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Children's Play: Theory and Practices ECEY4003/C

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Portfolio

Section 1

There are many play types, such as physical, language and symbolic, these are just the few of different types of play as according to Brodie (2024) knowing the various forms of play enables us to give children a variety of engaging experiences. Play is how they investigate, gain knowledge, and interpret the world. The foundation of early childhood development is play. It's important for learning, development, and wellbeing and supporting children's holistic development.

Play with sensory motors

Children use all their senses to learn about their environment during the early stages of life, Mathews (2024) suggests a phenomenon known as sensory motor play. What's fascinating about infancy is that everything that appears to be a thing can intrigue a child's interest and all these things sort of turn into playful objects.

Around nine months of age is when object exploration and the selection of new objects for play typically begin. They grow quite fascinated of things that roll, bounce, and make noise. By the time they are twelve months old, babies prefer toys that use the cause-and-effect principle.

A sensory motor play example

The concept of cause and effect will eventually become clear to a child who is playing with a soft squeeze toy that releases a sound each time it is squeezed.

Sensory play what is it

According EYR Team (2019) activities that engage children's senses, such as sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, are referred to as sensory play. Giving children this kind of activity will allow them to use their senses to naturally learn more about the world around them. By encouraging the brain's neurons to form connections and support growth in all learning domains, these activities aid in brain development.

Children's sense of touch, for instance, develops as they experiment with sensory materials. This establishes the groundwork for learning additional abilities, like using fine and gross motor skills and acknowledging objects by touch. By shaping, scooping, splashing, and moulding objects, these motor skills can be improved.

In early childhood settings, "messy play" is frequently seen as a purely ludic play activity. According to Gascoyne (2017) some therapeutic professionals have acknowledged that it can be important for helping young children who have experienced trauma. research that explored at how young children who have gone through trauma might use messy play to control and communicate their feelings.

Sand, water, paint, playdough, gloop, gellybaff, clay, shredded paper, and shaving foam are resources of materials included in messy play. Patterns, unique characteristics, and transformative qualities in the children's interactions with these resources were recorded.

According to The Old Station Nursery (2020) the vital aspect of early childhood development is sensory play, which enables children to use their senses to investigate and understand the world around them. Children gain language skills, problem-solving abilities, fine and gross motor skills, and cognitive development through sensory activities.

Another example of play is loose parts according to Williams (2022) this helps children learn skills in all subject areas. It is child and supports children in developing their sense of self and independence. Due to its unlimited nature, loose parts play facilitates children's exploration, observation, inquiry, investigation, construction, deconstruction, and interaction with others and their environment and open-ended exploration.

There are numerous advantages to loose parts play for both the child and the adults who participate. For instance, it is inexpensive and simple to set up. Additionally, a significant amount of research on its effects has produced encouraging results.

There are numerous benefits to using loose parts play, these consist of, It develops creativity, It helps children relate to the real world and reality, they can determine their own goals for their play, they make their own stories and games, they engage in conversation and share their experiences with others. And It produces play that is rich in language, emphasizing vocabulary and dialogue.

Flavin (2022) suggest that sensorimotor experiences were central to Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Children can use loose parts play to develop their senses and build knowledge through practical investigation.

According to Jean Piaget's theory, children actively create knowledge by interacting with their surroundings. He distinguished a few cognitive development phases, including the sensorimotor stage, in which children are learning by using their senses and motor abilities. Piaget's theory is consistent with loose parts play in a few ways.

Sensorimotor exploration: Children actively use their senses by touching, smelling, and manipulating a variety of materials during loose parts play and also sensory play. They practice their motor skills and develop their sensory perceptions as they experiment with textures, shapes, sizes, and weights.

Building knowledge: According to Piaget, children use their interactions and behaviours to create cognitive structures. Piaget's theory of assimilation and accommodation, children develop their understanding of the world through loose parts play by experimenting with materials, drawing connections, and resolving issues.

According to Play Wales (2023) regardless of their culture, disability, gender, language, background, behaviour, or needs, all children have the right to play.

Section 2

Allowing children to explore and develop their self-confidence Play Adventures (2018) suggests that the idea behind self-directed children play is to let independently, without adult supervision, and without a set structure.

Play defines it, which is, freely selected: by deciding on and managing the play's content and purpose. Individually guided by pursuing their own interests, ideas, and instincts. Playing in their own manner for their own motives is known as intrinsic motivation.

According to Ledendecker (2020) these days, many toys have a specific function. Let's take a doll as an example. A doll will always be a doll, even though a child can use it for imaginative play. The same goes for a plastic dinosaur or a tiny toy train. This is not to suggest that these toys are flawed rather, their nature restricts the ways in which children can use them.

Let's think about a cardboard tube now. There are countless options! One minute the tube might be a megaphone, the next a telescope. It could be a bridge, a log, or a ball-guiding object. We provide children with basic materials for self-directed play, such as playdough, cardboard tubes, balls, sticks, scarves, and more.

Children do require some structure. According to Bottrill (2018) whether it's home time, lunch, or a carpet session, they should be aware of what comes next. They don't need to limit their education to just one hour of math or one hour of reading. We take away freedom when we enforce this. We limit opportunity, joy, and excitement. But as an adult, you can adopt and alter children's developmental needs. Children must have the valuable time to create, re-create, engage, and shape if they require more time to do so. Your 15-minute break adds up to an additional hour and fifteen minutes each week, which is time that children would prefer to spend playing. Recognizing the importance of adult's roles in the play cycle and their containing function within it.

King and Sturrock (2020) suggests that play maintenance: The worker watches the activity, but there is no need for intervention because the play is self-contained. Simple intervention: When an adult responds to a child's request, they serve as a resource for the play. This can be subtle.

Medial intervention: The adult participates in the child's play at the child's request, for example, by starting a game and then drawing, or by providing an alternative from which the child selects.

Complex intervention: When children and adults play together, there is a direct and prolonged overlap; the adult may need to participate in the play or serve as a partner to the playing child.

How can children benefit from self-directed play, according to Ledendecker (2020) It increases self-assurance. Children discover how much they can do for themselves through independent exploration. They feel successful when they create their own games with their own set of rules. It promotes self-reliance. Through self-directed play, they can develop independence early on in a prepared, secure setting. It inspires creativity, when they play independently, children are compelled to be creative. We are enabling them to exercise their creativity by providing them with these chances. As they play, they will create their own narratives and discover possibilities no one else has thought of. It imparts problem-solving skills. Creating one's own rules inevitably leads to solving problems. Children will need to learn how to make things work the way they want them to. Children can learn at their own pace. There is no time limit or academic standard to fulfil when playing on one's own. Every day, children have the chance to expand on their own knowledge in ways that make sense to them. It develops motivation from within.

Section 3

One of the most common and practical methods for evaluating development is observation. According to Care Learning (2025) It entails observing and listening to babies and children in a variety of settings to comprehend their interactions, behaviour patterns, and abilities. Both structured and unstructured observations are used by educators. Looking for behaviours or abilities, such as whether a baby can grasp an object or a child can share toys with friends, is known as structured observation. Unstructured observations enable the teacher to observe behaviours during play routines as they naturally arise.

There are a few observational techniques that you can use to do this effectively, Narrative observation, learning stories, time tracker, and photographic and video observations, according to Brodie (2017) The time you have available, and the purpose of the observation will determine which observational method you use. You may possess the ability to observe to use either method. Ironically, the shortest observation the magic moment requires the greatest amount of skill. This is because you may first identify the moment and then begin with and accurately record it.

According to Stout (2019) photographic and video observations are one of the selected observational techniques that are used in most setting. Upload method to the class seesaw school app, which is used for online chat, messaging, and sharing of content as well as photo and video chat.

Seesaw activities are an excellent method for organizing standard grade-level tests and gathering information that demonstrates children thought processes. As suggested by Stout (2019) school children in early childhood were practicing writing

words with the appropriate short vowel sound. The primary school teacher used Seesaw Activities to create a formative assessment that featured sentences like "I see a fish and a fan" that had picture clues. The words "fish" and "fan" lacked vowels. The children were required to read the sentence and write in the appropriate vowel using Seesaw's draw-and-record tool. All school children were given this as a seesaw exercise. Together, the teachers were able to examine the pupils' responses and identify the types of errors they were making. Hearing their thoughts aloud provides a deeper understanding of how they process information than simply examining their responses. One effective reason to document their progress is with a seesaw activity.

According to Lorina (2021) a child's learning during an experience can be perfectly documented with photo observations, which also offer insight into the child's abilities and development. When it comes to taking pictures of a child's emotions, this is a fantastic chance to record their expression when they finally finish a challenging task they were working on, their expression when they are deeply engaged in an activity, or their smile when their parent arrives to pick them up in the afternoon. It is possible to use each of these captures in documentation. When using photographs for documentation, keep in mind to include comments and descriptions of the events described in the photos. Photography is a fascinating tool for recording development and change, and well-chosen images will faithfully capture the child's educational path.

Practitioners can develop a comprehensive understanding of the child by seeing them in a variety of settings. According to Care learning (2024) their interactions with peers, reactions to difficulties, and emotional expression are all part of the holistic perspective. This knowledge aids in the development of caring and encouraging surroundings where children feel secure and appreciated.

We have seen that if we observe children with care, attention, consideration, and generosity, we can gain insights into the depth of their learning. Smidt (2015) suggest other significant motivations for observing and attempting to interpret what we see have to do with the duties of the adult who looks after and instructs young children. Our daily efforts to strive for quality include observing learning and getting to know children's thoughts and emotions.

According to Conkbayir and Pascal (2020) constructivism is the name given to Jean Piaget's method, that children learn by actively creating their own knowledge through their investigations and expanding on prior understandings. Regular observations and assessments to improve the understanding intellectual development of children.

Section 4

When an observer watches children play, according to Early years careers (2016) they can gather valuable information. It offers details about the child in relation to them individually.

Care learning (2025) suggests that when working with children in a play work setting, observation is important. It enables playworkers to gain a deeper understanding of children's play behaviours, social interactions, and developmental stages. Children use play as a means of self-expression and communication of their needs, feelings, and thoughts. Playworkers can better support, facilitate, and create an environment where children can explore and flourish by keeping a close eye on them.

Moyles (2010) shows us that since play is unquestionably the most natural way for children to learn worldwide, it is important for us as educators to make sure that children have every chance to play and have fun. Play has great power. Because play allows children to start learning from first-hand experiences based on what they already know and can do, it deepens their learning and understanding.

Wales was the first nation in the world to enact legislation pertaining to play opportunities for children in 2010. According to Play Wales (No date) the Welsh Government noted that in order that to achieve its goal of creating a play-friendly Wales that gives children the chance to play, it needed the help of others. It identified that local governments, their partners, and other interested parties would also need to work toward this. The government consequently enacted legislation safeguarding children's right to play, granting local governments a statutory obligation, also referred to as a duty to evaluate and guarantee that their community offers appropriate play opportunities for children.

According to National Literacy Trust (2024) play is essential for encouraging children's language and communication abilities as well as for promoting their learning and general well-being. Children have countless opportunities during play to practice using both new and familiar sounds and words, as well as to hear and explore the power of their voice. Play fosters creativity, improves problem-solving abilities, and supports language development, all of which contribute to cognitive development. Children can practice their home language or languages and learn new words through play. Play is inclusive, accessible, and breaks down barriers. Play is supported by all forms of communication, including speech, body language, signing, touch, eye contact, and facial expression. Play helps develop a range of physical, gross, and fine motor skills, which will help with writing. In addition to improving coordination and general health, active play fosters the growth of muscles, imagination, and communication abilities. Through experimentation and repetition, play allows children to practice, revisit, and integrate deeper learning. Children's natural curiosity is facilitated by play, which helps them form connections and comprehend what they see, hear, and experience in their surroundings. Children learn independence, tenacity, and how to take turns through play, which helps them negotiate and form bonds with others. Children can explore and learn how to control their emotions in a safe environment through play, which fosters empathy and resilience in them. Play helps children know concepts in an entertaining and captivating way, develops their imagination, and cultivates a love of learning.

According to Mosher (2024) seeing more of the child's abilities, interests, and personality traits through observation also aids in developing an honest view of them. It's essential to interpret the child's actions using written documentation, photos, and videos. The process of watching, listening, questioning, recording, and evaluating children's words and behaviours is known as child observation.

According to Brodie (2017) to do this successfully, you can employ a variety of observational strategies. However, it makes sense to think about why you are seeing before you begin, so that you can record the most important details.

According to Bruce et al. (2015) observation trained practitioners acknowledge the importance of closely observing each child and are concerned about using this information to guide the planning and organization of their school curriculum. Using materials, opportunities, experiences, and interpersonal relationships, they hope to support children in ways that have historically been successful in the early years. Along with working as a team and as individual family workers, they also wish to increase their efficacy in helping children learn more. They believe that maintaining accurate records is fundamental to this procedure. Despite the difficulty of the task and the limitations we currently face, the goal of record-keeping is to get to know each child as well as possible without becoming overwhelmed or giving up. We cannot function effectively without maintaining accurate records.

Observation of a child behaviour can assist a teacher in comprehending the reasons behind a child's inappropriate behaviours. Spreeuwenberg (2022) suggest that determine any special requirements, get to know the child better and enables the recording of abilities, demonstrates the child's manner of speaking and review how they interact with their peers.

Children's play is observed for a variety of reasons, Early years careers (2016) suggests that some of which may be influenced by specific circumstances, but the main objective is to learn additional details about the child or group of children, consider the clause, keep an eye on and observe practitioners' work. Find out how children react to specific activities, find out how the skills of the children are growing. Keep an eye on how adults and children interact. Examine the language development of the child, analyse how well the room routine is working, examine the behavioural patterns of the children and learn about the friendship patterns of children.

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