

Section 1

Why is play important?

Play is usually perceived as an activity that is pursued to experience pleasure. (Whitebread, D., Basilio, M., Kuvalja, M., & Verma, M. 2012) laid emphasis on the significance of play promoting the physical, emotional and social development of children, play is vital as it offers an ideal opportunity to develop a sense of participation, socialism, teamwork and cooperation with others. Along with this, it not only teaches the children self-awareness capability, but at the same time provides a recreational sense helping their mind and body to relax and establish bonds with the other children of their age. Being engaged in the activities, concentration improvement can be observed.

What is the role of self-directed play?

Self-directed play or free play or open-ended play occurs at the child's terms and is created with their own imagination, led by their interests and motivations. According to the research report (Howard-Jones, Taylor and Sutton, 2002) free play or self-directed play benefits children's creativity, thinking and exploring capability. In addition to this, it builds self-confidence, encourages independence, stimulates the creative and imaginative skills, teaches problem solving, allows children to direct themselves at their own pace of learning, cultivates a sense of motivation in them. By making their own games with their own rules, a feeling of success and independence is experienced, by providing a safe, prepared environment to discover their own world and find the innate joy in the play. This can be seen as the exploration of their own limits and identity with a sense of self control.

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

There are various types of play for contributing to the child's overall development. (Amanda Rock, 2020) suggests that sociologist Mildred Parten explains that there are six different types of play that depend on the social setting, age and mood of the child to be engaged promoting implications that can bring holistic development which includes:

Unoccupied Play:

It refers to the activity dealing with random movements without any objective, setting up an exploration of future play. With this the child explores the movements and learns about excitement.

Solitary Play:

Solitary play refers to independent play where a child plays alone engrossed in toys and objects. This is when the child has not learned social skills or maybe shy to interact with other children. The play helps in becoming self-reliant, make their own decisions, develop self-confidence to interact with others, improvises creativity and gives relaxation to the mind.

Onlooker Play:

This is a type of play when children are not actively playing but are keen in the observation observing the other children play. This builds a sense of observation and lets the child acquire language skills by listening and learning according to the observations.

Parallel Play:

Parallel play is a side-by-side play with limited interaction involving in their own space as a room of 3 children playing by themselves interacting occasionally. The benefits include the ability to learn and socialize with other children of the same age, develop the sense of role play and possession.

Associative Play:

Associative play is a play that involves more with other children rather than playing with toys, setting no rules of play without any structure and common goal. The benefits include the increased social and sharing skills, language development and cooperative skills.

Cooperative Play:

Cooperative play is where children learn to interact and cooperate together. It involves teamwork, sharing and understanding others, developing communication skills, learning self-expression and boosting the confidence of interaction.

Play supports the holistic development of children ensuring good opportunities to interact with other children of the same age and further develop skills at the budding age to focus on the overall development of the child.

How can adults support self-directed play?

(Kozi Kidz, 2018) Adults can support self-directed play by encouraging by:

Letting them to the outside world:

Giving the children an outdoor natural environment to play is a perfect set for the self-directed play as they are free to be imaginative encouraging them to be resourceful about the materials around and understand the risks at their own terms, developing a decision-making skill.

Providing open-ended toys to play:

A variety of toys are available to play with, building blocks, puppets, etc. can be a great tool for encouraging self-directed play. The toys and material around can help the child develop his own game with his own terms to manage and set an onset for self-direction.

Asking Questions:

For encouraging the child to feel free and explore their thoughts to play, questions can be asked to help them develop the play game and set the agenda for them. With the questions and their possible answers, they can develop the ideas rolling in their minds put to an effective play game.

Having Patience:

If children are experiencing disagreements over the play direction, let them discover their own solutions given a chance to negotiate with other children resolving minor conflicts, and the adults should have patience before intervening.

Section 2

Why is risk beneficial for children?

Exposing young children to risk is beneficial as provision of risks and hazards in the play engages and challenges the growth, learning and development of the child. (Gill T. 2007) By providing an opportunity for the children to take risks which leads to positive response in regard to child's health, social and emotional requirements with a holistic development where they learn managing their own risks in a sustained and assessed environment and gain experience of the unpredictable world.

It is essential to give the children a more independent environment, (Susa and Benedict in Ball. 2002) risk taking can be associated with further benefits contributing to

personality development traits with creative and imaginative skills. Risk taking teaches valuable lessons for life developing life skills where children can learn self-regulation with the analysis of certain activities and the action to be taken that could create a risky turn, and if the child builds up the ability to analyze the risks, sure he can figure out a way to escape.

(Dweck, 2000) addresses that risk has the potential to create a positive implication on child's development needs. With the study it is deduced that risk can permit the children in pushing themselves to their limits of capacities and can encourage them to develop and progress. He argued that personality traits are not determined biologically and are a result of people's attitude surrounding them.

(Taylor, A. F., & Kuo, F. E., 2009) Risk taking promotes mental and physical health with the long-term exposure of play. The risky play behavior involves activities with less physical activity and more courage. This may include climbing a tree, walking to park alone, etc. such activities not only challenge the physical traits but also strengthen the muscles, bones and heart. Embracing the free play helps gain knowledge of height, speed, various tools along with their hazards and benefits. Also, the enhancement of emotional health can be experienced with risk taking, building a sense of motivation and driving them to achieve the goal even if they face failure, which eventually helps them master a new skill by overcoming the obstacle and advance gradually to tackle the problem. With this, the children are actually reducing their own risks by developing instincts to overcome their fear and learn life skills. This may include activities like dangling upside down the monkey bars, riding the bicycle, etc., practicing persistence and resilience without even knowing can build up a characteristic of effective learning.

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

Although it is natural to keep the children safe and give them a safe environment, at the same time exposing them to a risky environment whilst keeping them safe from harm is essential. Exploring risks in the play has obvious development and learning benefits engaging the children into provision of challenges and situations to make decisions and assess the risks and possible solutions. The need for introducing a balance is beneficial and research shows that a great majority of injuries when exposed to risky environments require little or no medical treatment but can leave a positive learning impact on the child thus, giving a sense of relief to the parents and a learning lesson for the child. The exposure can be done cautiously with common sense promoting opportunities to build self-confidence for the child. (EYFS, 2016) promotes the characteristics of effective learning supporting the child's exposure to risk. Encouraging children to try new activities to judge their abilities and respecting their efforts promotes the idea to incorporate a safe feeling in their mind. Being aware and alert of the possible

risks and identifying the significance of encouraging exploration in the young children's ensuring physical development while at the same time not inhibiting the risk-taking experiences. Persuading them to opt for challenges rather than being shy can possibly increase the persistence and learning abilities and lack of risk in play can damage the child's well-being and resilience.

Research suggests that parents' over-protective attitudes depict a shallow understanding of the children's play needs, and lack of understanding of 'play value' as expressed by the practitioners (Armstrong et al, 2006). Setting the children free with a sense of autonomy without supervising them and letting them play in their own space independently can lead to a positive implication in their development phase.

(Linda Newman, Nicole Leggett, 2019) suggests that the introduction of risk can be done gradually by increasing the level of difficulty. Without getting into a direct involvement, discussing the risk can be beneficial to let them learn and expose them to the risks but being available in case they need without explicitly making them feel their presence. Just as the children are introduced to the potential risks, it provides an opportunity for the children to build skills, judgement and confidence. The children can feel self-satisfied and happy with the benefits and experiences of learning with the risk introduction giving them a healthy growth and development environment for a competent world to manage risk in play provision.

Section 3

Discussion and understanding of Observation method for young children

Leuven Scale Individual Child Observations

(Matt Arnerich, 2018) Leuven Scale Individual Child Observations is an assessment developed at Leuven University, Belgium by the joint effort of Ferre Leavers and his team. It is a 5-point scale that allows child care practitioners to measure the wellbeing of the young children and their involvement for tracking the development, learning and progressive state of the child. According to the explanation given by Leavers, a high state of well-being can be considered when the child feels comfortable in the environment, has confidence to experiment and is eager to explore. On the other hand, a low level of wellbeing is considered when a child feels frightened and anxious, making it hard for them to grasp the skills in a sustained and sophisticated manner while exploring their potential. With the effective teaching that is laid by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are the gestures depicting child's involvement which are

closely associated with characteristics of efficient learning. Leuven scale can help monitor the indicators effectively that can come up and promote a practical intervention plan for the holistic development of the child.

The Leuven scale. (2019) The emotional wellbeing on the Leuven Scale can be done as:

- Extremely low: When a child tends to show clear gestures depicting distress or when they appear scared or aloof, and act aggressively, causing harm to themselves or others nearby.
- Low: When a child appears agitated and does not show an erect posture. Although, the inconvenience is not distinct every time and is not as powerful to be depicted in Level one.
- Moderate: When a child encompasses a neutral way of expression and manner. The demeanor and expressions do not show gestures of disappointment.
- High: When a child seems satisfied and happy but these indicators are not forever present with a similar intensity.
- Extremely high: When a child is spirited, assured and shows no gestures of tension or stress. The behaviors are expressive and spontaneous. He will appear at ease.

The levels of involvement on the Leuven Scale can be done as:

- Extremely low: When a child seems absent minded and depicts an absence of enthusiasm. He will go on staring passively without an aim or try looking around repetitively to check what others are doing.
- Low: When a child is simply disturbed and may not be able to concentrate on a specific task when he is being assessed, then looks blank without expression about what is happening in the surrounding.
- Moderate: When a child seems engaged in an activity at a routine level. It may occur that he is progressing with their development however they show energy or concentration quite rarely.

- High: When the child does not get disturbed easily and appears engrossed in the activity, he is engaged in.
- Extremely high: When the child acknowledges spontaneous activity indicating that he is lively, focused, persistent and creative throughout the observation period.

Leuven Scale for holistic development:

(Cheqdin Childcare Software, 2019) The process-oriented strategy will be accessed by practitioners simply and might act as an extremely helpful screening tool to optimize the educational opportunities for every kid. The technique is good to make sure of providing the proper 'physical' and 'emotional' setting for learning.

(Pollard and Rosenberg, 2003) The research suggested that a wide variety of factors can possibly have an impact on the children's well-being growth and development, as a result, provided a more holistic definition of well-being including health, emotional intelligence, emotional development, social competence are the few factors of consideration. Children have to be compelled to be long-faced with challenges and experiences that do not seem to be too straightforward, nor too exhausting, and this could solely happen once they perceive their competencies, and their interests. Taking into consideration the importance of health and overall development and involvement of children, with the aim towards filling the gaps concerning the amount of young children's health and involvement in the early settings of children are set up with a holistic development ensures and assess self-confidence, encourages independence, stimulates creative and imaginative skills, teaches problem solving, allows children to direct themselves at their own pace of learning, cultivates a sense of motivation in them.

The benefits of the tool include assessing the wellbeing in terms of self-confidence and self-reliance, relief and peace and experiencing joy and happiness without restraints. Assessing the sense of involvement by taking into consideration focus, efficiency, creativity, expressions, posture, response time and precision. The limitations is that being a 5 point scale the further specifications relating to a certain key area of assessment can be missed concerning the individual child focusing on the unique behavior of every child.

Section 4

When observing and assessing children why is play important?

Observing children's play offers a very important means where adults can observe and audit the child's development phase. Keeping a check and track of activities or play state is a help to the practitioners enabling them to monitor the time children utilize to equip themselves into certain tasks, as per their interests and form an experience with the associated activity, the practitioners get an idea to set up a well-structured and balanced program documenting the child's strengths, weaknesses and interests.

(Lindon, 1999) It is suggested that assessment and observation should be done by taking a variety of factors into consideration including the sensitivity of the environment, the purpose of setting, the child's individuality in terms of age, maturity, ability and the opportunities available to them. When all this is considered, the barriers that are believed in assessment need to be removed. The research argues that these factors may be a rough guideline and the eradication plays a vital role in assessment.

(Hyder, 2004) argues that children tend to experience learning through their imaginative and creative play, in which concentrating and looking at may be a significant part to observe or assess a child's emotional and physical expression. Observation provides an aid to straightforward, however effective ways of assessing young kids as they develop. By documenting how a child reacts and learns new things, relates and socializes with others. The practitioner analyses the data and develops activities to push growth and development on the skills, contributing to the success of acquiring skills.

Does observing children in play give a more accurate reflection of where they are in their development?

(Neaum. S, 2016) suggests that there is a need to observe to build an understanding of a child's grasping ability and his interests in order to make him learn in an effective way by equipping him with activities of his interest and come up with approaches and methods to best support the child in growth and development.

(Neaum. S, 2016) Various techniques are observed for making an accurate reflection of development phases, this includes time sampling, which takes up a short observation of the child at regular interval tracking, using tracking to track the observations following the child's choices within the setting between activities and keeping a record. A child's learning capability can be assessed and conducted through careful analysis with proper documentation giving a useful and accurate reflection on the development phase.

How can adults support this?

(Cooper, 2000) provides an evidence that parents do not lay significance on play value. The research conducted reflects that the children's and carers' attitudes towards play was assessed via questionnaires in public play areas, and it was found that, safety was on a higher priority in play when compared with enjoyment for carers. It was found that the desire of adults to minimize risks was partially driven by their own convenience as they wished to relax and take their focus away from supervising children, and favoured high levels of safety.

Adults can support the understanding of the importance of the role play when undertaking observations and assessments by listening to the child understanding his needs in an effective manner. Understanding the practitioner requirements as well and supporting the baseline assessments for the ongoing observations and assessments to be done for the child's growth and development check.

(Smith, 1998) suggests that adults can bring a degree of maturity to activity and play, which is referred as 'pedagogical relation to children' in research terms. It emphasizes on the adults' knowledge to encourage risk-taking to support children and negotiate their own risks. With this done, adults can make a critical sense of their own beliefs based on common sense judgements. In order to support children in taking up challenges in play, it is necessary for the adults to become actively involved in children's play just words of encouragement are not enough to support the holistic development of the children.

The adult needs to be involved in the process of observation where they can decide with the practitioner on the need and purpose of assessment for observing the growth and development of the child. Plan the process and help the child feel comfortable in the observation setting. Be clear on ethical issues for the assessment understanding the child's concern if any. Being supportive throughout the assessment plan. Reflect on outcomes, also ensure active participation of the child in the activities so that the observations can be effective. Agree with the practitioner on the ways to decide the future assessments and support the outcomes. Adjusting the planning appropriately and being a monitor in progress as a support system for the child to engage into his growth and development plan.

(Howard, J., & McInnes, K., 2013) highlights in their research the need of training of practitioners for enabling them to understand the views of children relating to play and utilize the information to build playful situations maximizing the developmental potential

of play. Also, focusing on providing important evidence to comprehend the significance of play and enhance children's emotional well-being, observations discussed in relation to professional practice to deal with children.

REFERENCES

- [1] Whitebread, D., Basilio, M., Kuvalja, M., & Verma, M. (2012). The importance of play: A report on the value of children's play with a series of policy recommendations.
- [2] Howard-Jones, Taylor and Sutton. (2002). The Effect of Play on the Creativity of Young Children During Subsequent Activity. (2002, August). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233035688_The_Effect_of_Play_on_the_Creativity_of_Young_Children_During_Subsequent_Activity
- [3] Rock, A. (2020). Important types of play in your child's development. Retrieved January 11, 2021, from Verywellfamily.com website: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/types-of-play-2764587>
- [4] Kidz, K. (2018). "I'm bored!" - How to encourage self directed play. Retrieved from Kozikidz.com website: <https://www.kozikidz.com/blog/im-bored-how-to-encourage-self-directed-play>
- [5] Gill T. (2007) No fear: growing up in a risk averse society. Retrieved from <https://timrgill.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/no-fear-19-12-07.pdf>
- [6] Susa and Benedict in Ball (2002) 'Playgrounds: risks, benefits and choices'. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56f1b6cbe707ebc63b90b4ef/t/59a5e842e45a7ca7180dea/1504045124854/ISGA+Risk+Declaration+-+English.pdf>
- [7] Dweck, C. S. (2000). Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development. London, England: Psychology Press.
- [8] Taylor, A. F., & Kuo, F. E. (2009). Is contact with nature important for healthy child development? State of the evidence. In C. Spencer & M. Blades (Eds.), Children and their Environments (pp. 124–140). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [9] Male, T., & Palaiologou, I. (2016). The early years foundation stage. 22–44

[10] Armstrong, S.C., Barker, J, Davey, R., Diosi, M., Horton, J., Kraftl, P., Lumsden, E., Marandet, E., Mathews, H., Murray, J., Pyer, M. and Smith, F. (2006) Evaluation of Play Provision and Play Needs in the London Borough of Redbridge. London: Redbridge Children's Fund.

[11] (Linda Newman, Nicole Leggett. (2019). Retrieved from Researchgate.net website: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316245919_Play_Challenging_Educators%27_Beliefs_about_Play_in_the_Indoor_and_Outdoor_Environmen

[12] Arnerich, M. (2018). How to apply the Leuven Scales in practice. Retrieved from Famly.co website: <https://famly.co/blog/management/leuven-scales/>

[13] The Leuven scale. (2019). Retrieved from Emotionallyhealthyschools.org website: <https://emotionallyhealthyschools.org/primary/the-leuven-scale/>

[14] Cheqdin Childcare Software. (2019). The Leuven Scale for early years : What should childcare providers know.

[15] Pollard, E.L. & Rosenberg, M.L. (2003). The strength-based approach to child well-being: let's begin with the end in mind. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=0ulKq93f4FUC>

[16] Lindon, J. (1999) Too Safe For Their Own Good. London: National Early Years Network.

[17] Hyder T., (2004). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234599883_War_Conflict_and_Play_Debating_Play

[18] Neaum. S. (2016). Retrieved from https://study.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/Neaum%2C%20S.%20%282016%29%20Observing%20and%20Assessing%20Children%27s%20Learning%20and%20Development.%20London%2C%20Sage._.pdf

[19] Cooper, J. (2000) Listening to Children at Play. London: Theories Landscape.

[20] Smith, S.J. (1998) Risk and Our Pedagogical Relation to Children: On the playground and beyond. New York: State University of New York.

[21] Howard, J., & McInnes, K. (2013). The impact of children's perception of an activity as play rather than not play on emotional well-being: Play and emotional well-being. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 39(5), 737–742.