

Section 1

Play is essential during a child's early development. Playing independently assists a young child's brain in order to develop, this utilizes skills such as language and communication in preparation for the child to mature. Singing, rattling and making noises improve a child's motor skills. Games in early childhood lay the foundations for the next steps of education in a child's life (Theirworld.org, 2020). Self-directed play also allows a child to express themselves at a young age, during self-directed play children cannot help but lead with their imagination. Allowing a child to use this opportunity lets them flex their creativity (Ledendecker.M, 2020). Self-directed play is a great way to stimulate a child's imagination as during this time of free reign it is important to understand that the child can create an outcome that an adult had not imagined (Ledendecker.M, 2020). The role of self-directed play is to encourage a child's independence. Self-directed play allows a child to gain the experience of independent learning at early stages of life, while in a safe and inspiring environment (Ledendecker.M, 2020). The role of self-directed play is to allow a child to explore and build upon their knowledge. Self-directed play is essential in their development, particularly in the development of their language (Wasik, B.A., Jacobi-Vessles, J.L., 2017).

Different types of play can contribute to a child's holistic wellness. Active play is a well-known contributor to a child's holistic wellness and a way to expand their knowledge. Active play in a group setting children allows a child to interact and socialise with their peers. Social and interpersonal skills are learnt through this form of play. Sharing things with their peers such as toys or books can allow the lesson of give and take to be taught. There is no doubt that children will encounter conflicts while playing with one another, ensuring the child is guided to solve these problems peacefully ensures that children will discover the feelings of empathy and develop their social skills. Active play is terrific in the form of exercise. Activities which allow children to run around a free space, jump, tumble or climb develops their physical skills (Firstwalkers.com, 2016). Also, activities such as ball games, dancing with the child, running races, rock climbing help to build a child's movement, strength and flexibility (familylives.org, 2020). The amount of energy a child uses during play helps to develop their resilience and co-ordination. Active play can help a child's communication skills develop. Children will communicate while participating in activities and on the playground, sometimes to themselves but often with other children, thus building the child's

confidence. Active play also develops a child's confidence. Through play a child can create many friendships. Playtime with friends help to build confidence and a sense of belonging in their surroundings. Through the experience of play it can give the child a feeling of achievement. Active play can also develop a child's creativity. It has been shown that play enhances creative thinking. Allowing a child free reign to play encourages them to be creative and explore their inner artist. A good way to encourage a child to use their problem-solving skills and teamwork is using competitive games/play, for example, running a race (Firstwalkers.com, 2016).

As an adult it is important to remember that during self-directed play that the children are the ones in charge of the activity in motion and although it is natural to want to jump in and show a child the 'correct' way to carry out this activity it is useful for the adult to take a step back, give them space and allow the child to execute the task in question in a way that they see fit (Hollismontessori.org, 2018). It is important to allow a child the time to understand things such as putting toys together, or trying to explain certain games, without the help of an adult. It often saves time explaining rules of games to children; however, it is important that they learn these skills individually too. Although it is the easier option to jump in and help, allowing the child to take the lead can be empowering for a child as it allows them to learn independence. Some ways to encourage self-directed play can include allowing a child to pick out their own toys and providing an empty space for them to play in. Classic toys such as balls, blocks, teddies and fancy-dress items can be a great inspiration for the child to use their creative side and observe what they come up with (Childventures, 2014).

Section 2

Risk during play can challenge children in many ways, one example is a physical challenge, allowing a child to run a little faster than normal or climb a little higher than normal can challenge a child to exert themselves further than usual. Another example is a child can feel emotionally challenged in certain situations. Allowing a child to feel this way can help them get over their fears of whatever they are facing. Lastly, a child can feel mentally challenged, for example, a child learning their boundaries in what they can and cannot do in certain environments is a great way to challenge them mentally and put them to the test to see how they behave (Earlyyearsresources.co.uk, 2018). Children need to face the opportunities of solving a problem by taking risks. The benefits of risk include children pushing the limits of

their abilities, allows them to gain a sense of control through their actions and it is a great way for them to learn boundaries in a protected environment where they can be discreetly supported by their practitioner (Earlyyearsresources.co.uk, 2018). In most cases children are split into two; a risk taker and a child who typically likes to avoid risks. The children who avoid risks need to have more encouragement through some moderate guidance and support. It is important that children are thoroughly encouraged to take reasonable risks such as 'rough play', this type of play prepares children for the outdoor environments where there are several potential risks. Allowing children to take risks can increase self-confidence, it will assist them in being to differentiate between safe and potentially dangerous situations, improve their awareness to safety and the child will begin to feel a sense of accomplishment. In every situation where there is risk, there are consequences. Some consequences can involve an injury such as cuts and bruises, a sprain or break and worst case a concussion. There are also emotional consequences such as the feeling of being rejected, the child may feel disappointed in themselves if they could not accomplish something or they may feel embarrassment (Lanekids.org, no date).

Managing risks while in both a play and learning environment can be a complex task. An example of a risk is a wobbly bridge, in daily life this is a serious risk however, in a play area this has several benefits. The child will be challenged to see if they are steady on their feet and if they have the confidence to cross the bridge (Gill.T, no date). Promoting a risk offers opportunities for children hence why managing a risk between these opportunities of learning and play must be safe too, thus balancing between a serious risk or a benefit for the child. A balanced approach is needed due to the wide variety of changes a child faces in their everyday life. The balanced approach can be done by using a risk benefit assessment is executed by asking if the risk in question has benefits for the child. Exposing children to a certain level of risk allows children to gain an opportunity for growth and development (Gill.T, no date). The Health and Safety Executive recognises that play is what interests' children in the real world, and with this comes risks. It is vital to remember that play can develop a child's risk awareness and that is formulates a child for their future. As the practitioner it is important to strike the right balance between risk and the benefits. This does not mean all risks should be eliminated or reduced, some risks should be encouraged. It is also important to remember that not every aspect of play must be set out as a 'security blanket'. Risk assessments are not essential for low-risk activities such as running a race. It

is important not to forget that even though some risks are beneficial there might still be risks that are not beneficial and that it is probable that some mistakes will be made (HSE.gov.uk, 2012).

Section 3

There are several different types of observation tools which can be used to observe a child in their early stages of development, all of which come with benefits and limitations. Each different observation tool comes with different techniques, yet they all have the same goal. The goal of using the observation tools is to observe the child's development, which can then be used in future to record the child's full development. Some observation tools are checklists, time samples, a written narrative, digital records and sound recordings (Rainbownursery, no date). Time samples are simple and versatile, time samples also provide information about a child's activity regularly in the classroom. Time samples can be structured, however in some cases they are not. This is down to the decision of the practitioner who can choose to use running commentary as a sample is being taken. This method is beneficial to look at the child overall during the activity instead of during different segments of the activity (Rainbownursery, no date). While using time samples the practitioner can also observe the child's interests and their concentration span. When using this method, it is important make the decision of how structured the time sample sheet will be. If the practitioner has opted for a structured recording of the child's development, there will have to be a sheet drawn up with codes which the practitioner will have to familiarise themselves with. The practitioner also must decide how long they would like to observe for with intervals in between. There are many advantages to time samples. One example is that a time sample can provide evidence about a child and their activity over a duration of time. Another benefit is that the time sheet can be used in future to assess the child's total development. Finally, a time sample can give a symptom of the child's interests and attention span. With every advantage, there comes limitations. The limitation of a time sample is that there will be no documented information of what the child does outside of the times they are being observed (Rainbownursery, no date).

In the early year's foundation stage, a record of all the child's achievements and development is logged into a document which allows the practitioner and parent to work in harmony to act with a holistic approach which will give support in any of the child's future developments

(earlyyearsatters, 2020). Time samples should be used for the practitioner to identify as possible causes for concern and to note any development the child has made since last being assessed (newchildcare, no date). Many advantages can be seen when using time samples to monitor a child's holistic development. One advantage which can be seen is that a time sample can indicate where the child spends most of their time and what areas of the classroom interest them the most. It can also indicate which areas the child avoids. Using time samples can provide the practitioner with numerical information about the child such as what they like to play and what friends they like to play with. Time sampling can also be focused on an individual child or it can be used to observe the whole class' development. Some disadvantages to time sampling are that there are no details which can be recorded about the nature of play. Another disadvantage is that it be ineffective in short periods of time. One disadvantage to time sampling is that while the practitioner is taking note of the child's activity, they may miss vital information. Time samples must also be done periodically, if this is not done the results could be biased or judgmental (Childcare Network, 2010).

Section 4

Observations in a childcare setting is crucial in order to monitor a child in the early stages of their development. Observations are typically a long process as it requires constant reviewing and ensuring all developments are listed in order to see if children have developed or are struggling, if this is the case the practitioner is able to identify these issues and allow the child accesses to the correct support. It is important that the child's social, physical, emotional, language and cognitive skills are the main points of observation. It is important to notice when a child is struggling in one of these areas and it is down to the practitioner and parent to put a plan in place which focus on the area where the child is lacking (AziloTraining, 2018). Observation allows the practitioner to see what way of learning interests the child the most, it also allows them to see what areas do not interest the child, allowing them to improve their delivery of teaching in future (Louis.A, 2018). Observing children during their playtime shows the practitioner how well they can explore and learn. Observing during play also means that the practitioner can ensure the child's development is at the expected stage. It is important to see what toys or equipment and what type of environment stimulates the child and their development best (AziloTraining, 2018). An essential part of observing a child's

development is to see what interests them, using this information ensures that a child's needs are met through reflection of which they enjoy. The best way to ensure that a child's demands are met is through observing what they enjoy or dislike through play and establishing what can be done to engage them in activities which can extend their education and learning (Neaum. S, 2016). Observations can often be used to discover what level a child is at in their development, listening and understanding a child will allow the practitioner to get a sense of what level the child's speech is at (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008). For a practitioner to have a true understanding of a child's development they must allow the child to proceed in self-directed play. The practitioner will get to observe children interacting with one another and how a child will tackle different hurdles presented to them. The communication between practitioner and child will be done using open and closed questions. Children can often view play with a practitioner as non-playful, and they will not come out of themselves as freely as they would if they were unaware of the practitioner. It is important that the practitioner allows the child to play at their own pace and only involve themselves when asked to do so or is necessary (McInnes, K., Howard, J., 2010).

As a child develops their interest in play also develops. The role of the practitioner is to scaffold the child's learning using praise and support. The play and development go together, and it is down to the child to invite the adult to participate (Seriously kids, 2020). It is important that the practitioner communicates with the child about their play, involving themselves when the child asks them to will let the child know that the practitioner is interested in their play and that the practitioner is in full support of child's independence. Through observing the practitioner will gain an understanding of what engages a child and how to keep them engaged in future. The role of the practitioner is to ensure that the child has a well-suited space for play. Understanding the environment in which children enjoy their play is crucial to understanding how the play can be improved. Through observing and interacting with a child the relationship between both child and practitioner will develop. Thinking critically about a child will help them progress for their future. Looking at the information gathered through observing a child there is a chance of fixing any minor mistakes for the future, it will also allow the practitioner to build upon a child's needs and boost the experience of play for the child. The practitioner involving themselves in the child's play will help them to learn and grow while building a trusting relationship in the process (Rymanowicz.K, 2015).

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