

EAEE4004 Assignment

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

Why is play important?

Play is a significant role in a child's development and is a known fact the key to a child's health brain as it improves brain function and memory skills. Play is one of the main ways in which children learn and develop. Playing helps children's brains to develop and for their language and communication skills to mature and to build vocabulary, learn new skills and knowledge. By playing it also develops motor skills and essential skills such as problem solving. Children sense their abilities and build self-worth in themselves through investigating, exploring, and becoming creative in different activities this will develop their imagination, dexterity, physical, cognitive, and emotional strengths. Play also improves relationships and a good connection with both children and adult through this it can then build trust in people which will give children more confidence and it will teach them to cooperate with others and learn to share. Play also allows children to feel young and energetic and is a major source to heal emotional wounds and relieve stress. It has also been said by 'play wales' that Playing is central to children's mental, social and emotional health and well-being. Through play, children develop resilience and flexibility, which contributes to physical and emotional well-being.

What is the role of self-directed play?

The role of self-directed play is a freely chosen way of playing where the child gets to choose what they want to play with without any adults choosing or suggesting the activity for them but will ensure they are in a safe and well-prepared environment. By leaving children play freely chosen they are led by their own interests and motivations. It gives children the experience to become independent and stimulates imagination. It gives children the opportunity to allow them to flex their creative muscles and improve problem solving skills whether its playing alone or with others. Outdoor play is a wonderful way to encourage self-directed play as it is such a natural way of playing and allows children to roam freely as far as possible if it is a safe environment. Open-ended toys are another wonderful way to encourage children to self-directed play it includes toys like building blocks, dressing up clothes, puppets etc, it means that the play does not have a purpose or button telling children what to do. It has also been said by theorist Vygotsky that he believed that social interactions and relationships are key to children's cognitive development. A critical aspect of this is the development of imagination through play. Vygotsky believed that through adult support at the right level children could learn and develop through play (Nilsson and Ferholt, 2014).

Play type – how does the play type support children's holistic development?

There are many types of play but looking in a holistic picture communicative play supports children's holistic development best. Communicative play is an interaction between children and adults or animals. It can be used as a written piece which covers fine motor skills where the child will learn how to grasp on a pencil etc, verbal or body language. The activities can include Children engaging in conversation or making facial features like making faces e.g., sticking out their tongue. Singing songs and clapping games, trying out tongue twisters, writing notes / letters to each other, reacting to body language, and learning what different non-verbal expressions mean. Through communicative play children develop fine and gross motor skills,

speech and language development, physical development, social and emotional development, and cognitive skills. It was also known that theorist Sigmund Freud believes that Play has an important role in children's emotional development.

How can adults support self-directed play?

There are so many ways that adults can support self-directed play, but they must think about the activity before leaving the child play. The activity must be suitable within the age range of the child for them to meet their needs and full potential. The adult must plan the activities carefully and must follow all the policies such as health and safety policy, safeguarding policy, play policy and outdoor play policy as well as taking observations and assessing risk. Adults can support self-directed play by leaving loose objects for the children to play with to encourage them to play. Loose objects include puzzles, dress up clothes, building bricks etc. The adult's role is to ensure the objects are safe for the children to use by themselves for example there is no sharp or pointy edges or use of scissors by themselves, that is why it is important that the adult ensures to plan the activities carefully.

Section 2 – Evidence of a clear understanding of why exposing young children to risk is beneficial.

Why is risk beneficial for children?

Taking a risk is something that is beneficial to children because no matter what age you are you will forever come across risks throughout your lifetime. Children learn about risk through play, allowing children to explore and learn through playing and taking part in positive activities, they will learn how to judge risks and manage them for themselves. Also, by leaving children explore for themselves it sends them the message that you trust them. It has also been researched by And Brussoni that "risky play can actually reduce the risk of injury too." Play Wales said that "Being brave and conquering a fear is something that is very important to children and a sign of growth."

How do we balance exposing children to risk whilst keeping them from harm?

It is particularly important that we allow children to take risks however the adults role is to ensure that the children are not in danger of serious harm while taking a risk, they can ensure that the children are safe by taking a risk assessment where we will look out for any sharp edges or points on equipment, weak structures that may collapse and items that include traps for heads and fingers. Some things we can make safe for children to take risks, but we must always remember that we cannot make everything safe and that we need to know the balance between risk and fun. Risky play should include loose materials that give children the chance to create and destroy constructions using their skill, creativity, and imagination. Good risks and hazards through play challenge children, and support their growth, learning and development. Leaving children take risks also allows them to use their own initiative where they learn self-regulation such as "how high is too high if I climb that tree?" or "how fast can I ride a bike and can still stop?" Allowing children to take risks develops their self-confidence, resilience and teaches them valuable life skills and risk management skills.

The Play Safety Forum ('PSF'), formed in 1993, exists to consider and promote the wellbeing of children and young people through ensuring a balance between safety, risk, and challenge in respect of play and leisure provision.

Section 3 – in depth discussion and understanding of an observation method for young children. Choose from the following observation types scale method-based observations – foundation phase profile observations, schedule of growing skills (SOGS), strengths and difficulties questionnaires, Leuven scale individual child observations – movement tracker, interaction tracker, running record.

Benefits and limitations of the observation tool

There are many beneficial ways to observe a child without putting pressure on children in the foundation phase. The first observation which is a profile observation is a terrific way to observe a child especially when an adult is observing their behaviour with and around others. A profile observation is carried by using a chart on the left side of the chart it will say what the child can or cannot do for example "speak quietly," in the middle of the chart there will be a description more in depth saying something like "child A answered child B's question but was very shy and didn't give eye contact while answering" and on the right-hand side there will be room to make additional notes. This is a fantastic way of finding the underlying cause of unusual behaviour in some children and the best thing is the child is not pressured and does not know they are being observed. Another way an adult can observe children is by a strengths and difficulties questionnaire which I like a tick list that is written down what they are going to challenge the children with for example and put a tick if they can do it or a cross if they cannot and there will be an additional box to add notes for example, the child knows the colour red but only can identify it in Welsh so that would be our note. A movement tracker is another wonderful way of observing a child, leaving the child to play a physical game for example hopscotch or on a bike and then the adult can observe their movement and what they can and cannot do for their age, some children at 3 can ride a bike but some others may not be able to pedal the bike therefore they would take a note on it. The last one is an interaction tracker which is use if they think there that something is not right in a child's behaviour for example, they do not use eye contact at all then they would closely monitor them through a day to see if they give any eye contact at all each time, then write down the exact time, place, and the incident for example 12.40 - reading conner – bumped into child but only used brief eye contact. By observing a child, we can ensure they reach their full potential and get the correct help if needed.

Does it give a holistic view of the child or does it only focus on the area?

By observing a child, it gives a more holistic picture of the child's development, but it also focusses on the area. When observing a child, we usually pick something out to observe for example it their physical development this week and it could be their language the following week therefore we are only focusing on the area but in time looking at the holistic view of the child.

What are the strengths and limitations of this?

The strengths of observing a child are to collect the data where and when an event or activity is occurring. You must see what happened in the event/activity yourself rather than relying on what children say they did.

The limitations of this are to look out for the ordinary not the extraordinary and ensure to note every little detail of the event this way they will be able to help children find a way around their problem or pain point they have. Secondly, we must be attentive and only record what you see and hear. never start analysing what you think is going on or you will certainly miss something. Thirdly be exact and aim to ensure to get the correct information and keep notes of what you are seeing, when and where, and how people behave. Keep an eye out for things like body language and it is important we do not react to anything we see or hear. Timing is something that is also important while observing a child. It is important we know what is going on before and after the event as well as during the event you are observing. Finally, we must debrief and analysis as an observation is most valuable if it is completed by an immediate debriefing session. Observers can together share, ask questions, and start to analyse what they have seen and heard.

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?

While observing and assessing children to see where they are at in their development. It is important that they assess children so that educators, parents, and family are provided with critical information about the child's development and and growth. An assessment identifies the child's strengths and weaknesses within a program and information on how well the program meets the goals and needs of the children. This will give the educator, parents, and family's an idea how they can reach the child's needs if there are any that need to be met. The best way to assess a child is by leaving them play this way it will put no pressure on the child and bring the best out in them. Children also are more themselves when they are playing in a natural area rather than when we ask them to do something, they feel pressured and we often do not see the best potential in the child that way. another way to assess a child is by taking photos and videos of them playing as evidence that they are at their full potential or we can write an observation and take notes while doing this it is important that they include every little detail of how the child is playing whether it is independently or playing with others every bit of detail matter such as eye contact, body language, verbal, copying and proximity.

Does observing children in play give us a more accurate reflection of where they are in their development? How do we know this?

Observing a child while they play gives us an accurate reflection of where they are in their development, this has been proven through experiences of experts. It is a known fact that children are themselves while playing whether it is on their own or with other children. Studies say that a child's behaviour is affected when an adult is direct present while the child/children play. If we closely monitor the child while they play, we will find out their likes and dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses and how they learn through their play and interactions. It also reveals more about the child as an individual, and how they interact with other children and adults.

How can adults support this?

Suggested by Howard and McInnes that adults use simple language as from experience that talk at home was different to talk at school with more opportunities for learning with the language at home. It is also suggested that closed questions meaning that they are simple yes or no answer questions as it has been recognised that ‘the cue of adult presence is ‘more likely to be used to distinguish between play and not play activities. It has also concluded that the cue of adult presence is less likely to be used in making play and not play distinctions’ which means that adults should not be direct present while children play as the result in children taking a more playful approach to task which will have consequences for their subsequent behaviour. It is also known that adults tend to involve themselves in work rather than play activities.

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