Importance of play in an early childhood curriculum

Dorothy Burhop

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IMPORTANCE OF PLAY
IN AN
EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

by
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

What is play? Play is like love. Everyone knows what it is but no one can define it (Chance, 1979, p.1) State agencies are showing a growing interest in including play in the early childhood curriculum. Why? Are there more benefits to play than manipulating toys or objects? Are people in authority saying that play has educational value as well as being fun? Is play really child's work? Do we need to educate people on the value of play? Should play be part of all early childhood curricula?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research paper was to examine the educational benefits of play. Play has a number of dichotomies (Chance, 1979). Play can be:

1. Social or asocial
2. Cooperative or competitive
3. Imitative or original
4. Repetitive or novel
5. Overt or covert
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6. Active or passive
7. Organized or spontaneous
8. Peaceful or boisterous

This paper examined the different dichotomies and their educational value, and tried to answer the above questions concerning play.

Scope and Limitations

This paper reviewed literature on the educational importance of play published within the last ten years. It examined how play is important for children in their preschool years up to age six where play is considered to be the child’s business.

Definitions

For ease of understanding this paper, the following terms are included:

- **play**: is considered to be the child’s work or his business.
- **adaptive play**: is when you take play activities and adapt to a level so that the child can participate in the play activity.

Summary

There is a growing interest on the part of state agencies to include play as an essential
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part of an early childhood curriculum. Play has educational value for preschool children under the age of six and is beneficial in teaching basic skills. This paper researched the educational benefits of play. It investigated early stages and attempted to answer some questions about the role play has in education. A definition of play was provided to clarify a controversial issue in terms of its educational benefits to children. Chapter two reviews the research on the role of play in education.
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CHAPTER 2
Review of Research

The basic concepts of reading, writing, and mathematics are learned as children play. They need to develop visual memory, auditory memory, language, classification, eye-hand coordination, body image, and spatial orientation. Play fosters physical development. It promotes development of sensorimotor skills. Play also fosters intellectual development (Hendrick, 1988). The main goal of children is to play.

Some characteristics of play are (Mayesky, & Neuman, 1985):

1. It's a natural part of a child's life. Adults do not have to tell children how to play.
2. It is self-directed, determined by the personality of the player, not the desire of adults.
3. It's a creative activity, not a production.
4. It's a total activity. Children become completely involved as they play.
5. It's a sensitive thing for children. Play may sound noisy, and children may seem deeply
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involved; yet it can be easily destroyed by interference from other children or suggestions from adults. There is no right way or wrong way to play. It is a highly creative and highly individualized activity.

Value of Play

Aggressive Value

Aggression starts with life itself and serves as an essential biological function. Earliest exploratory play of every infant has an aggressive characteristic. The intensity with which a baby searches for and latches onto the nipple or even how a tiny baby waves his arms are considered aggressive. These are the consequences of a biological drive. Aggression is a lifelong component of all play, learning, and work. It is the force behind our highest achievements as well as our most terrible acts. Aggression can be expressed constructively or destructively, but it is only truly hostile when its principal aim is to injure someone or something (Piers & Landau, 1980).
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Aggressive play is a sign that the child has an urge to prevail, to find out, to test himself. In other words, it promotes development. This doesn’t mean that pinching a child is recommended. Instead, it should be discouraged (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Pretend gun play or any kind of role-play does not indicate a tendency to violence or foreshadow a particular kind of career, least of all a criminal one (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Aggressive play shouldn’t be squelched but energies should be channeled in a way that the children don’t feel hemmed in. Children need outlets for their aggressive urges because they have yet to develop reasonable control of their feelings and behavior (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Aggression is a component of virtually all play, engaged in by both sexes from the earliest years. It is a safety valve for letting off steam that would likely otherwise be expressed in dangerous ways like hostility toward others or oneself (Piers & Landau, 1980).
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What is good play and what will make it better? There are four aspects of play which may be evaluated (Chance, 1979):

1. Atmosphere
2. Playthings
3. Adult intervention
4. Individual differences

Behavioral Value

Dr. Schwartzman teaches children that behavior has context and that the meaning depends upon its context. Behavior and ideas can be commented on. It can be criticized, evaluated, revised, or rejected (Chance, 1979, p. 36). Play is the basis for cultural evolution.

There are several types of play (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985):

1. Free play (spontaneous) is flexible; unplanned by adults. It is a self-selected, open exercise.
2. Organized play. May also be open and flexible. Some structure is provided in terms of materials, equipment, or directions by the teacher.
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Play may be further subdivided by the age of the child, whether it is imaginative or whether it involves the use of specialized materials or equipment. Areas of subdivision are (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985):

Infants and Toddlers:
- Face-to-face talking (trying to recognize people and voices)
- Grasping rattles (building, reaching, and grasping skills)
- Peek-a-boo games
- Manipulative toys

Older two's and three year olds:
- Enjoy dramatic play roles
- Collect anything that is attractive to them or to others in their group
- Repeat games or play activities over and over

Four year olds:
- More imaginative
- Reflect more aggressive activity like monsters or ghost characters.
- Like to wear costumes that show strength of their character.
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* Better coordinated in using tools and equipment.
* Like to hide things and delight in playing hide-and-seek.
* Distinguish the real from the imaginary. Know difference between playing a role and actually being the character.

Five and six year olds:
* Play games that have rules. Understand the need for rules and meaning of games that have certain objectives.
* Play out their fears and sometimes relieve their aggressions through dramatic play. When they are scared they will hit.
* Dramatic play becomes more complicated in the roles children play and characters they become. Play doctor with children of opposite sex (interest in their bodies), romance by playing bride and groom games.
* Improve coordination allows them to play with more complicated toys.

Cognitive Value

Mental growth is important in developing concepts. Through play a child learns the meaning
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of up and down, hard and soft, and big and small. Play contributes to a child's knowledge of building things and arranging things in sets. They learn to sort, classify, and probe for answers. Piaget (1963) felt that imaginative play is one of the purest forms of symbolic thought available to children. It permits the child to fit the reality of the world into his own interest and knowledge of the world. Imaginative play contributes to intellectual development. Symbolic play is a necessary part of a child's development of language (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Play offers opportunity to acquire information that sets the foundation for additional learning. Example: when playing with blocks, a child learns the idea of equivalents by discovering that two small blocks equal one large one, or through playing with water and sand, the child acquires the knowledge of volume, which leads to developing the concept of reversibility (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Piaget talks about cognitive levels of play which are (Ziehner, 1986):
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1. Practice play—sensorimotor stage of development. Repeating learned behavior to provide pleasure vs. achieving a specific goal.

2. Symbolic play—preoperational stage of development. Uses mental symbols to represent experiences, pretend or make-believe play begins. Increased language skills allow him to imitate and recall past experiences.

3. Games with rules—concrete operational stage. Accept prearranged rules and adjust to them and control actions and reactions within given limits. Involves cooperative and competitive activities.

During the first six to eight weeks of life the infant's movements are limited by reflexes. As the infant gains control over his movements, the best playthings encourage participation, such as a mobile to hit, noisemakers to bang, or a rattle to shake. Playing with these objects gives the infant a sense of competency because they make something happen (Ziehner, 1986).

The first lesson a baby learns is that he is a being apart from his mother. When he sucks his fist, the baby feels something in two different
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places, his mouth and his hands. In being gently, playfully cuddled and caressed, the baby develops what psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson calls "basic trust" the primary goal and achievement of the first stage of human life. Because the baby discovers that a caring person always comes when needed, he gradually develops a trusting response to life that enables him to meet the continuing challenges in the environment and in himself with competence and optimism (Piers & Landau, 1980).

The child begins to discover and handle all sorts of household objects - pots, pans, books, bottles, shoes, knickknacks. All of these can be looked upon as educational toys, except that they may be fragile, expensive, even dangerous. The principal the child learns from such encounters is that there are safe and happy limits to exploration. He learns that though climbing on the bookshelves is forbidden, he can count on his parents to provide something equally attractive and challenging to do instead (Piers & Landau, 1980).

The child who throws his spoon on the floor, time after time during the course of almost every
meal is learning. He is developing his ability to pick up something, let it go, and throw it. He is discovering that things fall down—not up and brought back. The child learns social lessons, too—that a bigger brother or sister may be friend or foe, sometimes ready to play and protect, at other times a fierce rival for a possession or for Mommy's attention. He can learn life's valuable lessons about cooperation and competition, the limits of safe aggression and the advantages of harmony in a day-to-day play with brother or sister that is different from his relationship with his parents (Piers & Landau, 1980).

The child learns about time, space, and distance—how far is, in terms of his energy and traveling time, from the crib to the door. He learns that things that disappeared from sight, such as a series of nesting cups or boxes, still exist. This is important to the child's emotional development (Mommy still exists and can come back even though she's out of sight) and his intellectual development as well. Such early learning enhances the capacity to comprehend abstract concepts of size, place and dimension.
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The child learns everyday lessons in cause and effect, too, through play as he discovers what he can do to things and what things can do to him. Example: pulling a toy duck by a string and pinching his finger in a clothespin (Piers & Landau, 1980).

All such discoveries made through playing with people around him and with toys and ordinary household objects are part of what may be called the hidden curriculum of infancy and toddler stage, the day-to-day experiences that teach optimism, self-confidence, trust, and also caution, fear, and wariness (Piers & Landau, 1980).

The remarkable aspect of this sort of learning through play is that it is never lost. Later lessons acquired in school are often forgotten, but the things learned at play are never forgotten (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Emotional Value

Play contains emotional values. It allows children to express their feelings about doctors by administering shots or jealousy of a new baby by spanking a doll. It allows a relief from the
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pressure to behave in unchildlike ways (Hendrick, 1988).

Most important contribution of play to emotional development is the formation of a child's self-concept. Play is one way in which the environment, including parents and other people, can respond to the child and contribute to his or her feelings of self-worth and competence (Chance, 1979).

Many of the opportunities that a child has to influence the environment come in play. A baby gurgles; and a parent gurgles in return; a three year old throws a ball across the room and someone rolls it back; a six year old plays with a jigsaw puzzle and the pieces fit together. Through such interactions, children acquire feelings about themselves that are vital to healthy emotional growth (Chance, 1979).

Play is the key to emotional growth. Creative play helps a child develop a positive self-concept. In play activities there are no right or wrong answers. They always are successful to one degree or another. They learn to see themselves as capable performers. Even
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when things do not go as well, there is little pressure built into play. Young children view themselves as successful and worthwhile human beings through creative play. This is important in developing a healthy outlook on life (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Children learn to express and understand their emotions in creative play experiences. They express feelings about doctors by administering shots with relish or their jealousy of a new baby by walloping a doll. The same doll that only moments ago was being punished may next be lulled and crooned to sleep in the rocking chair (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

The emotional value of creative play is that it also offers the child an opportunity to achieve mastery of his emotions. He is in command. It establishes the conditions of experience by using imagination and enables him to exercise his powers of choice and decision as the play progresses (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

When a child is hurt or has been wronged by someone, it helps to put himself in the place of the "bad" person, in a make-believe way. As soon
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as the child feels in command of the situation, instead of being helpless and at the mercy of others, he begins to feel much better (Piers & Landau, 1980).

One of the most important functions of this kind of reverse role-playing is to help young children assimilate and master shocking or frightening experiences. A child, like an adult, feels better and in greater control if he has some idea of what's going to happen and why (Piers & Landau, 1980).

But without such preparation, children help themselves, after the fact, master anxieties by role-playing. Example: A child can replay his appendix operation—with one crucial difference. He changes his role from the powerless victim to the powerful person, and thus the event gradually loses its terror and becomes neutralized (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Play is a therapeutic tool with young children for several reasons. Young children do not yet have the mastery of language and abstract thought which enables them to comprehend and discuss their problems, fears, and anger. Through
a doctor's sensitive guidance and sharing of the child's play, he helps the troubled youngster begin to relieve his anxieties and master his problems (Piers & Landau, 1980).

**Environment Value**

Play offers a child opportunity to achieve mastery of his environment. When he plays, he is in command. By using his imagination, he exercises powers of choice and decision. This fosters the growth of ego strength in childhood (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Atmosphere depends to a large degree on the feelings that supervising adults have about play. Chief ingredient in a good play atmosphere is freedom—freedom to move about, to touch, to try things out, to experiment, to explore. Most of all, freedom to make mistakes, to perform imperfectly. There are no evaluations, no grades, no scores, no real failures. Physical environment that is bright and cheery and generally attractive is helpful (Chance, 1979).

Roles of adults in making play work.
(Musselwhite, 1986, p. 6):
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1. Entertainer—to get and keep child’s interest.
2. Director—to teach the child specific skills.
3. Observer—to determine the situation.
4. Conversationalist—to be an equal partner.

Adults must create a physical and psychological environment that gives children permission to play and encourages it when it occurs (Chance, 1979).

Playthings ought to be safe. For very young children, realistic toys are more desirable, but as children get older, less realistic toys encourage creativity (Chance, 1979).

Adults should actively participate in play. They should play with the child, not merely supervise or direct the play (Chance, 1979).

Adults could provide good play models. According to Dr. Fein, disconnected play is not as beneficial as are imitative and elaborative play (Chance, 1979, p.5). If an adult responds to the action of the child, the child’s behavior has consequences. This gives the child a feeling of competence (Chance, 1979).
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Individual differences help to establish good play. It depends on the characteristics of the child.

For adults, play is what they do when they have finished work. It is a form of relaxation. For children, play is what they do all day. Playing is living, and living is playing (Ziehner, 1986).

We need to provide an environment in which the child can be happy. Childhood is a process, a stage on the way to adulthood. It's a child’s right to enjoy life at the moment (Ziehner, 1986).

Many parents and teachers consider child's play a luxury, a way of marking time between more important activities. Play is the only good and lasting way of learning for the young child. Through play, children learn and master skills—social, emotional, physical, and mental (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Playing is as necessary as breathing, eating, and sleeping. This means that from birth parents should play with their children (Piers & Landau, 1980).
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A caring person to cuddle and play with a child during his first year of life, seals the fate of the young human being. Babies who enjoy loving playmates learn and live (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Play is the surest, fastest path to learning, self-confidence and the mastery of many skills (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Language Value

Talking out loud, often to themselves, young children teach themselves the grammar of their language. They practice various kinds of sentences, moving from one tense to another, from one mood, say, declarative, imperative, or interrogative, to another (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Although they teach themselves almost everything they need to learn, largely through play, they are yet not consciously concerned with the rules or structure of play and games. About the age of four, children learn that their lives, their worlds, are composed of logical succession of happenings. Example: storytelling, the right order must be followed (Piers & Landau, 1980).
What children are expressing in their stubborn refusal to do things in a new or different way is the need for predictability in their lives and, therefore, for comprehension of their environment. What seems like stubbornness is actually a confirmation of the child's growing awareness of the complexity of the world, and an expression of the child's attempts to function competently in that world (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Play is a valuable experience in language development. In play, the child uses speech to verbalize what he is doing. The play activity acts as a stimulus to verbalizations. It allows the child to talk freely and communicate with those who are playing about him (Weininger, 1979).

The child manipulates, acts, and makes order out of his world. He uses language to describe what he is doing. It is almost as though play creates the opportunity for preverbal logical thinking and working out of understandings, which then allow for him to verbalize his reasoning and logic. Play is the stage that permits the initial activity to unfold, and carries along with it the functions of language and reasoning. Through
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language the child is able to communicate his ideas and to find out the sense of logic and reasoning that is available to him (Weininger, 1979).

As play evolves, the child begins to use words and images. He will describe things, talk about things, and follow his own activities with what is almost a commentary. He creates representations of the events which concern him in his surroundings, and pretends, verbally they are these. He will make use of these objects and events in a symbolic way of his own making for his own purposes (Weininger, 1979).

When a child begins to use language in his play, it is important to encourage the seemingly pointless talking, and explaining as the child talks about what he is doing. His language has to catch up with his actions. This is why, many times, we really do not understand what the child is saying, why his current actions do not match his current words. His ability to describe the present and then to differentiate it from the past and the future depends on his continuing use of symbolic language in his play. His reading
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ability also depends on this kind of play activity (Weininger, 1979).

Skills and competencies cannot be considered as belonging to one subject matter area, to one subject description, but rather flow from one area to another. Example: reading is not learned by just looking at books, it requires visual-motor play, body-image understanding, black-white sequence, straight-line conceptualization, and so on (Weininger, 1979).

At play children are constantly moving, touching, listening, and looking. They practice and learn physical skills and sensory discrimination. They are constantly talking and so practice their vocabulary and concepts. They explore and question, increase their knowledge, skills, and vocabulary. They practice ways to relate to other people, learning the complicated business of human relations (Weininger, 1979).

Physical Value

An obvious benefit from play is that it aids physical development. Physical exertion that comes with play improves circulation, aids in fighting obesity, helps maintain muscle tone, and
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increases resistance to a number of diseases (Chance, 1979).

Physical development also includes the acquisition of perceptual-motor skills. This skill depends a great deal on experience, which depends on play. Example: walking, keeping one's balance, judging distance, coordinating what the eye sees and what the foot does (Chance, 1979).

Physical growth contributes to muscle development. Throwing a ball or lifting objects helps a child's muscles develop. Placing an object on top of another and grasping tools develops muscles and eye-hand coordination. Play forms that require children to look at an object, feel textures, smell various odors, hear sounds, and taste substances help develop the senses (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

To a younger child, a thing is what you do with it. But the older child realizes that objects fall into defining categories. Through play this sort of progression takes place, through play children test the validity of their beliefs (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Social Value
Eye contact is an extremely important social skill, since it is the most basic way of making contact with another person, a way of saying, "We are together. We have a relationship" (Chance, 1979, p.32). This ability is acquired partly through play.

Play helps develop social growth. When children play together, they learn to be together. They develop common interest and goals. They must learn to "give a little" as well as "take a little" (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Young children act out adult roles—mom, teacher, storekeeper. Play functions as a safe staging ground to try out various types of behavior the child will need later in real situations. Through pretend play children begin to fathom the meaning of other people’s behavior and to develop comfortable and acceptable styles of behaving themselves. They begin to acquire self-confidence based on what they have learned through play (Piers & Landau, 1980).

These children are less likely to become aggressive and hostile. They are better able to tolerate frustration and delays, became better
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"sharers" with other children, and less demanding of their parents and adults (Piers & Landau, 1980).

By parents participation in pretend play with the child, they set the stage for full development of the child's power of imagination and for his delight in using it (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Characteristics of Play

There are four kinds of play (Chance, 1979):

1. Physical
2. Manipulative
3. Symbolic
4. Games

Physical Play

In physical or sensorimotor play the emphasis is on action. This means run, rough-house or jump about. Most young children spend a great deal of time tickling each other, wrestling, playing tag, etc. Much physical play by its nature is social, boisterous, and competitive (Chance, 1979).

Manipulative Play

Manipulative play is an attempt to get control over, or master the environment. It's a way of providing stimulation. Children enjoy
making things happen. Much of play is aimed at social control (Chance, 1979).

Symbolic Play

Symbolic play involves manipulation of reality. This includes pretend, make believe or fantasy play as well as nonsense rhymes and other forms of speech play. This is an innately human trait (Chance, 1979).

It’s the deliberate misrepresentation of reality. Dr. Garvey identifies three elements in pretend play (Chance, 1979, p.5):

1. One or more objects
2. Theme or plan
3. Roles

Symbolic play is characterized by a lack of constraints. There are no rules. There is logic however, and it’s found within the play itself (Chance, 1979).

Games

Games are governed by rules or conventions. Piaget noted that very young children do not play with each other; they play side by side, they do not interact in game like fashion (Chance, 1979).
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Characteristics common that seem gamelike (Chance, 1979, p. 7):

1. Mutual involvement of children
2. Alternating turns
3. Repetitions of the entire interaction
4. Quality about the interactions that was "non-literal." Example: A child stands with hands out and wants the ball to be rolled back (Chance, 1979).

Children's games nearly always involve interactions with other people, so they are especially important to social development. One of the things children learn from such encounters is the concept of turn taking. This notion of cooperation is then elaborated into sharing and team work through complex games and pretend play (Chance, 1979).

Play is effective in teaching the concept of competition. Children learn about struggling toward a goal, about rules, about aggression, team spirit, and the joy of winning and the misery of losing. It also helps children to understand all sorts of complex social concepts such as power...
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relationships, hierarchies, social status and roles (Chance, 1979).

Any society is better off if its members are sound and productive. The most common benefit of play is that it is one of the chief ways by which children are enculturated. The stability of any group depends on its members to integrate new members into its fold. It gives members ability to adapt to society changes. It opens up thought, giving a flexibility or openness to new ideas, new way of looking at things. It's what allows a society to move forward. We have acquired a certain adaptibility. We grope and struggle for awhile to understand the new rules, and then we go on as before (Chance, 1979).

Games can be invented by children on the spot, or can be existing games known to most children and adults (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

According to Dr. Hult, the intense examination of an object, an idea, or a skill, is where most learning takes place (Chance, 1979, p.22). Dr. McCall felt that play provided a way of practicing what has been learned (Chance, 1979, p.22). Dr. Fein claims that play is a way of
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exploring that skill or that information further, of tapping its boundaries, finding its limits, and mastering it (Chance, 1979, p.22).

play allows children to test the limits, to carry what they've learned as far as it will go. Dr. Sutton-Smith asserts that play gives us permission to make mistakes (Chance, 1979, p.22).

freedom to fail, permission to explore the impossible and absurd, allow the child the opportunity to explore the outer limits of his skill, thereby gradually extending those limits. There is evidence that children function at a higher level of sophistication in their play than at other times. Dr. Hutt observed children's language in play as being far more complex (Chance, 1979, p.23). Utterances are longer on the average and they use more adjectives and adverbs.

Dr. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, discussed a kind of a play-competence spiral: learning leads to more sophisticated play, and play provides a kind of mastery that leads to more learning, which leads to more sophisticated play, and so forth (Chance, 1979, p.23). The play-competence spiral
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helps the child reach an adult level physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially.

Major Divisions of Play

Play is composed of two major divisions (Weininger, 1979):

1. Sensory-motor play
2. Dramatic-symbolic play

Sensory-motor Play

Sensory-motor is the mode of play for the infant, as the child grows he will integrate with dramatic-symbolic play (Weininger, 1979).

Sensory-motor play is an activity in which the child is receiving information by doing something. It is really the beginning of the child's learning to use his arms, hands, legs, feet, and entire body. Children involve themselves in sensory-motor play for the sheer joy of mastering situations and for the pleasure of showing off and displaying their mastery over their own body and over reality (Weininger, 1979).

It allows children to receive information about their physical and social environment and helps them to differentiate themselves from their non-selves (Weininger, 1979).
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A child learns the multiple uses of materials and this encourages movement in the direction of new goals and permits him to assimilate new information by handling and manipulating materials (Weininger, 1979).

**Dramatic-symbolic Play**

Dramatic play begins when the child begins to make use of make-believe and illusions in his playing. The child tries to deal with new things which frighten him and with things he really does not understand. He is trying to evolve the "as if" part of himself which will help to meet expectations and fulfill different roles, as well as enable him to understand why other people act the way they do towards him. He can then explore what it is like to be his sister, superman, a fireman, etc. What would happen to me, what would I do and be like? By pretending, he finds out the kind of roles adults have, and this will eventually evolve into an aspect of making a vocational choice for himself (Weininger, 1979).

Hartley (1952) describes eight basic functions of dramatic play (Weininger, 1979, p.39):

1. Imitate adults.
2. Play out real life roles in an intense way.
3. Reflect relationships and experiences.
4. Express pressing needs.
5. Release socially unacceptable impulses.
6. Reverse roles usually taken.
7. Reflect and encourage changes in attitudes and adjustments to reality.
8. Work out problems and experiment with solutions.

Three motifs constant in children's play (Weininger, 1979, p.40):
1. Need for protection
2. Need for power
3. Need to attack and destroy

Types of Play

Creative Play

Play develops the creative aspect of a child's personality. It promotes divergent thinking where more than one answer is possible and provides opportunity to develop alternative ways of reacting to similar situations. Example: fierce dog breaking into a house. Some children may respond with screams, others rushing to shut
the door while others will attack the dog by throwing water on him (Hendrick, 1988).

To develop the abilities necessary for reading, writing, and mathematics, the child needs to know configuration, figure-ground relationships, shapes, patterns, spacial relationships, matching (shape, size, color), whole-part relationships, arranging objects by sequence, organizing objects in ascending and descending order, classification, communication, measurement, and problem solving. This is acquired by initiating activities with open ended materials like blocks, cubes, pegs, finger paint, brush paint, dough, clay, water, sand, and wood. Thus play enhances their pre-readiness skills for academic learning. Play is learning (Hendrick, 1988).

Creative play activities influence a child's total growth, including physical, mental, emotional, and social growth (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Dramatic Play

Dramatic play occurs daily in the lives of young children. It is one of the ways that
children naturally learn. They imitate the people, animals, and machines in the world. It is their way of understanding and dealing with the world. Children enjoy re-creating the exciting experiences of their lives. One of the best ways to stimulate spontaneous drama is to provide young children with some simple props and the freedom to experiment (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

**Fantasy, Imaginative, or Pretend Play**

Spinning fantasies provide a needed retreat from the pressures of coping with the demands and intrusions of other people. It provides time to evaluate, make order and sense of all the impressions, the stimuli, which come at the child. In letting his imagination just "take off," the child is learning to think creatively. This is a link to adult creativity (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Play is spontaneous, self-teaching exercise. Piaget (1963) observed that young children learned through self-motivated, discovery play, inventing both the problem and the solutions to them according to an innate and universal "readiness" timetable. Learning follows from the discoveries children make for themselves through play. They
make intellectual discoveries (such as the fact that water runs out of a cup with a hole in it), social and emotional discoveries (how to win friends and influence parents), physical discoveries (how to climb a stepladder and get down again safely) (Piels & Landau, 1980).

Preschoolers whose play includes considerable amount of make-believe and fantasy have more advanced language skills and perform better in various tasks that call for intellectual reasoning. It provides a means for children to cope with intellectual demands, as well as the emotional and social ones of growing up (Piels & Landau, 1980).

The child's urge to learn by doing is our human 'program'. As lower animals are 'programmed' to survive by instinct, human beings are 'programmed' to survive by discoveries made through trial and error (Piels & Landau, 1980).

Self-directed practice-play is how a young child carries out the human program for survival. When a child repeats a just-learned word or phrase over and over for his own ears only and with every
sign of delight, he is beginning to teach himself to talk (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Children who have learned how to pretend are also able to escape unpleasant real life situations by withdrawing into a fantasy world that is much more entertaining. Fantasy play seems to give children a clearer idea of what is real and what isn’t. Dr. Sutton-Smith claims that a lot of play is an effort by the child to get power over his environment (Chance, 1979, p.29). He learns that some things cannot be altered.

One of the characteristics of pretend play is that it gives children a chance to take different roles, to experience the emotions of a fictitious character. Children who engage in this kind of play are better able to tell what another person is feeling (Chance, 1979).

Imagination is the arena of play where the child can begin to dramatize the function of airplanes, animals, vehicles, and people. This is where play helps to clear up some of the confusions of his day. Play allows the child to explore those aspects of the world and his imagination which are frightening to him. Play
permits the child to do something with his thoughts (Weininger, 1979).

A child between the ages of three and five seems to conceive of space in terms of his physical actions. If he can run, jump, feel, move, then those aspects of action become incorporated into his comprehensive map. The spatial relationship that the child has of his area appears to be influenced by his capacity to move, touch, push, squeeze himself and objects with the space (Weininger, 1979).

The child first explores and then plays. When the child has examined the object so that it loses its foreign qualities, the child may either ignore it or incorporate it into his play (Weininger, 1979).

Imaginative play according to Piaget (1963) is one of the purest forms of symbolic thought available to the young child. It allows the child to assimilate reality in terms of his own interest and prior knowledge of the world. This is also necessary in the development of language skills (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).
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Through imaginative play young children come to terms with many fears and hurts they're vulnerable to. They actually heal themselves of emotional injuries through play. Example: suffering a sudden separation from their parents. If children did not play, they could not thrive, and they might not survive (Piers & Landau, 1980).

The capacity to overcome frightening events by reenacting them and assuming the role of the person in charge is one of the basic functions of imaginative role-playing in early childhood. Adults do a talking-it-out in similar situations. Such measures help people to cope with and master stress, to regain their balance and sense of being in command of themselves and their circumstances (Piers & Landau, 1980).

The ability to manipulate reality, to think metaphorically, is developed further through pretend play. It allows the child to explore the world of possibilities and to try out his notions about the way the world works.

Play tends to have same functions as dreams: wish fulfillment and mastery. In play, the rules
of adult life are suspended. The child is no longer the weakling at the bottom of the hierarchy. The child becomes the master (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Children enjoy playing, and those who play more seem to be happier, even when they aren't playing, than those who don't play much (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Dr. Helen Schwartzman found that the most popular kids are the ones who are best at initiating and maintaining play (Chance, 1979, p.29).

Young children act out adult roles—mom, teacher, storekeeper. Play functions as a safe staging ground to try out various types of behavior the child will need later in real situations. Through pretend play children begin to fathom the meaning of other people's behavior and to develop comfortable, acceptable styles of behaving themselves. They begin to acquire self-confidence, based on what they have learned through play (Piers & Landau, 1980).
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These children are less likely to become aggressive and hostile. They are better able to tolerate frustration and delays, better 'sharers' with other children, and less demanding of their parents and adults (Piers & Landau, 1980).

By parents participation in pretend play with the child, they set the stage for full development of the child’s power of imagination, and for his delight in using it (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Pretend play is one of the most valuable kinds of play in which preschoolers can engage. It develops creativity, intellectual competence, emotional strength and stability, and feelings of joy and pleasure; the habit of being happy (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Sociodramatic Play

Dramatic play is when a child acts out the parts of one or more characters who may be real or imaginary (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Sociodramatic play develops a child’s ability to abstract essential qualities of a social role and also to generalize role concepts to a greater degree. Language development is enhanced by
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dramatic play. Children tend to use more explicit and descriptive language. Play enhances social development. This entails verbal communication and interaction with two or more people, as well as imitative role playing, make-believe in regard to objects, actions, and situations (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Play helps the child put himself in another’s place fostering growth of empathy and consideration of others. It lets children define social roles by experimenting what it’s like to be the baby or the mother or the doctor or nurse. Play allows the opportunity to acquire social skill such as how to enter a group and be accepted, balance power and bargain with other children so that everyone is satisfied. It allows children to work out a social give and take that is key to successful group interaction (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Sociodramatic play involves verbal communication and interaction with two or more people, as well as imitative role playing, make-believe in regard of objects, actions, and
situations, and persistence in the play over a period of time. It provides countless opportunities for acquiring social skills. How to enter a group and be accepted, how to balance power and bargain with other children so that everyone gets some satisfaction from the play. (Mayesky & Neuman, 1985).

Themes of Play
There are several themes of play (Musselwhite, 1986, p.3):

1. Intrinsic activity - done for its own sake, rather than a means for achieving a specific end. Can be seen as isolated play.

2. Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserts that play is essentially spontaneous and voluntary, done by choice rather than by compulsion. Children do not need to be coerced to play during a free time.

3. Includes elements of enjoyment, something that is done for fun.

Benefits of Play
Play has several benefits. They are:

1. A source of enjoyment and learning.
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2. A way of developing friendships and feelings.

3. A means of learning to control or channel one’s feelings.

Stages of Play
In the stages of play, there are several ways to use play activities and adapt them to special needs childrens. They are (Musselwhite, 1986, p.8):

1. Exploratory-grasping, squeezing, mouthing toys, and throwing.


3. Parallel play-swing, build block towers, color next to peer.

4. Associative-approach peer with toy, brief physical contact with peer.

5. Cooperative play-ball-rolling or block-building with peer, pulling peer in wagon, and taking turns.

6. Symbolic play-domestic make-believe with dolls, cars, house, dress-up, and etc.
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Sequence of play

Parten in 1932 identified six social stages of play (Ziehner, 1986, p.33). They are:

1. Unoccupied behavior-following an adult
2. Onlooker
3. Solitary play. In early toddlerhood, the child generally plays alone at first, or with an adult.
4. Parallel play. Child plays side by side with other children, with some interaction, but without direct involvement with them.
5. Associative play. May be a child merely being present in a group. Participating in finger plays during circle or group times.
6. Cooperative play. Begin to talk about, plan, and carry out play activities with other children. It is organized for some play purpose. Labor is divided among the children.

Unoccupied Behavior

Unoccupied behavior is where the child just follows an adult. He does not involve himself in any play behavior. He seems disinterested in what the other children are doing.
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Onlooker Play

Onlooker play is when the child observes other children as they are playing but does not enter into their play. Moves from one group of children to another, always standing or sitting apart from each group. Shows interest in the ongoing play. The child is emotionally unprepared to take an active part (Weininger, 1979).

Solitary Play

Solitary play engaged in by the very young child in an egocentric fashion is satisfying his own immediate needs. It may appear that he plays with adults, but in reality he only takes what the adult gives him and makes use of it in a very solitary fashion. Depending upon a child’s previous social experiences and his temperament, a child may still be at the solitary stage of play at ages of five and six. Also depending upon the mood he is in, a child older than six may engage in solitary play when he regards other children as a hinderance to his own particular interests (Weininger, 1979).

Parallel Play
Parallel play is where two or more children engage in similar if not identical pursuits with no exchange of any kind of genuine feeling or real sharing of goals or thoughts. The children will look at each other and deal with each other and seem to be involved in the same kind of play but without actually meeting it. The child continues to be a social isolate. Psychologically, he is not yet a member of any group, although both his active stance and the physical proximity of his play to a group tend to belie his psychological isolation. He is simply sharing the same box of toys with a nearby group, and not participating in the group's play—not even through imitation (Weininger, 1979).

Associative Play

Associative play is where children play along side each other but the individual child continues to be an isolate. They may talk or exchange ideas or toys, but each child really does what he wants to do, and borrows and lends toys in terms of how he sees his own needs and project developing. They may also be imitating each other's behavior.
The child may be playing railroad and may talk about it, but each one will want to build his own tracks and buildings, and trains, rather than working jointly on the project. Frequently observed at the four year level (Weininger, 1979).

**Cooperative Play**

Cooperative play is where children are genuinely exchanging feelings and interacting. They have a sense of belonging to the play they are involved in and to the group. There is an underlying organization to their play. If they are playing railroad, there is usually an assignment of roles, either voluntarily, by tacit agreement, or at the instigation of one child who may be older or more mature or just plain bossy. As a child interacts with other children in this way, he is testing his developing self through games, using rules as a way of finding out how he stands in relationship to other children. He is learning to anticipate the intentions and expectations of other players. This is essential to all his further social relationships with
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people of all ages. Found in junior kindergarten and primary grades (Weininger, 1979).

Special Education

Play is a prime means to full development for everyone, especially children who are mentally and physically handicapped (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Many skills that develop as a matter of course by means of spontaneous play in most children can be taught through guided play and games to handicapped children (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Games help the handicapped, not only because they develop physical and mental skills but because they "reach" the handicapped as no other activities can when they are performed in a playful spirit (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Play can open the way to some of the relatively few careers suitable for the handicapped (Piers & Landau, 1980).

Piaget (1963) says, "Everytime we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself. That which he discovers by himself, will remain with him visibly...for the rest of his life." (Piers & Landau, 1980, p.60).
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There are several main goals of adaptive play. They are to integrate the child into mainstream. Play enhances normalization and helping the child develop within the family, classroom, and the community. Independent interaction with play materials reduces the need for institutionalization, the child will require less supervision and entertaining (Musselwhite, 1986).

Play helps in developing enjoyable leisure pursuits to enhance the quality of life.

Play facilitates the development of specific areas (Musselwhite, 1986, p.13). They are:

1. Gross motor-walking, running, climbing
2. Fine motor-grasping, manipulating, releasing.
3. Social skills-turn taking, initiating interactions, and sharing.
6. Communication-modeling and teaching receptive and expressive language. Play also reduces undesirable behaviors.
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Play has several strategies for intervention as a therapeutic tool. It is motivating. Play can be used to enlist a child's cooperation. Need to keep the needs of the child in mind. If it isn't fun, it isn't play (Musselwhite, 1986).

Play has potential for carryover. Enjoyment of play increases the likelihood that tasks based on play will be carried out by adults. It can also encourage children to engage independently in play tasks (Musselwhite, 1986).

Play has a potential for repetition. It offers numerous opportunities for practice. It also integrates use of the senses. You can see, hear, touch a toy, offering numerous learning opportunities (Musselwhite, 1986).

Play provides parents and children with a natural opportunity to experience positive interactions. Play is a window to whatever is on the child's mind (Ziehner, 1986).

Play takes place in a relaxed atmosphere where there are no undue restrictions. The goal is to have fun. It gives children freedom to experiment and make mistakes, to practice over and over skills that they have learned. There are no
failures or evaluations. Sometimes children perform more difficult skills in the relaxed atmosphere of play then they do in a structured teaching situation (Chance, 1979).

Play gives children an opportunity to influence their environment. Chance (1979) states that children learn to play most effectively when adults play with them. Adults can follow the lead of the child and then elaborate on what the child does. Example: If a child bangs on his highchair tray with a spoon, his mother bangs on the tray and taps the cup to make two sounds instead of one (Ziehner, 1986).

Young children who say "mama" after their mother says "mama" or hide their eyes after their father hides his eyes are learning to imitate and to take turns. Children engaged in pretend play are learning the social rules that govern certain situations and are learning how other people feel. By playing with their children, parents can help them learn to play more imaginatively and also can help the child with handicaps learn to play with other children, including his brothers and
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Children need time to play alone, to practice skills, and to make problem-solving discoveries by themselves. Play should continue as long as it is fun. It should be discontinued when the child becomes tired or bored (Ziehner, 1986).

By observing children at play, you can gather information about a child's developmental skills, learning styles, and preferences. It can reveal how a child’s play abilities may parallel other areas of development (Ziehner, 1986).

Adults assume that play is purposeless and is an unstructured activity that has no end result. It is not obvious to adults that children learn by playing. Adults tend to forget that learning can be a source of pleasure (Weininger, 1979).

Activity of the child is play. It's the most natural and efficient way for a child to acquire competency in any curricular area (Weininger, 1979).

It is through play that the young child recreates the world and comes to understand it; his play is predirected on his experiences. It is
the child's attempt to achieve, to feel comfortable, and hence to be able to innovate and change his world (Weininger, 1979).

Children learn from their own actions and those of other children, because children are generally their own best teachers (Weininger, 1979).

Characteristics Common to Play

Characteristics common to many kinds of play (Chance, 1979, p. 11) are:

1. Play is fun. When children play they enjoy what they’re doing. They are preoccupied with the activity to the point that they are unaware of other events.

2. Play is an end in and of itself. Dr. Kirschenblatt Gimblett (Chance, 1979, p. 12) says that play, the center of interest is in the process rather than the outcome, so the way of doing something becomes what gets done. The fun comes from the activity itself. Play is inner directed the rewards come from within the individual.

3. Play is more than it seems. Activities are not to be taken at face value. A child
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4. Play provides a challenge. Activity must be difficult enough to be interesting, but not so difficult that it is impossible. Play is at its best when the challenge nearly matches the skill of the individual.

5. Play takes place in a relaxed setting. There is a certain degree of choice, lack of constraint from conventional ways of handling objects, materials, and ideas is inherent in the concept of play. Karl Groos proposed that play was a way of preparing for adulthood. Play is a way for children to rehearse the roles they are destined to fill in adulthood (Chance, 1979, p.20).

In play, the child finds satisfaction for his entire being, his body is strengthened, his mind refreshed and energized, his imagination inspired (Weininger, 1979).
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CHAPTER 3

Summary

The purpose of this paper was to research the importance of play as an educational tool in an Early Childhood curriculum. This researcher reviewed the literature on play within the last ten years and its educational value for children under the age of six.

Play facilitates cognitive growth of the child by allowing him to do rather than being done to or being told what to do. Play is a learning process. It consists of sequences that involve creative patterns like changing, designing, questioning, organizing, integrating, and simplifying. It involves judgemental skills like understanding, combining, comparing, criticizing, evaluating, explaining, and etc. It involves discrimination skills such as defining, describing, communicating, identifying, listening, ordering, matching, classifying, etc. The child learns to be attentive and to listen, to understand, to interpret and then to communicate,
and he also remembers what he has done because, this behavior is meaningful.

Play helps children to find ways of dealing with their emotional reactions to themselves, to their peers, and to the adults in their world. Play helps them to sort out these feelings and to master what has been frightening or exciting. This is accomplished by playing out the event again and again, until it is no longer upsetting to the child. Play allows the child to experiment with unresolved situations and to solve the problems which exist in the unresolved situation.

At play children are constantly moving, touching, listening, and looking. They practice and learn physical skills and sensory discrimination. They are constantly talking and practicing vocabulary and concepts. They explore and question, increasing their general knowledge of the world. They practice ways to relate to other people, thus learning about human relations.

Through imaginative and dramatic play, children make models of the real world and play out situations in order to understand what they know about the world. They learn to comprehend
and understand male and female roles by what they have seen people do. They act out their fantasies, fears, wants and needs. Play relieves the child of anxiety and allows him to take in information that is threatening or dangerous to him. In this way play contributes towards personality development, mental health, and emotional well-being.

Play is a major achieving pattern of children. It increases a child's creativity. This is accomplished by increasing the child's capacity to perform a task that requires ingenuity in coming up with an answer that is not easily suggested by the materials themselves or by another person.

An appropriate environment gives the child the opportunity to use his sensory abilities, his cognitive abilities, his motor abilities, and his language abilities for communication. His learning depends on sensory experiences, and he gains information by these experiences in his environment. These experiences are determined by the child's interests and curiosity. The child
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explores, builds, discovers, and repeats activities.

For young children play develops their mental processes. Play increases their ability to deal with the problems of life and social development, as well as develop muscles and imagination.

Play also contributes to a child's social and emotional development. The feelings of success through play provides the child with the confidence to attempt new and more challenging problems and situations and to cooperate with others. Cooperation enables children to play with others, to play games with rules, and to play games without always having own way.

Children need to first learn and understand that people and things exist independently regardless of the child's actions on them.

Cognitive development shows growth of the child's thinking skills. The infant's early experiences of touching objects, feeling objects, and observing what can happen to objects allows the infant to understand rules that can be transferred to other experiences. Cognitive
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development leads to the ability of the child to think logically.

Play is a cognitive map-maker. A child looks at his environment and selects a piece of it to attend to at a particular moment. His activity becomes attentional. He concentrates on the stimuli in his environment that he has selected and he gains information from that stimuli. As he gets older, the map will become more detailed as different kinds of information will be put in it. It will be more complex, wider in scope, and the inaccuracies will be replaced with more accurate information. For the young child, information which does not fit into the map will be forgotten. If it cannot be integrated into what is important and useful to him, it is not retained.

Infants learn about the science of physics by throwing toys and food across a room. They learn about gravity by falling down and by watching objects fall; learn about language by listening to adults talk and by imitating the sounds they make; learn about depth by watching their hands and feet, by bringing them close to their faces, and by watching people move around them; and learn
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about how things are related by banging two toys together and by stacking blocks.

infants and young children only learn about things by acting on them. the environment should provide opportunities to make these discoveries. an interesting environment invites infants to explore. special learning materials are not necessary and children can learn much by just exploring things around the home.

adults can encourage the child's discoveries by providing appropriate toys and experiences that stimulate curiosity. as a child matures, he continues to learn about his environment by playing with different materials and by touching, tasting, smelling, and examining them.

motor skills increase the infants' access to objects around them and to new learning opportunities. when infants are able to crawl, they can investigate under tables and inside cupboards. infants' curiosity often seems to have no end once they discover their new ability to investigate the world.

motor skills and curiosity show the infants' need to act on things in order to understand them.
Children need to build on their understanding in small steps by experiencing their environment, testing new skills, and increasing their confidence to undertake more difficult situations.

When two or three year olds are finally able to represent actions mentally, they begin to become involved in symbolic or make-believe play. At first, the child's make-believe play often reflects an exaggerated notion of reality. Gradually the play takes on a more objective view of the world. With this objective view the child gains the ability to play games that have rules and require cooperation.

One of the most important aspects in play is identification the child makes with the adult. The child needs to learn how to deal with different situations without getting upset, or to be able to remove himself from the situation. This is learned through identification with adults. The child observes how adults react to situations and model their reactions.

A young child needs to be able to identify with a human being, which is necessary when viewing himself as someone who does not have all
the answers. A child must have some understanding of himself, of self-respect, self-confidence, a sense of self-worth and a feeling of I am. These qualities are achieved through play. In this stage games permit the development of social attitudes and allow the child to learn to be with others, to cope and fit into a structure.

This child will look for things in his environment that will satisfy his curiosity. Young children will try to make use of objects in a new and different ways after the first novelty has worn off. Example: The plastic bottle may be first sucked, then rolled, then banged, and then used as a container. The child learns and wants to practice what he has learned. He practices words by repeating them, practices fine motor skills by repeating simple activities. The child really works hard at trying to master these skills. Sometimes he is hurt doing this. He falls, bumps his head, or scratches himself. He learns that pain can be avoided by improving his motor skills and dexterity. He learns how to integrate pain in his cognitive map and develop ways to avoid pain. Pain can be helpful in that
it becomes another aspect in his comprehension of
the world and acts in such a way as to motivate
him to develop new, different, and creative
strategies to cope with the world.

For the young toddler, play is his "work" and
it helps him understand what is happening around
him. As he plays, he finds out what he is allowed
to do and what he is not. He develops a sense of
self-confidence. There is a feeling of being safe
to explore new experiences and new ways of working
with people.

The three and four year old gets his
information from playing with other children. He
is beginning to see that he can play with some
children, but not with others. He learns there
are some places he can play in and some places he
cannot. He is beginning to understand language
well enough to comprehend instructions,
especially those which relate to activities that
are of concern to him. He talks about himself.
Along with language development and acquisition,
he increases his involvement with other people.
The child is essentially an egocentric person,
because he knows something it must be true and
correct. It is hard for him to accept information from other people. Through play and his interaction with his peers, the child gradually changes from his egocentric self to one where he is able to incorporate the ideas and information of other people. This allows him to accommodate, assimilate, and develop the information.

Play is a natural avocation of childhood. Children cannot be forced to play or be taught to do so. Play is motivating, reinforcing, and a satisfying mode of behavior for the young child. Play serves some very important functions for human development since it is both natural and necessary to the young child's emotional development.

Adults assume that the child who is playing is not doing anything 'useful', that play is a timefiller and a way of bribing children to stay out of their way and keep quiet. Adults believe that play is something children do to relax between periods of learning.

Conclusions
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In play the process not the product is important. It’s the knowing of how things fit into the world.

Play is an activity. It does not need to result in a product. It may involve one child or groups of children. It may be built around toys and tools or it may involve just the child’s imagination. A play period may last a few minutes or go on for days.

Children are natural learners. They learn about space and movement through their reflexes and their sense. They learn about the qualities of things by rolling a ball across a floor, playing with sand and water, and lining up rows of toys. Through this, the child gains important concepts about the world.

Play is the work of the child. It is through play that the child gains the self-confidence he needs to allow him to continue to learn other kinds of things.

Play takes place every minute of the child’s waking day in his early years, and he works hard at it. His ability to play, to have fun, to enjoy himself allows him to realize that it’s okay to
enjoy yourself, that happiness, security, and fun can be created from within and they are not given to you by someone else.

Play is the child's major way of learning. He learns about language development as he discusses what to do next and as he makes up stories and simple acting out situations; he is involved in map-making as he lays out a village, train station or road; he is seeing for himself science concepts which he will not be able to deal with verbally for some time, such as the use of the wheel, ramp, pulley, or lever. He is also learning the mathematical concepts about size and shape involved in block building.

Through play the child is formulating basics for his intelligence. He tests, evaluates, reevaluates, comprehends and works out the actual experiences provided him by reality. He uses fantasy in play, and the fantasy becomes reality when he plays. When the playing cannot conform to adult reality, the fantasy changes in the play. The child is making a personal cognitive map which allows him to begin to understand the world in more objective terms.
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Play has no rules unless they are imposed by the child and also changeable by the child. The child needs to find out how well he can do things for himself, to change the rules and still be in control of the situation. Most children set up goals they can reach and make up rules that fit their skills and abilities. This is a natural and sensible way of developing a feeling of self-worth.

Play is the business of childhood. It is through play that the child grows, and the growth acts as a stimulus in play which becomes learning.

The child needs to be provided with the opportunities to develop ways to do things and gain satisfaction. It is the teacher's role to create a classroom atmosphere that will encourage learning and exploration. The teacher has to recognize the needs of the children and provide the play and materials that will encourage them to move on to the next level of learning.

Play is the child's private reality. It is a private experience, a unique and novel part of childhood. A child must play as certainly as he
must eat, breathe, be sheltered and loved, if he is to be a whole person.

Play integrates behavior patterns and coordinate experiences. Gradually the child builds patterns of what can be expected to happen and when, and then coordinates his experiments with things in a learning way.

Play permits direct learning. It allows a child to explore his thoughts, ideas, and comprehensions that he has of his world and permits him to build his world a little closer to reality.

Learning through play is child's work, and at times it is frustrating and tiring. There are times when children need to go back to an old, familiar behavior to comfort themselves or to restore their confidence when they are learning an difficult new skill. Just as play is a way for children to gain new information, it can also be a haven when they feel frustrated.

Play does a lot of things for children. It's fun. It is also serious business. It provides the child with experiences and chances to react to the world and to see how the world reacts to him.
The child learns about the world by playing with it.
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