

Homework Task

What do each of these theorists contribute to your understanding of the importance of play? Write a summary paragraph outlining why play is important and how these theorists support that view. Remember to reference your sources.

Play is important because it encourages and supports a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development by allowing them to explore and express their curiosities and grow through child-led experiences that reflect what they find enjoyable. Problem solving, risk taking, investigating, creating all take part in play while building on the child's existing knowledge that is influenced by their culture and close relationships surrounding them; and with the vital support of a positive adult role model who understands when to intervene in their play for example to extend provision, interact, and facilitate appropriately while considering the child's holistic needs; influencing the child's sense of ownership and belonging as they begin to take control within their play giving them a sense of purpose (Learning Through Play, no date; Ginsberg, 2007, Welsh Gov, 2017). Many theorists support this: Vygotsky's theory encouraged adult relationships and culture as being a critical part in the child's play, enabling and ensuring the child is succeeding in knowledge and understanding before moving them on to the next stage of development (Nilsson and Ferholt, 2014). Bruner also saw the importance of the adult in play, arguing that children must be given time to play engaging in first time experiences and learning the varied skills well, before being supported to further that development. He saw children as active learners and shared Vygotsky's view that culture impacts academic achievement and at the heart of education is the child, suggesting that when considering children at play, the children's voices matter for example, what they like and what they do not like to play with (NurseryWorld, 2016). According to Sigmund Freud, play impacts a child's emotional health and wellbeing by providing opportunity for them to explore and express their emotions freely and safely for example in role play, processing traumatic experiences or suppressed memories. Theorists Anna Freud, Donald Winnicott and Melanie Klein also believed play to be a way of therapy and like Vygotsky and Bruner, she placed value on the adult/child relationship but using play to build strong connections with the child (Freud Museum London, 2017). Piaget identified stages for cognitive development: Sensory motor, preoperational, concrete operation, and formal operations; he highlighted 3 stages of play: Practise play, symbolic play, and social play, supporting the importance of allowing children to master skills

by engaging in their own curiosities, becoming aware of the world around them and freely expressing as they begin to problem solve while building on their current knowledge (Teachings in Education, 2020). Similarly, Parten developed stages for play too, again supporting one stage being achieved before moving on to the next; however, the focus was more how the child interacts socially during play as appose to Piaget's cognitive play schemes suggesting both developmental areas are important and being achieved in play (Hornung *et al*, 1976). Finally, Erikson theory believed in psychosocial stages and his focus was on conflict providing turning points in development leading to success or failure for example, he believed the basic conflict for preschool children is initiative v's guilt as they begin questioning themselves if they are good or bad people. The vital events in their lives involve exploration and play and achieving success in establishing empowerment within their play gives them a sense of purpose ensuring they feel good. However, he believed children who take too much control experience disapproval resulting in feelings of guilt. This suggests that adult involvement in play is vital to a child's healthy development influencing a healthy balance of control and ownership, leading to the child's sense of purpose and happiness – successful play (Erikson's Psychosocial Stages Summary Chart, no date).

Reference list:

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