Development in a Narrative Play-world."* European Early Childhood Education Research Journal 21 (2): 213–225.

Howard,J and McInnes,K (2012) *the impact of childrens perception of an activity as play rather than not play on emotional wellbeing* Swansea University, Swansea, UK, and School of Psychology, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, UK doi:10.1111/j.1365-2214.2012.01405.x

King, P (2020) *A Brief Introduction to the Play Cycle* [Video] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtGrwAxgLrQ accessed on 5th February 2022

King, P. (2020) *The Play Cycle and the Theory of Loose Parts* [Video] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpuD1NLk6IE (Accessed: 5th February 2022).

Lester, S. & Russell, W. (2010). *Children's Right to Play: An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Liv Torunn Grindheim (2017) *Children as playing citizens,* European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25:4, 624-636, DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2017.1331076

Loizou, E (2017*) Towards play pedagogy: supporting teacher play practices with a teacher guide about socio-dramatic and imaginative play*, European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 25:5, 784-795, DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2017.1356574

Lorina (2016) *different types of observational methods* available at Different Types Of Observation Methods - Aussie Childcare Network accessed on 17th February 2022

Mcinnes, K., Howard, J., Miles, G., & Crowley, K. (2011). *Differences in Practitioners' Understanding of Play and How This Influences Pedagogy and Children's Perceptions of Play*. Early Years (London, England), 31(2), 121-133.

McInnes,K, Howard,J Crowley, k & Miles, G (2013) *The nature of adult–child interaction in the early years classroom: Implications for children's perceptions of play and subsequent learning behaviour,* European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 21:2, 268-282, DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2013.789194

Moyles, J. (2013) '*Play and Early Years: Birth to Seven Years'* Available at: http://www.playwales.org.uk/login/uploaded/documents/INFORMATION%20SHEETS/play%20and%20early%20years.pdf accessed 5th February 2022

Nilsson, M, & Ferholt, B. (2014). *Vygotsky's theories of play, imagination and creativity in current practice*: G9unilla Lindqvist's "creative pedagogy of play" in U.S. kindergartens and Swedish Reggio-Emilia inspired preschools. Perspectiva, 32(3), 919-950.

Pacey (2016) *child observation and learning journeys* available at Fact Sheet title (pacey.org.uk) accessed on 12th February 2022

Play wales (2017) *play types* available at Play types.pdf (playwales.org.uk) accessed on 5th February 2022

Play Wales (2018) '*Playing and Hanging Out'* available at http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playinghangingout [Accessed: 5th February 2022].

Psicologyanswers(2022)*what is a child tracker observation* available at What is a child tracker observation? (psichologyanswers.com) accessed on 12th February 2022

Smidt, S. (2015) *Observing young children : the role of observation and assessment in early childhood settings*. 2nd ed. London ;: Routledge.

Swansea University Student Union Day nursery (no date) *individual observation sheet* Swansea university student union. Unpublished

The anna freud centre (2022) *play therapy* available at Play Therapy (annafreud.org) accessed on 31st January 2022

The British psychological society (2019) *children's right to play* available at Childrens right to play - position paper.pdf accessed on 6th February 2022

UNICEF (2007) *Child poverty in perspective: an overview of child well-being in rich countries.* Innocenti Report Card, Vol. 7. Florence: Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF

Welsh government (2015) *foundation phase framework* available at foundation-phase-framework-revised-2015.pdf (gov.wales) accessed on 5th February 2022

Welsh government (2020) *introduction to curriculum for wales guidance* available at introduction - Hwb (gov.wales) accessed on 6th February 2022