

Portfolio

Section 1

Friedrich Froebel 'believed that play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul' (Early Education, no date).

According to Family lives (no date), play gives children the opportunity to learn and develop while helping to build their self-esteem, as children are able to choose what they want and who they want to play. Play is a fun and engaging activity which children will often become very focused and entertained with what they are doing. 'Play is very important to a child's development, it is an integral part of a child's Early Years Foundation Stage and supports their learning journey' (Family lives, no date). Family lives (no date) suggests that through play children are able to encourage their imagination and develop a sense of adventure. Early Years Matters (2021) indicates that, play can be both indoors and outdoors with various environments for children to discover and learn about their surroundings. Through play children are able to take risks, develop new skills, problem solve and learn to share with the other children. First Walkers (2016) shows that, through play children are able to socialise with other children. They learn to share and be patient with others when taking turns. By children actively playing they are exercising allowing them to mature their muscles and bones by jumping, running or climbing. During play children are able to improve coordination, stability and motor skills. Actively playing allows children to become healthier, get more sleep and decrease the chances of any illness. First Walkers (2016) states that, children are able to develop their language skills through play when communicating with other children, this helps them also develop their intellectual skills.

Rymanowicz (2015) shows that, adults need to ensure they provide children with a fun and suitable environment for the child's learning and development. Adults are able to help children focus on their strengths and enhance their abilities by ensuring they have

an effective environment for the child. Providing children with a choice regarding their play will give them the opportunity to lead their individual learning. Rymanowicz (2015) also states that, engaging with children is essential especially during play as it gives both the child and the adult an opportunity to bond and build a relationship, where children feel the adult respects their decision. By adults interacting with children during play will allow the child to begin to feel happy and comfortable when playing either by themselves or with other children, having the adult their gives the child comfort.

Kozi kids (2018) states that, self- directed play is when a child's play is decided by them and where it is taken place, for example, indoors or outdoors. Self-directed play encourages children to develop own motivations and explore interests. Kozi kids (2018) shows that, self-directed play gives children the opportunity of free choice as they are able to decide by themselves that they would like to play with. It also shows children the play activities/ toys they best prefer as well as activities they may not like. Hollis Montessori School (2018) points out that, it is essential for practitioners to ensure that the children are the ones leading in their play, as practitioners can sometimes pre-determine ideas without intention. This can lead the child to feel like it is more of a task rather than play. Wallerstein (2017) shows that, when children self-direct their play they are able to use the toys and objects available and will try to overcome any barriers if they do arise any during play. During play children tend to join other children, through this they are able to develop their language and social skills while also learning to share.

Cheqdin Childcare Software (2019) points out that, heuristic play is when children are allowed real life/ natural objects to play with, for example, saucepans, wooden spoons, seashells or pebbles. Heuristic play allows children to explore and familiarise themselves with real life objects, giving them the opportunity to play with various sensory stimulation objects within their environment. Schoolhouse's work (no date) shows that, heuristic play stimulates a child's creativity and lets them develop their imagination, for example, when using a saucepan child may pretend that they are cooking. Heuristic play also supports a child's brain development by exploring various objects ensuring a cognitive growth. Schoolhouse (no date) suggests that, children

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can make different sounds using real life objects, for example, using a wooden spoon to hit the bottom of a saucepan. By making these sounds children may begin to question what other sounds can be made or how the sounds were made, by doing so children are being innovative as they are exploring different questions about these sounds. Through heuristic play children can make decisions independently, this encourages them to gain self-confidence and gives them reassurance from adults for allowing them to decide what they would like to play with. According to Auld (2002), the early childhood curriculum of New Zealand, Te Whariki takes into consideration how heuristic play can enable children to have more involvement and concentration during play. Veazey (2018) states that the Te Whariki approach focuses on the child from birth to young children. They encourage children to interact with their environment without any set guidelines given. They reassure children that all their surrounding environment is a learning environment.

Nursery world (2014) shows that, when people think about the word risk the first thing that comes to mind is danger. Adults will try to eliminate or manage risk, by assessing the environment before the child can play. However, risk is beneficial to the child so adults need to ensure they balance both the benefits and hazards of risks when assessing the environment. For example, when a child learns to ride a bike, they will not manage to learn without the risk of falling or tumbling. It is essential for adults to assess whether the benefit of an activity can outweigh the possible risks. Nursery world (2014) indicates that, risk is not just to do with physical activities, it also involves social and emotional risks, for example, children may feel like they are taking a risk when joining other children during a game. Adults need to ensure they take into consideration the needs of all children as what may be a risk to some may not be to others. Nursery world (2014) points out that, each individual setting or parent will have different ways of encouraging risky play, for example, some settings will allow children to climb a tree as other settings may assess it as too risky.

According to Arnerich (2018) risky play gives children the opportunity to determine boundaries showing them what is considered risky by adults. In early years children are able to engage and enjoy an activity more effectively if it has some sort of risk as it becomes adventurous for the children. It is important for adults to trust children with their play. This will help to motivate and encourage the children to investigate and discover their environment without any fear or confusion. All children understand their limits and will know what activities they are ready for, for example, a 4-year-old child may not feel ready to ride a bike even with stabilisers as they may fear they will fall. Arnerich (2018) suggest that, adults need to ensure they have an atmosphere that provides a playful learning environment for all children as some children are likely to become bored of activities other children may not. If adults try to convince a child to do an activity, it can make them become resilient to join in another time. When children experience difficulty or risk during play it is essential adults try not to interfere as the child can miss out on a valued learning experience. Children falling and hurting themselves is all part of play and will teach them to be more careful next time. Arnerich

(2018) suggests that, it is essential adults support all of the children equally when they are playing, as adults can sometimes encourage boys a little more especially if it involves riskier activities.

City Guilds (2019) states that, 'that by taking risks, children will develop positive outcomes which will support them as they develop' (City Guilds, 2019). It is important that adults ensure children can achieve the seven core aims that are founded by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child while allowing them to participate in risky play that benefits their learning experiences. City Guilds (2019) indicates that, practitioners should ensure a risk assessment record is put into place as this will help them to keep track of what needs to be done to ensure the safety of the children. Rodgers (2018) work shows that, children need the chance to be creative and learn to problem solve through risky play as it challenges them physically and mentally. Children will take risks through play as it helps them to learn and develop. All practitioners need to ensure they take into consideration their role and duty to ease any risk that may cause harm to children, however, risks that will give children the opportunity to learn need to be accepted. According to Rogers (2018) practitioners can ensure risk is reduced effectively by supervising children's play, certifying equipment is placed correctly and guaranteeing rules that are understandable for children are in place for each activity. Children safety is vital, and practitioners need to ensure the safety and well-being is taken into consideration and care when undergoing a risk assessment. Rodgers (2018) points out, that adults need to support children as it will aid them to gain self-confidence. Adults need to encouraging children to explore and play. They need to oversee children's play at all times whether it is indoors or outdoors. Adults need to ensure that they give children the liberty to take risk and direct their play. Rogers (2018) states that, by adults having an active involvement 'in the children's outdoor experiences, adults have a chance to ensure the children in their care are happy, worthwhile and meaningful experiences, which will enhance their developing skills' (Rodgers, 2018). Risky play gives children the opportunity to push themselves to achieve their best potentials, for example children may fall when learning to ride a bike but when supported and encouraged by adults they learn to get over the fear of falling and will try again.

Drake (2006) states that, observations are an important part of understanding the learning of children. It is vital for adults to assess and plan activities as they are able to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the children to ensure that next time, they provide them with activities that best fit their learning needs. By observing children, adults are able to observe the child's reactions, gestures and behaviours. Drake's work (2006) shows that, observing a child is only the first step that adults take into consideration relating to the needs and interests of the child. The findings during the observation will have an impact on the child's learning depending on how adults decide to support the child. By observing and assessing the child adults are able to make an appropriate plan to take into action, to encourage and help the child to achieve the required developmental stages for their age.

According to Young Wales (2011), the purpose 'of the Foundation Phase Child development assessment profile is to assess children within six weeks of their entry into the Foundation phase' (Young Wales, 2011:2) ensuring an assessment referring to all the six areas of development of the child is provided by the setting. Practitioners also have a separate document where they record all the information gained during the observation and assessment, this is called, the Foundation Phase children development assessment profile record, this record looks at defining certain behaviours each individual child may present. For most children their assessment profile will begin at the age of three, which is when they first begin school. The assessment can be completed by observing either a child playing on their own or with other children, showing how the child occupies themselves with the materials that have been provided by the setting. Young Wales (2011) suggests that, assessments should be unplanned as this allows practitioners to observe the behaviours of the child logically. There may be times where children may need some reassuring from the practitioner as the child may feel shy or resilient to join in with the activity. Practitioners should allow children to play with others during an assessment as it gives practitioners an idea of the child's different behaviours around various children. Young Wales (2011) points out that, notes from an assessment should be noted separately before the

practitioner decides if the child has met the description of behaviour required for their age. Discussing with other practitioners the findings from the observation will give the practitioner more information to take into consideration during their reflecting process. It will also allow them to make sure that a precise assessment of the child has been complete. Early Years Wales (2020) states that, the Foundation Phase Profile supports the assessment made on the child by practitioners while they are in the Foundation Phase Curriculum. 'Its main purpose is to provide a nationally consistent baseline assessment which aligns with the end of Phase outcomes' (Early Years Matters, 2020). By assessing and observing the children practitioners are able to plan activities that are appropriate and help support each individual child's holistic needs. Through observing children practitioners are able to become aware of any delay the child may have in certain areas of their holistic development, this helps to ensure that any help and guidance the child may need is provided to them. Practitioners need to ensure their assessment is provided on record as it will help other professionals become aware of the child's learning and development, ensuring they are supporting them correctly, for example, if the child is going through a transitioning process.

As Early Years (2020) points out, ensuring assessments are provided on record is beneficial as all practitioners will be able to guarantee an effective transition for the child. The Foundation Phase Profile provides setting with an idea of the child's learning and development on entry through the assessments made giving practitioners an idea of how they are able to support the child during their time in the Foundation Phase Curriculum. Early Years matters (2020) also states that, early interventions can be put into action for the children who need extra support from adults. The Foundation Phase profile is beneficial to all settings as it will be the same throughout Wales ensuring that if a child moves schools the records can be accessed, and the child can be supported more efficiently. However, Young Wales (2011) shows that, children are only assessed on the first six weeks of starting the Foundation Phase, this limits adults to become aware if the child is having difficulty either at home or in the setting after the first six weeks of assessment, for example, a child may go through the process of changing homes, which can make the child withdrawn from others. If practitioners don't know about the transition it may be harder for them to notice these signs on the child.

Section 4

AziloTraining (no date) suggests that, observations a vital for adults to monitor during the developmental stages of the child. By observing children during their play and learning, adults are able to recognise the stage of development the child is at. If a child isn't at the expected stage in their development adults are then able to support the child to achieve these by planning activities with the required resources, for example, toys or play equipment. Allowing children to explore activities they are interested is essential for their development as children may become bored of the play activities provided to them by an adult. Through observations adults are able to become attentive of any areas the child is struggling with, providing adults with awareness on how to identify ways to support the child.

Observing and assessing children's learning and development (no date) points out that, observing and assessing a child's learning will enrich the knowledge of adults on the child's learning development. Observations give adults an understanding of 'how children make meaning in their world, how they use and develop their language to enable then communicate with others and to think' (Observing and assessing children's learning and development, 139: no date). Through observations adults are able to understand how children are able to develop their emotions and morals during play. Observing children allows us adults to become attentive of the child as an individual. Practitioners can also learn from other adults, for example, other practitioners or parents, during observations as it improves their own practise.

Children's developmental stages are apparent when learning through play. Adults can link theories to their own practise by observing the child. Carefully observing and assessing a child will show practitioners the child's knowledge and skills, suggesting to adults what areas of development need to be improved and supported. Observing and assessing children's learning and development (no date) suggests that, adults can use the information they have gathered from the observations to plan play activities to encourage and motivate the child to achieve their developmental stages.

Through observations children's learning gives adults an idea of their overall provision.

Adults can support the learning and development of children by ensuring the provision is both planned and child-initiated, both of these provisions need to meet the interests of the child as it will enable them to participate in the activities that are beneficial to their learning.

According to the Howard and McInnes (2012) article, the importance of play for the child's developmental stages has been recognised and policies and procedure have been put into place to ensure children have the accessibility to various play opportunities, focusing on the health, education and social aspect. Howard and McInnes (2012) states that, studies have shown that children who have experienced play deprivation have shown a delay in their development. It suggests that children's academic performances had made an improvement when they felt that an activity given was play. The case study conducted in the article shows how children felt about the play activity they took part in. Howard and McInnes (2012) shows that, how an activity is perceived by the child will affect how they engage in the activity as they may understand it as a task rather than play. The article points out how adults can sometimes have difficulty in allowing the child to lead their own play as they may not intentionally take a supervisory role that interferes with the child's idea of play. Adults need to ensure open questions are used when children are playing as this gives them the opportunity to be creative and use their imagination. Howard and McInnes (2012) indicates that, if children see an activity as play, they will display emotional well-being throughout the activity. They used the Leuven Involvement Scale during the study where they kept the activity consistent, they studied how the child's emotional wellbeing was during two activity sessions where one was more play and the other not like play. During their findings it was discovered that children who took part in the activity like play showed a higher level of emotional well-being and a growth in behavioural signs linking to emotional well-being in comparison to the children who undertook the exact same activity, that was not like play. Howard and McInnes (2012) also suggests that, from their findings it is visible that children can develop emotional well-being more efficiently when they perceive an activity as play.

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