

# Portfolio

Saira Arshad

2125447

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**Section 1-1. evidence of a clear understanding of the importance of a variety of play types including self-directed play. the significance of holistic play should also be considered.**

Play is a very fundamental part of every child's life (Berkhout, *Bakkers, Hoekman, and Goorhius-Brouwer* 2013). Being a fundamental part means play builds a base of a child's imagination. Through play, children express their emotions. Play is a form of a child's innocence, creativity, knowledge, and skills (Mehta, Henrikson, and Mishra, 2020). Play is a learning technique used by children, used as a means of entertaining themselves. It is not only a form of entertainment for a child however play is used as an interaction tool and to familiarise themselves with their surroundings (Mariya, 2019). Recent research states that "play" is an important part of child development, and enjoyment and enables creativity (Brown,2009).

The term "play" is generally interpreted as "make-believe" (Lasse,2015). It defines the ideology of children's imagination and their perception. Play helps children develop emotionally, physically, and socially (Veiga, Neto, and Rieffe,2016).

Through play children interact with others, it helps them become active and show their feelings. Play is a form of communication for children, that enables them to express their feelings without using words. Play is recognized as a helpful tool in the early years education system (Samuelsson,2008-12).

Play is recognized as a fundamental right for children according to various international agreements. Numerous research studies highlight the significance of unstructured play, solely for recreational enjoyment and without any specific objective, in promoting the well-being and development of children. Despite this, contemporary society frequently views play as unproductive and time-wasting. Children, especially those with disabilities, encounter numerous obstacles in fully exercising their right to play. Play is such a magical experience that brings happiness, a sense of freedom, and pure joy. It allows us to immerse ourselves in a

world of imagination and creativity, while also teaching the importance of following rules. Play truly captures the essence of both structure and boundless fantasy. Play knows no boundaries or differences; it is not restricted to language differences or age. The play doesn't need an interpretation. Play has been a part of human existence since the very beginning. Western cultures have explored the concept of play from various perspectives throughout history. From philosophers like Plato to educational thinkers like Locke, Fenelon, Froebel, and Montessori, and psychologists like Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and Winnicott, there have been countless contributions to our understanding of play and its significance in childhood development. Scholars have approached the topic from different angles, breaking down the boundaries between disciplines. Johan Huizinga, for example, delved into the study of play as a foundational aspect of cultural anthropology. (Pedro Encarnação, 2018).

Peter K. Smith has spent numerous years exploring children's play, and in his book "Children and Play," he discusses understanding the world of children and different types of play. Peter K. Smith talks about how kids play in different ways. One way is called social contingency play, which includes games like peek-a-boo. Kids like this type of play because they enjoy seeing how others react and often copy what someone else does (Smith, 2009).

Sensory motor play encompasses actions seen during Piaget's sensory-motor stage, which typically occurs in children up to about 2 years old. It involves engaging with objects based on their sensory attributes, such as sucking on items or tapping blocks together (Smith, 2009).

### **Object play**

He discusses "object play" as a stage that follows the sensory-motor period. In this phase, children enjoy participating in diverse activities, including manipulating objects, constructing with building blocks like LEGOs, and molding clay. Language play includes activities such as wordplay, puns, jokes, rhymes, and storytelling. Language play allows individuals to experiment with language structures, sounds and meanings, fostering linguistic creativity and communication skills.

Physical activity play can take place indoors or outdoors and may involve organized sports, playground activities, or spontaneous games with friends.

Fantasy or pretend play is typically defined by the imaginative and non-literal use of objects or verbal expression. In this type of play, children engage in make-believe scenarios where they pretend to be someone else or imagine objects to be something different from their actual purpose (Smith, 2009).

### **self-directed play**

Nancy from “First Up: Thursday Thoughts” on the “Champions of Early Education” channel describes self-directed play as a process where children take the lead in generating their plans and ideas, and then proceed to explore and engage with those ideas in an organic manner. Teachers facilitate this process by providing materials and resources that support children’s own initiative and encourage their exploration and creativity (Self directed play for infant and toddlers, 2020).

### **Sensory motor play**

In this short video by Anna, the narrator emphasizes the importance of sensory play in fostering learning among children. Through exploration, children explore their curiosity and it helps with cognitive development through sensory play. It explains that by engaging with different sensory stimuli, such as textures as shown in the video children are playing with the play dough and different shapes (why sensory play?, 2022).

The two types of play mentioned above are self-directed play and sensory motor play which play a significant role in holistic development. They are also can be supported in the setting by adults providing the right material and observing the child's ideas for playing. In the setting, an adult can provide different types of textures which could help in sensory-motor play.

### **Section 2. Evidence of a clear understanding of why it is important for children to choose their own play and the importance of the role of the adult in children's play.**

(Santer, Griffiths & Goodall, 2007) stated that Free play is centred around the child's interests and needs. It provides valuable opportunities for children to explore materials, regulate their emotions, cope with difficult experiences, and develop both physically and mentally. (Alfieri, Aldrich & Tenenbaum, 2011) stated that The form of free play is often supported as pretend play, where children engage in imaginative scenarios and role play, such as pretending to be a part of a family. While free play

like this can enhance social interactions and cognitive skills. It may not be enough to foster academic learning on its own. However structured play offers more guidance and specific learning goals can complement free play by providing opportunities for academic skills development (Megha Mohan, 2022).

According to McInnes *et al.*, (2011), a thorough comprehension of play involves enabling both play and learning experiences where children exercise choice and control. Their study highlights that educators who do not grasp the significance of play tend to favour adult-led activities over child-led ones. According to Trawick-Smith and Dziurgot (2011) when adults are responsive and adaptable to the interests, preferences, and developmental stages of children during their free play, children are more inclined to independently participate in activities. To identify the play requirements of children, adults must initiate the process by observing play and interpreting their observations accurately.

The adults' capacity to interpret play relies on their understanding of play, which they have developed through past experiences, professional training, teacher education, and personal reflection. Sandberg (2002) states an aspect for adults to consider is that the quality of their interaction with children during play holds greater significance than the quantity of their involvement. Therefore, adults need to strive to be mindful of children's emotions and thoughts during play rather than imposing control over their activities. The positive demeanour exhibited by adults towards children during play significantly shapes the children's perception of the adult's role in facilitating play. Enz and Christie (1993) outlined five teacher roles within play settings: mastermind, participant, guide, supervisor, and disengaged observer. As onlooker observers, teachers position themselves close to the play area, attentively watching the children and providing non-verbal cues of support to the participants. Although they refrain from direct involvement in the play, their presence and positive reinforcement subtly convey the importance of the children's activities. Adults can support self-directed play like this, watching and observing and not intervening means that the adult has shown trust in child play and it opens many opportunities for children to shape their game in their own way (Ivrendi, 2020).

Virginia Axline (1947) stated that Self-directed play therapy operates on the premise that a child's behaviour stems from an innate drive for self-realization, without

seeking to control, without seeking to control or alter the child. Its core goals are fostering self-awareness and self-direction in the child. In this approach, the therapist provides a well-equipped playroom where the child can freely engage in play or choose to remain silent. The therapist's role involves actively reflecting on the child's thoughts and emotions, aiming to create an environment where the child feels understood and accepted. By expressing, identifying, and accepting their feelings, the child can then effectively manage and cope with them (Landreth, 2012).

In Australia the design of school grounds traditionally emphasises supporting children's play during recess and lunchtime. These breaks provide children with opportunities to unwind and engage in unstructured activities away from the school environment. this aim is to promote physical activity, social interaction, and overall well-being among students. The design of school grounds takes into account various factors such as space allocation for different types of play, safety considerations, accessibility, and inclusion of diverse play equipment (Altuğ Kasalı, 2010).self-directed play refers to a form of autonomous play where children have the freedom to choose what they want to play and establish their own rules and guidelines for the games or activities. Self-directed play is driven by the motivation and interest of the child rather than external directives or instructions. Researchers such as Hughes (2010), Juster (2015), and Vygotsky (1980) have all highlighted the importance of self-directed play in children's development. Hughes for example, emphasizes the role of self-directed play in fostering imagination and cognitive development. Juster stresses the importance of allowing children the freedom to explore and make decisions in their play, Vygotsky theory underscores the significance of play in facilitating learning and social cultural development (Aminpour, et al., 2020).

**Section 3- in-depth discussion and understanding of an observation method for young children. choose from the following observation types. Observation system that you are familiar with.**

Punch (2005) discusses the significance of observation as a research method in the social sciences, particularly in fields like psychology, medicine, and qualitative human inquiry. Firstly, it highlights the historical precedence of observation as a commonly utilized technique in these disciplines. This suggests that observation has been a fundamental aspect of research methods for quite some time. Jenny Salmon in his work emphasizes the importance of observational data, particularly through

participant observation. Participant observation involves the researcher actively participating in the setting or context being studied, allowing for a first-hand understanding of the phenomena under investigation. (Salmon, 2015)

Observers adhere to the best practice principles that emphasize structured observation techniques, non-involvement in unrelated activities, and effective listening skills. By upholding these principles, complete observance ensures the objectivity and validity of their observational research endeavors. (Salmon, 2015)

Mulhall (2003) states the importance of discretion, non-interaction, and maintaining distance for complete observers. these practices are aimed at ensuring the validity, objectivity, and integrity of their observational research by minimizing any potential sources of distortion. (Salmon, 2015)

In a Bright Wheel blog “Running Record Observations in Early Childhood Education” the blog states that a Running record is a systematic method for documenting a child’s behaviour or activity in real-time. This method involves writing down observations as they occur, written in the present tense, to maintain accuracy and capture the moment-to-moment actions and interactions of the child. running records gives educators valuable information on child development and allows them to tailor support and intervention effectively. This method is frequently used in early years settings to observe or document a child's behaviour or during activities. Mostly used to evaluate a child's reading skills by recording a running record of a child's oral reading. Running Records also helps educators to understand children's various needs such as language, social interaction, problem-solving, and motor skills.

By analyzing the recorded information, educators can tailor lesson plans and interventions to support each child's unique development effectively. Thus, running records serve as essential tools for enhancing learning experiences and promoting holistic growth in young learners. regularly conducting running records allows teachers to track and record their advancement effectively. This observation method is based on individual needs and it helps to tailor support according to the child's growth for development. For example, scheduling observation every one to two weeks may be necessary for a struggling child, whereas for other children who don't need help a struggling child only needs from 3 to 4 weeks check. By observing this

way teachers play a major part in a child's holistic growth development. Here are the benefits of running record observation method for children:

**Record Qualitative Information:** Running records allow educators to capture detailed qualitative information about children's behaviour, activities, and interactions in real time. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication, engagement levels, and social interactions.

**Identify Children's Needs, Behaviour, and Learning Patterns:** By systematically documenting observations, educators can gain insights into each child's unique needs, behaviour, and learning patterns. This includes understanding their interests, strengths, challenges, and preferred learning styles.

**Track Progress and Changes:** Running records provide a longitudinal view of children's development over time. By regularly documenting observations, educators can track progress and changes in behaviour and performance. This helps in assessing growth, identifying areas of improvement, and celebrating achievements.

**Identify Areas of Weakness:** Running records help educators pinpoint specific areas of weakness or challenge for individual children. By analyzing observations, educators can identify patterns of struggle, such as difficulties in specific academic subjects, social interactions, or emotional regulation. This allows for targeted interventions and support to address these weaknesses effectively. Overall, the running record observation method offers a comprehensive and systematic approach to understanding children's development, tracking progress, and addressing their unique needs, ultimately facilitating effective teaching and support strategies in early childhood education (Anon., 2023).

**Section –4 demonstrates an understanding of the role of play when undertaking observations and assessments of children and considers how this affects the child's engagement and the accuracy of the observation.**

Piaget and Vygotsky both shared a profound interest in the role of play as a vehicle of learning and development. They famously likened observing a child at play to seeing the child 'standing a head taller than himself'. This metaphor emphasizes the idea that through play, children engage in activities that enable them to surpass their current development stage and explore concepts beyond their immediate

capabilities. In essence, play provides children with opportunities to stretch their cognitive, social, and emotional capacities leading to significant growth and understanding (Smidt., 2015).play is a mode of learning categorized by children following their interests and passions. When a child can pursue questions that genuinely matter to them. Their engagement and curiosity are heightened, leading to a deep interest in finding answers. In this sense, play becomes a serious endeavour, as it provides a platform for children to explore, experiment, and seek understanding in a way that is meaningful and relevant to their own experiences and inquiries.

Through play, children not only acquire knowledge and skills but also develop critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and a lifelong love for learning. Ownership is an aspect to consider in a child's development, particularly concerning the role of an active learner. When a child feels a sense of ownership over a problem or inquiry. They become more engaged in inquiring and exploring it further. This ownership emerges when the adult observes and lets the child explore, and understand better. In such situations children take charge of the problem at hand, setting their own goals and strategies for investigation. For optimal development, adults need to support this sense of ownership in children. by respecting the child's initiative and providing an environment conducive to their inquiry, Adults foster a sense of agency, and self-efficiency in children, empowering them t take charge of their learning experiences. In this way ownership becomes a catalyst for active learning and critical thinking, driving the child's intellectual and emotional growth (Smidt., 2015).

As an educator, being alert and sensitive to all that is observed and heard is essential. Active listening, coupled with keen observation, enables adults to draw upon their knowledge of individual children and child development to effectively support their learning and thinking processes. This attentive listening serves avenue through which children can be encouraged to think critically, question, and develop their hypotheses and theories. To recognise questions from children need not be explicit or verbal. children often express their inquiries through expressions, actions, words, or silence. Therefore, educators must pay close attention to the cues, including facial expressions, and body movements. By remaining attuned to the cues and responding in a manner that nurtures the child's thinking and learning educators play a major role in scaffolding a child's cognitive development. Through this responsive and holistic approach to listening and observation, educators create an

environment where children feel supported, valued, and empowered to explore (Smidt, 2015).

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