Section 1

Starting blocks (no date) suggest that play is an activity which enables the child to demonstrate the ability to explore, have an imagination and a sense of making decisions and providing an entertainment factor. Furthermore, Play Scotland (2024a) claims that play is a method which allows the child to connect with the world, creating a better understanding of others, play is a task that children undertake frequently without questioning it, providing freedom and space, which involves observing, experimenting, trying, imitating as well as, appreciating the surroundings and the people.

Inspired Schools (2023) mentions that creativeness is an instinctive human attribute, creative play is an action which can influence diverse thinking which forms a fundamental requirement to the individual's needs and self-expression, comprising of crafts, singing, dancing, stories, baking, imaginative fun, as well as, role play, while offering the opportunities and endless possibilities to extend the mind and the inventiveness of the child.

According to Rhino Play (2018) the advantages of creative play include cognitive development, which offers the chance to expand the awareness of each child by providing opportunities to ask questions relating to the environment as this enables the child to develop their critical reflection, making decisions along with problem solving and allowing clear clarity of the full picture, other advantages include emotional development, the child may experience difficulties in communicating their emotions, involving artistic activities could provide an alternative opportunity to indicate any emotions the child may be experiencing, with it being either positive or negative interactions. Splash Learning (2024) highlights that social development through creative play could strengthen children's social skills and provide opportunities to create bonds and friendships with children while playing together, physical development enables children to increase visual-motor coordination, In addition to this, building language and communication skills can provide a fun approach which enables the child to connect with others and to share thoughts, while developing their language and imagination through their observation of other children (Splash Learning, 2024; Rhino Play, 2018).

Early Years Alliance (2022) mentions that outdoor activities provide educational opportunities for the child, as well as, providing benefits to the child's health and wellbeing by encouraging the time spent outdoors, undertaking physical activities such as, running and jumping, as this could improve the child's health by assisting the development in terms of balance, bone strength and building physical growth.

Early Years Resources (2016) has outlined the advantages of outdoor learning, which promotes active living and provides the child with a healthy lifestyle, while providing awareness of nature, as well as the surroundings which enables the child to gain the knowledge of the planet by experiencing the creatures within the environment, and learning about where they live and their lifecycles, also providing freedom to explore the environment to help with the development of social skills and creating opportunities for individual experiences to be discussed, furthermore, providing independence by allowing the use of loose parts to play a variety of games with friends to create interactions, additionally children who play outside are more resilient to the unpredictable phases of life and are less likely to grow ill, anxious, or violent. The outdoors space allows children to create an untidy environment, which inspires the children to be more imaginative and to try new things that may not be feasible indoors (Louv, no date cited in Barnardos, 2014).

My Teaching Cupboard (no date) highlights the characteristics of Isaac's theory, which considers play to be influential to the cognitive and emotional development, additionally, play can deliver a secure space, allowing the child to investigate and indicate their feelings during play, while allowing the child to participate in active learning by becoming comfortable through their abilities. Isaac's theory has indicated that early year's practitioners can consider the use of observation by monitoring the child to recognise the interests and desires as well as the stage of development by offering a play-based classroom with a variety of activities which could be used to incorporate elements of creative play, such as arts and crafts as well as role play, the use of these activities could aid the growth of each child in terms of intellect, emotional and social abilities which could reinforce the child's ability to cope with problems, compassion, and emotional facial expressions.

National Literacy Trust (2021) claims that play is useful for development and the ability to communicate, creating the basis for literacy by providing the child with opportunities to practice new sounds and words with friends and to exercise further` creativity by means of storytelling. During moments of play, knowledge can be obtained in a variety of ways, play by oneself or within a group, also having access or options to a variety of toys to express their views and space to exercise a physical activity which remains enjoyable to the child's education, even if the child is playing alone or within a group, moreover, Play Scotland (2024b) has pointed out the significance of play on a child's life and the healthy development which has become increasingly acknowledged in the past few years, whereby there has been an indication that play during childhood has a behavioural impact which has contributed to the child's lifestyle, health, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities, furthermore, the surrounding environment for playing has shown a considerable influence on a child's encounters, options and connections with the other children and the setting.

According to Thomas (2023), Parten's theory shows the six stages of play where the use of one-minute observations are carried out throughout free play, research was conducted to understand variety of ways in which children may engage in play, which included unoccupied behaviour where the child observed the environment around them without participating in the activity, also the onlooker is an example of a child who may be an existing spectator of the individuals to whom they are playing with, where they interact and ask questions, solitary independent play is where the child may sit away from the other children and play alone, parallel activity is when a child plays separately however, close by other children with no direct interaction, associative play includes a child playing collectively with a group of children, and finally cooperative or organised supplementary play which involves the children participating within a structured group, where there will be one individual who may lead the way by guiding other individuals while having a collective goal.

Section 2

Amin (2022) mentions that adults can actively participate during play which can provide support and guidance for the children, during play as they may need this to allow their imagination and creativeness to be evidenced. The adult can introduce forms of direct involvement in the activity such as, delegating roles amongst the children or jointly playing with the children and being directly involved to create positive relationships with the children which can aid the development of each child and help build confidence, furthermore, Parenta (2020) suggests that the role of the adult can expand as well as help the children to engage with the practitioner to provide a safe surrounding which enables the children to explore and trail out their thoughts to establish trusting bonds with children so they can completely engage in play that is self-driven, creating spaces where children can expand on their concepts and experiences.

Howard and McInnes (2013) discusses an activity lead exercise, which involved like play which allowed the children to have a choice to take part in the activities, as opposed to not like play which involved the practitioner requesting the child to participate. During this exercise, a group of children took part in two forms of play where there had been a comparison on the behaviours of the children, and to conclude, there was a difference among the levels of emotional health shown by the children in both sessions, whereby, the children who carried out the like play operation scored considerably higher than the children who carried out the similar activity not like the play, overall the results of this research have indicated that children viewed the activity as play rather than something that is not considered as play, furthermore, the children also displayed an enhanced emotional well-being, moreover, Howard and McInnes (2013) believes that the value of play strengthens the child's emotional health and has indicated that early years practitioners must comprehend the opinion of the each child regarding play and provide a variety of play conditions to emphasise the experimental ability of play.

Self-directed play can promote creativity by supporting the child with their imagination in the process of using their creativeness, as this provides the pupils with the flexibility to think imaginatively and with enjoyment, which could enhance problem solving and decision making, Furthermore, it is connected to unconventional

thinking which offers the children the option to conquer difficulties by using building games and participating in running, jumping, and providing the opportunity to develop arm strength, balance, hand-eye coordination, and physical fitness, while increasing the social and communication abilities which are regularly performed during role-playing and allowing the children to comprehend the world better by incorporating a variety of characters across different settings, by offering an experience to understand how the community works and how to communicate with other individuals, which provides the children with an opportunity to build their own identity and value the opinion of others (Red Monkey Play, 2024).

Holland (2018) defines article 31 from United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby, each child has the right to leisure and relaxation, as well as play and age-appropriate recreational activities with an option to take part in arts and cultural activities. The convention has acknowledged that these components are fundamental to childhood due to the enhancement of the child's experiences, therefore, the local authority is accountable and must evaluate the play provision from 2012 and support adequate play from 2014. Children have expressed how meaningful it is for them to have an opportunity for enjoyable as well as safe play and leisure activities in the local community.

Wales implement the guaranteed rights of the child to play, the Welsh government placed a strong value upon play and the benefits it provides for a child's life based on the primary right to play, due to this the child's enjoyment of life and overall wellbeing are greatly enhanced by play and the Welsh government claim that providing all children with high-quality play activities, could help lessen the consequences of poverty on their lives, moreover, Wales has a play friendly country guidance for local authorities which offers guidance on carrying out these responsibilities (Play Wales, 2022).

The Norwegian Kindergarten (2022) identifies the main components of the Scandinavian way, which is defined as togetherness, as it involves educational play and the outdoors being the playground, which develops the understanding of the child and the knowledge to interpersonal abilities to socialize together, however It has been considered that this is best accomplished when using a play-based education, therefore on each day a major experience is provided to distil confidence

and self-awareness in each child while talking and playing, the child is questioned by the care to encourage their ability to think and to enhance their curiosity, to create opportunities to discover, research and learn.

Section 3

According to City and Guilds, WJEC CBAC (2019) the foundation phase profile was created to assist early years practitioners to conduct assessments on children and provide early detection of any occurrences in progress and needs. Special education needs and additional learning needs can cause delays in development, this assessment provides the children the extra assistance as the profile consists of two sections which are the compact profile and the full profile, the compact profile is utilised as an early assessment in education, as it includes a record of abilities to aid the children's learning, whereas the full profile is aimed at assisting the assessment of the child from the time they start school until they reach year two, moreover, the full profile offers a holistic overview of the child's development which covers the four regions of education.

Pacey (2017) identifies that the usefulness of the foundation phase profile because it assists the assessment of the child's progress and skills by carrying out observations, It was developed to evaluate the child's capabilities and development within the four sections of learning through cultural variety, well-being and personal and social development, the development of language, literacy and communication skills, development of mathematics and physical development. The profile was used to facilitate the tracking development milestones and accomplishments. Each of the four sections of learning provide a variety of skills ladders based on the development outcomes which are displayed by each child, therefore it is useful for evaluating talents and development areas, additionally the skills ladder also assists in determining the potential next steps of development, which provides a useful record to help plan, furthermore, the profile can also be used with parents or carers permission, to ease a child's transition from home to school or another childcare facility, however there are challenges that should also be considered, as there are learning and engagement limitations resulting from physical, sensory, and emotional and communication challenges, therefore children should be provided with opportunities to plan their learning, practice newly acquired skills in a variety of

contexts across all subject areas and time to reflect on and evaluate their learning during progression.

Welsh Government (2022a) has highlighted research which was conducted in a variety of schools where a minority of practitioners observed certain skills which were more accurately assessed by the profile than others, specifically, assessments in the areas of mathematical development, language, literacy, communication, and physical development, which are more precise based on the learner's progress than those in the personal, social development, well-being, and culturally diverse areas. The challenges of the foundation phase profile where the length of time to complete the profiles, teachers reported that they felt more pressured during the first six weeks of the reception year, with their time being diverted from teaching to finishing the foundation phase profile, also an early year's practitioner declared through participation of the assessment, that they lost out on opportunities to work with pupils who were upset, and focus was diverted from the child's well-being, furthermore, it was acknowledged by twenty-two practitioners that in general teachers were not informed of anything new by carrying out these assessments, to conclude, the foundation phase profile is no longer used in Wales as the Welsh government changed the curriculum in 2022 (Welsh Government, 2022b).

West Sussex County Council (2021) highlights that observation is a formal term which forms a key element, that is a routine within professional practice while working with children, which involves closely observing, paying attention, and taking note of a child or a group of children while performing activities to determine the specific needs of each individual to allow the practitioner to recognise the characteristics and the reactions to various situations such as, meeting new people, detecting which habits, events, or pursuits a child appears to find easy or challenging, as well as any that appear to cause anxiety, carers can also evaluate the development stages and learn more about the individual care and educational needs to enable the next phases in the learning and development.

Observation provides a chance for parents to comprehend the child's interests and intellectual preferences while being observant, Furthermore, assisting in obtaining data and specifics, which enables parents, educators, and mentors to act rather than just react in response to circumstances and facilitating in tracking developmental

shifts in children during their most vulnerable times, also providing support for educators, parents, and mentors in accepting that each child is an individual and it aids in fostering a child's natural curiosity, as well as offering support to identify those factors in the surroundings with the adult that could either encourage or hinder the child's overall growth (The Global Montessori Network, No Date).

Observation is a core professional skill which is used in professional practice which allows practitioners to have a complete understanding of the children's growth and development, additionally, building relationships with children which requires observation to understand the child's interests, and to identity the forces that have shaped their lives in a sense of watching, listening, and noticing children, which is compared to looking out of the window into their life, therefore, teachers must consider and react with consideration to offer appropriate opportunities, support, and instruction (Birth to Five Matters, 2021).

Section 4

Neaum (2016) identifies the key reason children are observed during play which consists of a wide range of reasons to understand the capabilities of each child. Observation can provide knowledge of each child's interests which is useful in additional learning needs to provide the best options to assist the learning and development and to support the planning and provision to adapt the approach and interactive techniques to best suit the needs of the children, Furthermore, to connect theory and practice with the aim to further develop the knowledge of how the child learns with the environment in which play is performed, and to understand the type of games each child is involved with, who is involved and how each child is involved to acknowledge the activities carried out that provide excitement to each child, and gaining their interest which forms an element that is used to motivate the children as children are more likely to learn when they participate in an engrossed or interesting activity or experience.

The input of the early year's practitioner can be encouraging to the progress of children's emotions and attitude during play, as well as their approach to an activity and their learning ability, this could all be assisted by recognising and utilising the signs that children use, therefore, this creates opportunities to use an adult-led and child-led activity which the practitioner can engage and cooperate with the children

and build on each activity the child performs, moreover, the practitioner could show a productive pedagogy within the early years setting by adopting a diverse role from being responsible for the activities and instead, allowing each child to use their own initiative to perform activities that are self-lead, and creating a mixture of adult-led and child-led activities where the practitioner is required to engage and communicate with the children. (Ashiabi, 2007 and Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002 cited in McInnes *et al.*, 2013).

Children learn a great deal about themselves from their peers, as well as the connections and the world around them through play by realising the value of play, it is how the children integrate new information, investigate concepts and emotions, grow and form bonds with others while refining social skills, therefore, observations hold significance as they allow practitioners to understand the motivations behind a child's actions, the objectives of the child and the actions of the child which could have a deeper meaning than what first appears, Consequently, educators need to clearly see what to look out for during observations and to use them responsively, in conclusion, practitioners need to be inquisitive and contemplative about why children could be acting in certain ways, having a deeper comprehension of the development of each child, moreover, additional tools are needed to educate practitioners, especially those who are new to the field to understand how to make insightful observations, It is also believed that the child is not at fault if the carer cannot understand the child’s actions or if they believe their acts are meaningless (Louis, 2020 cited in Arnerich, 2020).

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