

1. Discuss two types of play and how these can be supported in practice.

Deep play.

Deep play is defined as a type of play that allows children the opportunity to explore risky play behaviour through perilous or potentially life-threatening experiences (Play Scotland, 2023). Deep play gives children the opportunity to manage their own risk and conquer fears through activities such as climbing trees, playing in and around rivers or playing games such as truth or dare (Play Wales, 2017).

The health and safety executive (2021) recognises the importance of taking risks for children's holistic development, stating that risk should not be eliminated from play, instead the benefits of those risks be weighed up against the dangers to improve outcomes, However, Play Wales (2017) explain that engaging in deep play should always be self-directed, allowing the child to calculate the risk themselves and only to a level they are comfortable with, what one child can achieve with ease , may cause harm to a child who is not ready to experience that risk.

When children participate in deep play it allows them to build a sense of self, analyse what their capabilities are and how far they can push the limits of their body or mind, therefore limiting a child's access to risk due to fear of harm or litigation may have a negative effect on their development (Knight, 2011).

Play Wales (2017) state that the risks taken during deep play can be not only physical but also emotional or mental, providing holistic benefits to the child, in addition, Sando, Kleppe and Sandseter (2021) found that where children are allowed to immerse themselves in risky play their overall wellbeing is positively affected, children are also more likely to participate in physical activity and have increased intrinsic motivation to be inquisitive about nature.

Knight (2011) states that to facilitate deep play a practitioner can provide environments rich in appropriate risk, a forest school setting is rich in such opportunities with logs for climbing and jumping, uneven ground for running, fire circles for cooking and fire starting or spaces for whittling with tools, however, Knight explains that these environments are not always

accessible and therefore practitioners must consider how they can facilitate deep play where it might not be so obviously accessible, additionally, Maynard (2014) explains that providing access to the outdoors supports children to demonstrate risky play behaviour, this can be encouraged and supported by providing loose parts such as crates and planks as well as hiding spots, allowing children not only opportunities for physical risk but also emotional and mental risk.

Role Play.

Role play is a type of play that allows children to explore ideas that they may be familiar with but might not be part of in everyday life, examples of this could include playing the role of a café owner taking orders and serving food or a family member going about their daily chores (Play Wales, 2017). Furthermore, Andrews (2017) explains that role play allows a child to create a link between their own world and that of others in an attempt to understand the world around them. Additionally, Education Wales (2022) state that practitioners have a responsibility to support and strengthen a child's links with their home and community by embracing a child's experiences.

Andrews (2017) explains that children will act out events they have witnessed in real life, exploring rules and cultural norms, however, to support role play to happen, Bruce (2011) states that children need to be offered an array of real life experiences as well as the resources to re-enact them, for example a trip to the fire station may offer opportunities for a child to role play the firefighter, yet a practitioner can enhance this play by providing items that the child can reimagine as hoses or helmets.

When role play is child led it provides opportunities for holistic development, allowing the child opportunities to expand on their language and communication skills, build imagination and creativity as well as enhance problem solving skills (Rees- Edwards, 2022). Additionally, Moyles (2010) explains that role play allows a child to learn to work through and cope with the complexities of life and with the support of an emotionally available adult to scaffold the child's play, the child can test out real life experiences without the risks that might be involved outside of play.

2. 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.

The importance of child-led play.

Play is the way children learn to experience and make sense of the world (Education Wales, 2022). Play Wales (2014) describes play as a spontaneous event where children experience the freedom to think in the moment and lead the outcomes following their own thought processes. Additionally, Bottril (2018) defines play as an open-ended opportunity with endless possibilities and The Welsh government (2014) explain that play is freely chosen and intrinsically motivated with no external goal. Moreover, for play to be truly child led the child must be intrinsically motivated, that is that the child must be motivated from within to play, with no external goal or reward, rather the reward is internal as playing makes the child feel good or gives them happiness (Wilson, 2018). Wilson explains that research suggests, where a person is expected to complete a task for a reward, they are less likely to be intrinsically motivated to complete that task and once the reward is no longer there or no longer holds the same value, over time intrinsic motivation may diminish completely. Moyles (2010) explains that the way children engage in an activity is often influenced as to whether they view the activity as play or not-play, this view is often affected by the environment and the resources presented to the child. Moyles states that when a child feels the activity is obligatory the intrinsic motivation is lost and the activity becomes not-play, however when an activity is presented away from a classroom with open-ended resources the child is more likely to perceive the activity as play, furthermore, The McInnes et al (2013) study found that where activities were child led and less adult initiated children were more highly engaged in a playful manner and learning was more effective. Education Wales (2022) state that play is a fundamental right for every child and in 2014 the Welsh Government put a statutory duty on every Welsh local authority to ensure there are suitable provisions for play for all children in their area (Welsh Government, 2014). The Welsh government's legislation sets out the importance of play for children's holistic wellbeing and development and recognises play as aim 4 of their 7 core aims for children. These core aims were influenced by the United Nations convention for the rights of the child (UNCRC). The UNCRC article 31 states that all children have the right to play and article 12 states that the views of the child should be considered, thus reinforcing the importance of play being self-directed (UNICEF, 2019). It is the belief of the Welsh Government (2019)

that high quality play opportunities can help build resilience and lessen the harmful effects of deprivation on a child's life.

The role of the adult.

Adults are integral in supporting children's development (Education Wales, 2022).

The practitioner is present as a facilitator, it is their role to ensure the child's play can be challenged and extended to develop the child's individual learning and understanding (Brodie, 2018). This can be achieved by Creating flexible, rich and authentic environments filled with opportunities for taking risks, building confidence and resilience as well as options for quiet reflection and self-regulation (Education Wales, 2022)

Practitioner should have an in-depth knowledge of child development (Education Wales, 2022) and understand the value of play and its importance for learning, sometimes this might mean the practitioner steps back, observes and allows the play to flow (Brodie, 2018).

However, while stepping back the adult must also be available at all times, it is a practitioner's duty to keep the child safe, encourage children to push their boundaries and be there to listen and empathise when needed (Cree and Robb, 2021).

In play work the role of the adult is clearly defined, above all the adult must understand the play process and allow that to happen for the children in a freely chosen manner (play Wales, no date). The process of play follows a cycle, known as the play cycle or Ludic cycle (Cree and Robb, 2021) The first stage of the cycle is known as the Metaludes, this is the drive to play, once a child has found the spark, they look for something to lure them to the play, this could be a play provocation or a gesture from another child, a play return is then received from the environment, the child or another child. Once the desire to play has been established the play is framed or contextualised by rules, boundaries, environment or themes and the flow of the play begins, the flow happens when the child is engrossed in play and continues until annihilation, the point in which the play ends. It is important to understand how the adult's role impacts on the play cycle, known as adulteration, without careful consideration adulteration can break the cycle before it is complete (Cree and Robb, 2021).

3. Discuss a method for observing young children.

Narrative observation.

A narrative observation is a formative, in depth and in detailed observation where the practitioner describes exactly what they are seeing in that moment, this type of observation tends to include a lot of information and is sometimes referred to as a long observation (Barber & Paul- Smith, 2010). However, Bruce, Louis & McCall (2014) explain that other methods of narrative observation may include writing in daily diaries, keeping notes or taking photographs with a brief note of what happened, therefore any observation that creates a narrative or tells a story. Although Brodie (No date) also describes narrative observation as long and full of detail, Brodie also acknowledges that photos and notes are beneficial to support narrative observations.

A narrative observation is usually completed for a defined purpose, where the practitioner wants to see the child's response to a certain event or gain a more in detail view of what causes certain actions (twinkle, no date). This type of observation is used when the practitioner wants to record all areas of what they are seeing, it gives a holistic view of a situation and is usually pre planned and done over the space of approximately thirty minutes to ensure as much information as possible is recorded (Brodie, no date).

Usually conducted by the child's key person or someone who knows the child well (Brodie, no date) it gives the opportunity for the practitioner to record the child's language, activities, and their holistic response to what is happening in that moment (Twinkle, no date).

Narrative observations can be beneficial when practitioners need to build up a picture of what is happening with a child, allowing them to keep a written record of what the child is achieving and how they are getting there (Barber & Paul-Smith, 2010), there are also many templates available to support this type of observation (Twinkle, no date) However, with practice, narrative observation can be done with very little planning, just an available adult with a pen and paper (Barber & Paul Smith, 2010).

Although narrative observation has many benefits, there are also a number of drawbacks, it takes a large amount of the practitioner's time, where they will need to be fully engaged during the whole period to ensure vital information is not missed (Brodie, no date) and may need to be planned in advance to ensure adequate staffing to allow the practitioner the time to achieve their set outcome (Barber & Paul-Smith, 2010). This type of observation should also

be done by the child's key worker to ensure the context of what is being observed is truly understood (Brodie, no date) and the practitioner will need to sit close enough to the child to hear what they are saying, which may influence the child's behaviour and change the outcome of what is being observed (Barber & Paul-Smith, 2010). Barber and Paul Smith also explain that as this is a long observation it is likely the practitioner will become tired and their handwriting may begin to falter towards the end of the observation, making it harder for the observation to be legible by other professionals.

Each type of observational method will require specific skill sets and record different areas in more or less detail (Brodie , no date) It is therefore important for the practitioner to remember throughout the observation and also once it has been completed, what the purpose of the observation is (Pacey, 2016). Observation, provides the bases of which all future planning can be built from to ensure the child is holistically supported (Education Wales, 2022) and therefore, the observation should be used as one integral part of the planning cycle (Pacey, 2016) To ensure this is being done effectively peer observations can be introduced, this allows practitioners to work together and review the observation process for its strengths and weakness as well as the practitioners own strengths and weaknesses and identify whether the observation method is suitable for purpose and whether the benefits of using this methods are worth the time commitment needed. A peer observation can then be utilised to support and strengthen the development of the planning cycle (Barber & Paul-Smith, 2010).

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.

Observation is a vital part of getting to know the children in the practitioner's care, it gives practitioners an insight into the child's life and allows them the opportunity to learn where a child is developmentally, emotionally and socially. Not only does observation give practitioners an insight into the child developmentally but observations also give practitioners an understanding of the child's personality, their likes and dislikes and what is important to them as individuals (PACEY, 2016) Therefore, observation gives practitioners a foundation on which they can plan and adapt their practice to holistically support the children in their care (Education Wales, 2022).

Education Wales (2022) state that using a wide range of observational techniques gives practitioners a comprehensive view of the child's personality. Moreover, observations should be done while the child is engaged in freely chosen play, this will give the practitioner a much more accurate picture of what is important to that child (Pacey, 2016).

If a child is aware that the practitioner is observing them or that an activity has been set up to observe a certain outcome then the child may become disengaged or change their behaviour (Barber & Paul-Smith, 2010). This is reflected in the play cycle which explains that an adult's involvement in an activity (adulteration) can have a profound impact on the entire play cycle, if the adult facilitates play by enriching an environment or providing provocations they can have a positive impact on the flow of play, however, controlling the play frames or dictating the direction of play may lead to annihilation before the play has begun (Cree & Robb, 2021). If practitioners are not mindful of how they approach observations, they may risk having an effect on the outcome of that observation, when a child realises they are being observed they may feel the need to please the observer. Pleasing the observer then becomes a reward and takes the child's activity from being intrinsically motivated to motivated by the reward (Cree and Robb, 2021).

McInnes et al. (2013) research suggests that where an adult is present a child is less likely to fully engage with play, this was more noticeable where the adult was directly involved in the play rather than nearby. If the child feels like they must take part in an activity they are much less likely to perceive it as play and therefore intrinsic motivation to join in can be lost (Moyle, 2010). However, For practitioners to truly understand the impact they have on play, it is firstly important that they understand why children play and what children learn from play (Broadhead, Howard & Wood, 2010). Play Wales (no date) describe play as an innate urge that is built into every child and is fundamental to the healthy development of the child and their community. The Welsh Government (2014) explain that play has contributed to the development and survival of humans and that children use play continuously as part of their learning processes. Brodie (2018) states that where playfulness is not adopted by practitioners, the child risks becoming overburdened by the expectations being placed upon them, however, giving children opportunities for play gives them the tools to bring together the information they have learnt, to process that information and make it make sense (Bruce, 2011)

Much research suggest that learning happens when external stimuli cause new connections to be made in the brain, this happens best when the experiences are meaningful to the child, through truly child led play, however, due to misinformation and curriculum pressures there

is often a burden on practitioners to separate the ideas of learning and play into different teaching areas (Moyles, 2010)

A key theorist in play and its effects on child development was Friedrich Froebel. Froebel , a teacher himself , developed the first kindergartens. Froebel understood the immense value of play and believed that children learned best when they engaged in activities that had meaning to the child themselves, Froebel also placed high value on the power of music and the outdoors (Macblain, 2022).

Reference list.

- Andrews, M. (2017). *Exploring play for early childhood studies*. London: Sage Publications.
- Barber, J. and Paul- Smith, S. (2010) *Early years observation and planning in practice*. London: Practical pre school books
- Bottril, G (2018) *Can I go and play now? Rethinking early years*. London: Sage
- Broadhead, P., Howard, J. and Wood, E. (2010) *Play and Learning in the Early Years: From Research to Practice*. London: Sage publications
- Brodie, K. (2018) *The holistic care and development of children from birth to three*. London: Routledge
- Brodie, K. (no date) *Observations in early years – Different types, why they are important and examples*. Available at: <https://www.teachearlyyears.com/nursery-management/view/making-observations> (Accessed: 05 March 2023)
- Bruce, T. (2011) *Learning through play*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Hodder education
- Bruce, T., Louis, S. & McCall, G. (2014). *Observing Young Children*. London: SAGE Publications
- Cree, J. & Robb, M. (2021) *The essential guide to forest school and nature pedagogy*. London: Routledge
- Education Wales (2022) *A curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/b1801d78-38c3-4320-9818-d9996c21aef8/220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 04 March 2023)
- Health and safety executive (2021) *Children's play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach*. Available at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/chilids-play-statement.htm> (Accessed: 28 February 2023)
- Knight, S. (2011) *Risk and adventure in early years outdoor play : learning from forest schools*. London: Sage publications.
- Macblain, S. (2022) *Leatning throries for early years practice*. 2nd edn. London: Sage publications

Maynard, T. (2014) *Exploring outdoor play in the early years*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

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*, 22(2), pp. 268-282. DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2013.789194

Moyles, J. (2010). *The excellence of play*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Open University Press.

PACEY (2016) *Child observation and learning Journeys*. Available at:

[https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY%20member%20practice%20guides%20\(PDFs\)/PG05-Child-observations-learning-journeys.pdf](https://www.pacey.org.uk/Pacey/media/Website-files/PACEY%20member%20practice%20guides%20(PDFs)/PG05-Child-observations-learning-journeys.pdf) (Accessed 5 March 2023)

Play Scotland (2023) *Play Scotland, Play types poster*. Available at :

<https://www.playscotland.org/resources/play-types-poster/#:~:text=Deep%20Play%20%E2%80%93%20play%20which%20allows,benefits%20to%20a%20child's%20development>. (Accessed: 28 February 2023)

Play Wales (2017) *Play Types*. Available at:

https://issuu.com/playwales/docs/play_types?e=5305098/53885121 (Accessed on: 28 February 2023)

Play Wales (no date) *Playwork principles* Available at:

<https://www.playwales.org.uk/login/uploaded/documents/Playwork%20Principles/playwork%20principles.pdf> (Accessed: 05 March 2023)

Rees-Edwards, A. (2022) 'Types of Play' in Waters-Davis, J. (ed.) *Introduction to play*. London: Sage publications.

Sando, O., Kleppe, R. & Sandseter, E. B. H. (2021) 'Risky Play and Children's Well-Being, Involvement and Physical Activity', *Child Indicators Research*, 14(4), pp. 1435–1451. DOI:10.1007/s12187-021-09804-5

Twinkl (no date) *Early years observation methods*. Available at:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/teaching-wiki/early-years-observation-methods> (Accessed : 05 March 2023)

UNICEF (2019) *A summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Available at:
https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf
(Accessed: 04 March 2023).

Welsh Government (2014) *Wales – A play friendly country*. Available at:
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/wales-a-play-friendly-country.pdf> (Accessed: 04 March 2023)

Wilson, G. (2018) *The Effects of External Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation* Available at:
https://nanopdf.com/download/the-effects-of-external-rewards-on-intrinsic-motivation_pdf
(Accessed: 04 March 2023)