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I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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Section One- The importance of variety of play types and the significance of holistic play

There are different types of play, and these are recognised to allow for holistic development, allowing children to have a range of opportunities through different environments and experiences (Cohen, 2018). Play is seen as an important aspect to the UNCRC, 'Article 31: Right to play' is described as a key aspect for children's holistic development as stated by Children's Parliament (2010). In this section I will be discussing two types of play, deep play and creative play.

Deep play, or otherwise known as risky play, is a type of play which allows children to come up against situations that are difficult and challenge not only physical development such as balance and coordination but also emotional by building resilience and mental through problem solving allowing to extend holistic development. Deep play is shown through play such as jumping from high objects climbing up a high wall or even sharing stories that create the feeling of fear (Play Wales, 2023). This type of play develops understanding of risk, mortality and the excitement from overcoming fears.

Deep play links to Piaget theory as discussed by Bormanaki and Khoshhal (2017) with the second basic tendency of adaptation, children use cognitive skills to respond to risks and challenges. Having experiences of deep play allows children to adapt to situations and environments. Rees-Edwards (2022) and states that deep play can also be observed as children being engrossed in the play and will not be distracted and solely focused on the play through concentration.

Deep play is usually seen with in the stages of older children but is not limited to older children, most play includes an element of deep play and therefore it is also observed in play with younger children. Deep play is usually seen in independent play or parallel play from Parten's theory as discussed by Rees-Edwards (2022). Independent play is when children play on their own and are only interested in their

own play. Parallel play is where children play alongside each other and may copy each other, both stages allow for children to develop and explore their own pace.

Deep play is seen as a difficult type of play for practitioners to create experiences for children as there are rules and regulations set in place for protecting the children. While health and safety rules should be followed practitioners should allow children to engage in risky/ deep play if they recognise a child demonstrate the need for it. It should be tailored to the skill set to maintain safety. For example, if a child is climbing chairs or tables, setting up stepping stones and gym trestle tables with crash mats in a hall space would provide a challenging environment to support needs whilst maintaining safety (Play Wales, 2023).

Creative play is not just limited to creating artwork and pictures through using materials, it also involves children using imagination and creativity in different experiences and situations and aids holistic development. Creative play can enhance physical development from using materials that can engage fine motor skills. Being in different environment and experiences can spark creativity as cognitive skills are developed to aid overcoming challenges through problem solving. When a positive outcome occurs, this allows for more development of confidence. As confidence increases children become more creative as they are more willing to try new ideas and they believe in their capabilities increasing emotional development (Rees-Edwards , 2022)

Creative play links with burners theory as discussed by Smidt (2011) of the four dominant models of pedagogy in particular third and fourth models. The third being communication or interaction with others, in creative play this would be sharing ideas and using creativity to problem solve which can develop social skills. The fourth model the learner makes own decisions from past experiences and successes showing independence in learning.

Creative play , through Parten's stages of play is seen in associative play and organised play. Bernstorff (2012) describes associative play as playing as a collective, where ideas and objects are shared amongst others through creative play this would

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develop both social and problem-solving skills whilst being aware of others.

Organised play is seen as working together in a team for a purpose, developing communication skills and increasing social skills.

Practitioners can aid experiences of creativity through using basic materials such as loose parts or different props, this can allow for open ended creativity and not having to reach an end product, this allows for the play to be child led and not product led (Play Wales, 2023).

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Bernstorf, E. (2012). Parten's Levels of Social Play in Kodály Teaching Contexts. *Kodály Envoy*, 39(1), 6–11.

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Section Two – The importance of children led play and the role of the adult in children's play

Aminpour, Bishop and Corkery(2020) describe self-directed play when based on [Hughes, \(2010\)](#) [Juster \(2015\)](#) and [Vygotsky \(1980\)](#). as children having the freedom to make their own decisions and have control of the play, may it be what they play with or how to play. The play is also implied to be 'intrinsically motivated ' suggesting that the play motivated by the child's interest and enjoyment instead of it being directed by someone else. Therefore, self-directed play allows the children to take engage in activities they have chosen and will enjoy doing.

It is argued that self-directed play expands a child's development and understanding to adapting through different experiences and situations. This process is suggested to allow children to regulate their feelings and emotions, helping overall behaviour. This is also suggested to be linked to further academic and social success benefits through having better understanding and creating strong relationships, allowing children to develop not only holistically but to move towards their potential. Arnott (2018)

From the ages of three to five according to Erikson's psychosocial stages it is implied that play is a fundamental process for facilitating learning. It is argued that through the play children gain control and freedom to understand who they are and gain a sense of belonging however, if they receive continuous negative experiences, it can create negative feelings. This could potentially have an effect on both social and emotional development (Erikson, 1950). Suggesting the importance of a practitioner's competence and understanding the role of play to support children's

development. On the other hand through gaining positive experiences and gaining purpose and confidence can contribute towards a child's well-being.

Arnott (2018) also discusses the importance the role an adult brings to the contribution of play and the opportunities that a child receives drawing on Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding. It is discussed how children may need to be guided towards play, with practitioners facilitating through initially showing children how to play with items or where to find them it, allowing opportunities to open for future self-directed play, it can also build the confidence of children to feel comfortable to play independently.

Timetables and structure in a daily routine is seen as a positive aspect by Bottril (2018) he also argues that for children to develop successfully they need to have 'freedom'. Bottril states that when adults heavily stick to timetables it can stomp creativity along with the want for learning. This suggests for practitioners not only to focus on the need to have academic structured learning such as maths and literacy but to also be aware of the learning that is created through the freedom of choice and play which sparks creativity and the excitement of learning. This also leads into playing in outdoor areas in break times and lunch times, these can be limited to structured routine of games which do not allow for self-directed play. Games have rules and they have to be followed to play the game correctly, which can take out the motivation for children to play. Bottril (2018) also mentions that 'in-between spaces' are a valuable way to allow children the opportunity to engage in self-directed play. He describes 'in-between spaces' as having three characteristics showing how the environment in which children are provided can hinder or enhance the opportunities for self-directed play.

Play Wales (2025) further highlights the importance of the impact of the environment in facilitating self-directed play to aid development. It is emphasised that the environment gives the opportunity to socialise with other children to build

relationships and enabling problem solving through communication and experiences. Nature and outdoor area are also suggested to be included in the environment in which children can access, to promote the holistic development of the child. It is said that outdoor play not only allows the freedom of physical play providing physical benefits, it allows for increased self-purpose and thinking skills. Play Wales (2025) indicate that the resources within the environment also play vital role, having loose parts and items with no specific purpose allow a child to interpret and play with in their own way, creating more freedom and choice whilst being challenged to allow for self-directed play.

Overall, self-directed play is shown as a key aspect for holistic child development in the early years as supported by Erikson (1950), through different aspects this can be facilitated by enabling adults providing opportunities through environments and allowing independence and freedom (Play Wales 2025).

Section two references

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Section 3- Observation

Froebel Trust (2020) discuss how every child is individual and therefore will learn differently and suggest so through education we observe to allow children to be provided with the correct learning. It is highlighted that observation is monitoring and actively listening to gain understanding of development and particular interests.

Smidt (2015) highlights the importance of observations, and the benefits they have for children's development. Through observation Smidt suggests that it allows children to receive an environment which is promotes development. Observations allow this for practitioners, through gaining knowledge of children's motivation and interests. When keeping records of observation it helps to see progress. She also discusses through observation it allows practitioners to look at 'scaffolding learning' to see if there are additional resources or guidance needed to help support the progress of independent learning. This, therefore, demonstrates the significance of observations for children's learning experiences to ensure they receive the correct resources to meet learning needs.

A method of observation which is used in practice is a movement tracker. Brodie (no date) describes tracking as method in which a practitioner watches where a pupil will move in the environment, showing the physical development for the child. This method is said to usually be tracked on a floor layout of the setting the child has access to allow for all areas to be observed, the time frame in which the child is observed is varied and dependant on the reason for observation. Surrey County Council (2024) agrees with this and adds it documents the amount of time that a child is within an area may it be play led , or academic learning focused. The floor plan record includes all areas of the environment, with lines to show the movement

between areas. Time spent in the area would also be indicated to support reflection and analysis of the observation whilst recognising the child's engagement in the area.

Surrey County Council (2024) state the benefits of using a movement tracker and that it allows practitioners to gain more understanding and insight into what the child does in the school day. Through observing the child using the movement method it is stated that it can indicate what the child is currently intrigued by and what sparks curiosity. This can therefore allow the practitioner plan and provide beneficial and interesting opportunities for the child to learn. Brodie (no date) further highlights the benefits of using movement trackers and suggests that they allow for the practitioner to gain further understanding of a child's movement. For example, a practitioner could believe that a child always jumps from space to space and therefore unable to stick to a task. However, observation could show that the movement through the areas includes movement of objects and equipment and therefore, can link to a schema. Recognising a schema which may not be recognised without observation shows how tracking movement, when reflected and planned upon can facilitate the direction of learning and development. Not only does the tracking have to look solely at individuals the information recorded can also be grouped and reflected upon as a class. This can allow for a practitioner to have an overview and opportunity to assess how the classroom is utilised, and what areas provide engagement for the children in comparison to areas which may need to be adjusted.

Larger Family Life (2021) recognises the limitations that are presented when carrying out observations using the method of movement tracking. When in an early years setting practitioners have multiple children within their care. This can cause barriers when doing individual observations, as practitioners have the duty and responsibility to also care for and protect the other children within the environment, this can therefore cause distractions. Distractions could cause an element of the observation to be missed and therefore, potentially missing a critical part of supporting the child's development. Surrey County Council (2024) describes the tracker as a record of a setting layout including lines for movement between areas and times allocations for children each area. This implies that not much detail is included on the tracker and

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upon reflection could lack clarity and mainly focuses on physical development not capturing the emotional and social interactions, this limitation could affect the way in which progress of holistic development is tracked.

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Section 4- Understanding the role of play when observing and the accuracy of observation

According to Birth to 5 Matters (2021) it is essential that practitioners effectively have the correct planning and equipment in place to facilitate the learning and development of for the children within their class. It is believed that the best way to ensure that this is done is from observing the children in their natural learning environment which is typically play. Howard & McInnes (2013) add to this by stating that children who were observed through what they deemed to be play in situations there were higher competency levels in comparison to when they did not perceive it as play.

Birth to 5 Matters (2021) explains how carrying out observations when children are learning through play can be seen as beneficial as some children show continuous interest in specific areas. Therefore, this allows them to experience and investigate all areas allowing for a range of development. Through observation it can also allow practitioners to provide resources to build on the child's interest to allow more curiosity and potential challenge and engagement.

On the other hand, Birth to 5 Matters (2021) states that not all children have continuous interest in specific areas and would benefit by receiving input from an adult. This demonstrates that by observing some children through play it may not show the full skill set and development progress. Suggesting that observations through play can be beneficial but potentially not for all children and there for an individualised approach for the observation of children's learning could be beneficial to accurately assess development.

McInnes, Howard, Crowley and Miles (2013) further add to how observation through play, may not be an accurate way of observation as they suggest that when adults are around children it should help children engage in learning through play, however there have been studies completed that show how when adults are around it can affect the learning through play. This indicates that when adults observe children through play their involvement even though usually from afar can unintentionally affect the way in which a child behaves. Therefore, when observing children's practitioners should be aware of this and take into account how the behaviours may change.

King, & Sturrock (2020) discusses the significance of an enabling adult in the play cycle through reference to Sturrock and Else (1998). They highlight the play cycle to have different stages, and each stage progresses for the involvement of the adult in play. The first stage 'Play maintenance' children are observed in this stage and there is no involvement of an adult/practitioner, this stage of the play cycle can allow a practitioner to observe if there is any intervention needed. The next step emphasises how an adult can support play through 'Simple intervention', the stage is described as support added to the play, this can be seen in forms of providing additional equipment or providing help when a child asks for it, showing in this stage that sometimes just minimal support can be beneficial and aid development. 'Medial intervention' is the first part of the play cycle which the adult is actively involved in the play. This is done through a child's invitation to play, but the adult may also leave the play, for example if a child would like to play a game of catch with the adult, the adult would play however, if another child came over they could step away from the game and allow the children to play together. Showing that this stage can allow for relationship building and opportunity for social development. The final stage discussed is 'complex interventions' this is stated to be when an adult and child are playing and the play is deep. The adult during this play is at the centre, however they do not take over but they do offer play signals to promote engagement.

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The overall view of the play cycle shown by King, & Sturrock (2020), suggests that it is important that the practitioner is aware of their role within the play and should not take over. All elements of involvement active or not should all be with the purpose of facilitating the development of the child.

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