Play in UK Primary Schools

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Introduction

Play is considered beneficial for children's learning and development. However, how this is enacted in practice will vary depending upon the age of the child and the type of setting. School is where children spend a vast amount of time, with most children in primary school in the UK being between the ages of 5 and 11 years. This age span encompasses different curricula which vary throughout the four nations of the UK. Usually children encounter a play-based curriculum in their younger years, for example, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England or the Early Years Foundation Phase (EYFP) in Wales. However, past the early years of schooling, and for most of their primary schooling, children encounter subject-based curricula where a more nuanced understanding of play may have to be developed, and this will be explored in this

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chapter. In addition, play time, although being increasingly eroded, presents another opportunity for children to play in the primary school and this will also be discussed. Finally, this chapter will present the need for a focus on playfulness, alongside play, which, it will be argued, transcends curricula subject-based delivery and can be implemented by all teachers regardless of the age of children being taught.

Primary Schooling in the UK

The statutory age for starting school varies across the UK. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is after children turn five years of age and in Scotland it is between 4.5 and 5.5 years of age, depending on the month of birth. However, in reality most children start primary school at four years of age. Table 1 explains the age bands, terminology and

Table 1 Primary schooling across the UK

Age during school year	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
4–5	Reception - Early years foundation stage	Reception - Early years foundation phase	Year 1 - Primary curriculum foundation stage	P1 - Curriculum for excellence
5–6	Year 1 - National Curriculum KS1	Year 1	Year 2	P2
6–7	Year 2	Year 2	Year 3 - Primary curriculum KS1	P3
7–8	Year 3 - National Curriculum KS2	Year 3 - National Curriculum	Year 4	P4
8–9	Year 4	Year 4	Year 5 - Primary curriculum KS2	P5
9–10	Year 5	Year 5	Year 6	P6
10–11	Year 6	Year 6	Year 7	P7

curricula used when discussing primary schooling across the four nations of the UK.

As can be seen, there are different curriculum frameworks covering the four nations of the UK. In England, the reception year is covered by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which is a play-based curriculum consisting of areas of learning (communication & language, physical development, personal, social & emotional development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts & design). From year 1 the National Curriculum is followed and is divided into four Key Stages across the primary and secondary age phases. Key Stages 1 and 2 make up the primary age phase and the primary curriculum is divided into three core subjects (English, mathematics and science) and 8 foundation subjects (art & design, computing, design and technology, languages (Key Stage 2 only), geography, history, music and physical education). Religious Education is taught separately as it is not a national curriculum subject (Department for Education (DfE), 2013).

In Wales, children experience the play-based Early Years Foundation Phase (EYFP) curriculum which covers children up to 7 years of age (Welsh Government (WG), 2015). This curriculum consists of areas of learning (personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity, language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development, Welsh language development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development), rather than being subject led. The National Curriculum (WG, 2008a) is subject led and is for children aged 7–11 years of age. This includes the same subjects as the English curriculum but omits a foreign language, which is replaced with the teaching of Welsh. This is all set to change in 2022 with a new curriculum with areas of learning and experience to be delivered to children from 3 to 16 years of age (WG, 2020).

In Scotland, the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) encompasses children aged 3–18 years of age (Education for Scotland, 2019). The primary years are covered by the stage called the Broad General Education and this is made up of 8 areas of learning: expressive arts, health & wellbeing, languages (including English, Gàidhlig & Gaelic learners and modern languages), mathematics, religious & moral studies, sciences, social

studies and technologies. In Northern Ireland the Primary Curriculum Foundation Stage (PCFS) comprises three age phases as shown in Table 1 and consists of six areas of learning: language & literacy, mathematics & numeracy, the arts, the world around us, personal development & mutual understanding and physical education (Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), 2007).

Play and Education

Play is difficult and complex to understand and define, if not impossible (Moyles, 1989). It is interpreted and used differently across disciplines but within early years education it is described as a vehicle for learning (Howard & McInnes, 2013). It is seen as foundational for the development and education of young children and has been described as "the child's work" (Isaacs, 1929, p. 9). Today the importance of play within early development and learning is demonstrated through its inclusion in all four UK policy and curriculum frameworks (EYFS—England, birth to age 5; EYFP—Wales, ages 3–7; CfE—Scotland and PCFS—Northern Ireland, ages 4–6) (Pescott, 2017), with all four stipulating a play-based curriculum.

However, whilst play is a distinctive feature of these early years UK policy and curriculum frameworks, and is mentioned explicitly, it is viewed as an activity designed to meet educational outcomes for young children (Wood, 2015) and as such has been described as being hijacked to serve the needs of the curriculum (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). In a play-based curriculum these outcomes should be met through child-led, child-initiated and spontaneous play. However, in reality, policy and curricula guidance outlines a view of play which is planned, purposeful and structured (McInnes, 2019). Ultimately, these different views of play result in different types of practice, from children playing freely to adult-led teaching sessions, which many consider not to be play.

Play in Primary School Policy and Curricula

The place of play within primary schooling has changed over time. The Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE), 1967) recommended play-based learning throughout the primary years resulting in experiential learning being introduced and utilised in many primary classrooms. Teaching and learning were based around themes and projects rather than subjects, and classrooms appeared very play-oriented (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). With the advent of national curricula (Roberts, 2019), teaching and learning became based around subject areas with play being distinct from work with work taking precedence, lessons being divided from play times and play being something that children do once their work has finished, with activities such as 'golden time', a period of time at the end of the day or week where children have a choice of more play-based activities (Dodds, 2014; Duffy & Trowsdale, 2014). Kushner (2012) argues that this is due to inherent contradictions between the nature of children's play and the nature of schooling, where the former is about freedom and following one's own interests and the latter concerned with teaching to adult-prescribed outcomes. However, these contradictions also exist within the early years as practitioners try to deliver a play-based curriculum to meet pre-determined learning outcomes (McInnes, 2019). Nevertheless, play is discussed within UK policy and curricula documentation in the early years, but it is far less apparent in primary curricula documentation across the four UK nations.

In the English EYFS, delivered in the reception year, play is referred to as "planned and purposeful" (DoE, 2017, p. 9). When scrutinising the English National Curriculum documentation, which covers the remaining primary years, there is no mention of the word play, as the documentation provides a framework for the curriculum subjects which need to be delivered. In Wales, the EYFP for younger children within primary school embeds the notion of play and teaching through play throughout the documentation. Play is discussed as a serious but necessary endeavour to ensure children learn and develop (WG, 2015). In addition, there are supplementary documents and guidance which assist the practitioner in their delivery of a play-based curriculum; Learning and Teaching

Pedagogy (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2008a) and Play/Active Learning for 3–7-year-olds (WAG, 2008b). Once children move out of the Foundation Phase the curriculum is divided into the different subjects to be taught and there appears to be no mention of play.

In Scotland, although the curriculum runs seamlessly from 3 to 18 years of age, it is divided into different curriculum levels. The early level is from 3 to 5 plus years of age and, like the Welsh early years curriculum, play is embedded throughout. Play is mentioned within every area of learning. The next two levels, first and second, which encompass the primary school ages from 6 to 11 years, mention play in relation to mathematical learning where it is acknowledged that planned purposeful play helps learners understand mathematics (Education for Scotland, 2019). In addition, for the early level, there is a supplementary document which provides guidance on how to facilitate active learning so children can learn through play (Scottish Executive (SE), 2007). This document discusses different ways of playing, such as spontaneous play and planned, purposeful play and how they might be implemented in practice. It predates the CfE and when first introduced was considered a novel approach outside of the nursery environment and one that teachers within primary schools struggled to grapple with due to different interpretations of what a play-based pedagogy meant (Martlew et al., 2011).

In Northern Ireland, play and playing is weaved throughout the curriculum guidance for the primary years and mention is made of building upon the play experiences in the Foundation Stage as children enter Key Stages 1 and 2. During these key stages, play is explicitly mentioned in mathematics and numeracy, the arts and physical education. For example, when talking about children learning mathematics it says, “they should continue to be involved in play activities which allow them to develop and apply their mathematical understanding in practical contexts” (CCEA, 2007, p. 58). Overall, how play is viewed within primary curricula across the UK is variable. Another way of looking at play in the primary school is through the use of appropriate play types for use with primary-aged children.

Types of Play in the Primary School

Briggs and Hansen (2012) identify ten types of play which they consider suitable for learning when teaching primary aged children: "artistic or design play, controlled imaginary or social dramatic play, exploratory play, games play, integrated play, play using the whole school environment and beyond, replication play, small world play, role play and virtual play" (p. 32). These types of play were considered appropriate as they are based on the leisure time activities of this age group of children. Their justification for these play types was also based on the observation that children choose these types of play activities when they are at leisure and relaxed, and therefore they would be motivated to engage in these play types when learning in school.

Many of these play types are self-explanatory, such as artistic play or role play. However, others warrant further discussion. Controlled imaginary play would appear to be a misnomer. Imaginary play is usually viewed as an activity which evolves from the player's imagination. Therefore, how can this type of play be controlled and who might be controlling it? It could be implied that within a classroom environment, this type of play, although initiated by the child, is being controlled by the teacher. Further description of this type of play refers to imaginary play that is based on a particular imaginary frame: for example, using story prompts to take on the role of particular imaginary characters. The use of predetermined story prompts implies a form of adult control. However, if too much control is exerted by adults and children lose agency over the play then it may not be viewed as play at all (Howard & McInnes, 2013). In fact, this point could apply to other play types such as exploratory play and games play.

Integrated play is described as an integrating mechanism which enables children to make connections between past and present experiences, thereby creating new meaning and understanding. However, it is hard to see how this is a play type as it is not referring to a particular way to play or type of play. It would appear to be describing a process which enables children to make sense of their world. Replication play is a play type which may be unfamiliar to many teachers. It is described as a type of

play which enables children to test out different roles in society and perceive the world from different viewpoints. This may be more familiar to teachers as role play, where children also have the ability to take on different roles and experience different ways of being, although this is viewed as a separate play type within this taxonomy.

Virtual play, otherwise known as digital play in the early years of education, is one play type that has grown and changed over the last few years. For the early years, digital play is not a clear concept. It is often seen as an activity not a play type (Stephen & Plowman, 2014), and often moves between and encompasses both digital and non-digital activities and between different spaces, for example home and school (Sakr, 2020). Over the last few years there has been a rise in children's understanding and experience of digital devices at home, with children having access to smartphones, game consoles, laptops and PCs. Schools need to replicate and build on these home experiences, but this is often met with scepticism by many teachers who do not see the value or breadth of use of educational technologies in the classroom (Teo, 2012). However, it could be argued that further research is required to evidence the extent of children's digital use at home and how this compares to school in order to demonstrate to teachers what is required within the classroom environment.

Within the UK primary curricula, computing and design and technology are features of both the English National Curriculum (ENC) and the Welsh National Curriculum (WNC). In addition, in Wales there is a Digital Competence Framework (DCF) (2008d) which identifies the digital skills children require from nursery to year 11. It is seen as a cross-curricular responsibility and can be applied across a wide range of subjects. In Scotland all types of technologies are encapsulated in a curriculum area called technologies and progression is viewed from 3 to 18 years of age. In Northern Ireland, using information and communication technology is seen as a cross-curricular skill and an optional digital framework for primary schools is in the process of being developed (CCEA, 2019).

Primary schools need to provide access to digital technologies and enable cross-curricular links, which many of the curricula and policy guidance are enabling (Burnett, 2016). However, concerns have been raised regarding the rise of technology use and digital play in terms of

children's wellbeing, safety and cyberbullying, but these have largely been unfounded (Stephen & Plowman, 2014; Burnett, 2016). In fact, digital games can often lead to positive outcomes, as shown by one recent example, a project on the use of prosocial digital games in primary schools, The ProSocialLearn Project (Parsons & Karakosta, 2019). This project involved primary children engaging with a series of digital games to increase their prosocial skills and findings suggested that these games were enjoyable for both children and teachers and that children learned a range of prosocial skills.

Overall, these play types have the potential to support the implementation of play in primary school classrooms. They could be used to facilitate a discussion about play and its place in the primary school. In the primary years which follow early years curricula, many of these terms will be known and in use. For example, many early years classrooms have role play and small world play areas. However, in the primary years which follow subject-based national curricula, these terms are more problematic. Whilst some of the play types map onto curriculum subjects, for example virtual play with computing, design and technology and games play with physical education, many do not. Play types such as play using the whole school environment and small world play are not subject based and will not have resonance with teachers and are, therefore, unlikely to be used.

Play Times in Primary Schools

Lessons are not the only opportunity for play for children during the school day as school play times also provide an opportunity for play, with total play times accounting for 22% of the school day in Key Stage 1 and 20% of the school day in Key Stage 2 in England (Baines & Blatchford, 2019). In the UK, it has been customary to have three breaks or play times in the school day for primary aged children: morning, lunch and afternoon. However, there is very little policy or legislation governing school play times and how they are used. There are guidelines relating to health and safety but very little in relation to timings, space, activities and supervision ratios. Consequently, there have been considerable changes

to play times over many years. According to Baines and Blatchford's (2019) survey of play times in England, which is a repeat of their previous surveys held in 1995 and 2006, there has been a reduction in the length of play times since 1995 by an average of 45 minutes at Key Stage 1. In addition, this reduction in play times has been replicated worldwide (Prisk & Cusworth, 2018). Generally, this has been achieved by cutting afternoon breaks and reducing the length of the lunchtime break. Reasons given for these changes have included needing to cover the curriculum and consequently needing more time for teaching and learning. In addition, more schools have been withholding some or all of play times from children as a method of managing misbehaviour as well as enabling individual children to catch up on work.

There is a lack of clarity about the purpose of play times; however, according to teachers, they provide an opportunity for physical exercise, fresh air, energy release and socialising, whilst according to pupils they like play times for socialising, autonomy and freedom to engage in playful activities (Baines & Blatchford, 2019). These times should provide a different type of play opportunity to that offered in lessons. It should be a time for unstructured child-led play where children can engage in various types of play which they would not be able to engage in in the classroom, such as rough and tumble play. This type of play has various developmental benefits such as independence and self-regulation (Gibson et al., 2017). It also provides the opportunity for creative, social and emotional development (McNamara et al., 2018). In addition, arguments have been made for the physical aspect of play times providing health benefits and helping the fight against childhood obesity (Mroz & Woolner, 2015; Ramstetter et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, according to the Baines and Blatchford (2019) survey, this type of play has been reduced due to the increase in play time supervisors compared to 1995 and 2006. Many play time supervisors provide general oversight of play activities and, with minimal support and training, may curtail play activities they deem risky or dangerous, such as rough and tumble play. In addition, increasing numbers of play time supervisors organise and supervise activities such as team sports and more indoor activities such as music and curriculum-support activities (Burgess, 2016). Furthermore, in the above survey, three-quarters of children

reported that they took part in adult-organised activities at play times, although this reduced as children got older.

Overall, play times provide a break from structured classroom lessons and should provide an opportunity for free unstructured play which has benefits for children's development. However, it would appear that over recent years children's opportunities for this type of play at play times have been eroded. The reasons for this include the reduction in the amount of play time due to curriculum pressures and attempts at behaviour management. In addition, the rise in the number of play time supervisors has led to more structured activities being offered at these times.

Playfulness, Learning and Pedagogy in the Primary School

Learning through play is considered important for children's development and wellbeing, whatever their age (Smith, 2010). Play is natural, it aids development, it enables children to gain conceptual understanding, to make connections between concepts and skills and to engage in deep, lifelong learning. The Lego Foundation has identified five characteristics of play which they consider promote learning: feeling joyful, being meaningful, actively engaging, iterative and socially interactive (Zosh et al., 2017).

The first characteristic, feeling joyful, is used to describe an activity which is pleasurable, enjoyable and motivating. It is something which engenders a positive emotion. In terms of learning theory, it can be linked with positive mindsets (Dweck, 2006) which foster resilience and learning. Being meaningful is about children being able to actively connect and construct new learning with previous learning and has its roots in Piagetian constructivist theory (Piaget, 1970). Actively engaging refers to children being involved in activities which require them to be active or hands-on. In addition, they need to be 'minds-on' to be fully engaged (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). The iterative characteristic links with Bruner's work on the spiral curriculum and children revisiting ideas and trying out new ways of thinking and problem solving (Bruner, 1960). Finally, being

socially interactive is derived from Vygotskian social constructivist theory and reflects the importance of sharing and discussing with others as one is learning and how this aids deeper learning.

These characteristics may also be considered to be ones which define playfulness as an approach or attitude towards a task rather than characteristics of play itself. Playfulness as an attitude or approach to an activity links to internal affective qualities of being, such as enthusiasm, motivation and willingness to engage (Moyles, 1989). This is a useful way to consider these characteristics as it is suggested that taking a playful approach or attitude may be far more conducive to learning and development than the play activity or play type itself (Bundy, 1993). Duffy and Trowsdale (2014) state that a playful attitude to learning needs to be promoted in primary schools in order to develop a range of skills and dispositions such as resilience, problem solving and perseverance. In addition, experimental research has shown that there are a number of cues children use to feel playful such as location of an activity, adult role in an activity and choice in an activity (McInnes et al., 2009, 2010) and that when children feel playful, they demonstrate enhanced performance (Howard & McInnes, 2013).

Zosh et al. (2017) consider playful learning to exist along a continuum from free play to direct instruction, although this latter way of learning could arguably be considered not play. This continuum of playful learning includes free play, which is child-led; guided play, which is child-led but is scaffolded by an adult; and finally games, which are adult designed and comprise rules within which children play. This continuum reflects distinctions in child agency between those activities which are child-initiated, and where children have free choice, and those which are adult-initiated, and where children have little to no choice. However, work by King and Howard (2016) has highlighted the need to consider this more flexibly and discuss the need for adaptable choice and negotiating agency in activities for optimal learning.

Parker and Thomsen (2019), on behalf of The Lego Foundation, have identified eight pedagogies currently used within primary schooling which they believe are consistent with learning through play and a play-based pedagogy in the early years. They refer to them as the 'older siblings' of a play-based pedagogy and demonstrate how they align with the

five characteristics of playful learning (Zosh et al., 2017). They have then tracked the five characteristics of playful learning against these pedagogies which they say are "playful and highly effective" (p. 7). They collectively term these pedagogies as "integrated pedagogies" (p. 6), although they could be termed 'playful pedagogies' due to the incorporation of features of playfulness. The eight pedagogies are: active learning, cooperative & collaborative learning, experiential learning, guided discovery learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and Montessori education. These have very little overlap with the learning play types discussed earlier, although the exploratory and integrated play types may have similarities with some of the above pedagogies, most notably experiential learning and project-based learning.

Active learning involves learners having choice regarding the what and how of an activity and thereby being active or involved in the learning process. Cooperative and collaborative learning involves learners working together and interacting socially to complete a task. Experiential learning is where learners engage in quality learning experiences with others. Guided discovery learning is where learners are guided to discover ideas or knowledge for themselves. Inquiry-based learning begins by asking open-ended questions or presenting scenarios which learners need to engage with. Problem-based learning starts with a problem which needs to be worked through in small groups whilst project-based learning has learners working together on a specific project. Montessori education is a prescribed method of education involving particular materials and environment and it involves many of the elements outlined in the previous pedagogies. These characteristics of playful learning and the integrated or playful pedagogies may be used as an additional way of scrutinising UK primary curricula for evidence of play.

Playfulness in Primary School Policy and Curricula

It is made clear at the beginning of the English National Curriculum that the document provides an outline of what should be taught but that "teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge" (DfE, 2013, p. 6). However, throughout the document there is little mention of terminology reflecting the playful pedagogies identified above. Children aged up to 7 years in Wales experience the Foundation Phase Curriculum, which has play and active learning embedded throughout. In addition, it also contains language such as "experiential activities" (WG, 2015, p. 3) reflecting playful pedagogies. However, once children are taught according to the WNC, reference to any language associated with play or playful pedagogies is missing.

When reflecting on the Scottish CfE against the pedagogies identified by Parker and Thomsen (2019), playful words are in abundance. When discussing the curriculum, phrases and words such as interdisciplinary learning, project learning and thinking creatively are used to guide teachers in devising and delivering the curriculum. There are design principles which support their design of the curriculum which feature phrases such as children having challenge and enjoyment and personalisation and choice. In addition, teachers should embed creativity throughout their designing of the curriculum. The experiences that children should receive involve active learning, cooperative learning and active engagement which foster children's motivation and deep learning. Within different areas of learning, words such as creativity, ingenuity, exploration and experimentation are used (Education for Scotland, 2019). Teachers are clearly being encouraged to think and implement playful pedagogies to enable children's learning and development.

As previously stated, the Northern Ireland primary curriculum explicitly mentions play, not just within the Foundation Stage but also at Key Stages 1 and 2. In addition, many of the words associated with playful pedagogies and the characteristics of play and playfulness can be found throughout the different subject areas, such as challenging and enjoyable, exploration, choice, enthusiasm, curiosity, exploring and co-operative

learning (CCEA, 2007). Furthermore, guidance on implementing playfulness in the curriculum and children's learning has been provided, which includes playful structure, playful interactions and playful opportunities (Walsh et al., 2007). The learning experiences expected within the primary curriculum should include activities which involve children investigating and problem solving, they should be challenging and engaging, relevant and enjoyable, enquiry based, active and hands-on and should offer children choice.

Overall, there are clear differences in how play and playful characteristics are discussed in primary policy and curricula documentation and how this might be enacted in teaching practice. In England there is no mention of play or the terminology associated with playful pedagogies. This does not necessarily mean that playful pedagogies are not being utilised in English primary schools but that the curriculum guidance does not necessarily promote this. This potentially opens the way for more didactic, subject-based teaching. In Wales the situation is slightly different in that children in primary schools up until the age of 7 years experience a curriculum which is infused with play and playful pedagogies as teachers are encouraged to teach in this way. After the age of 7, however, the curriculum resembles that of the English one. Whether playful pedagogies persist in the later years of primary schooling is dependent upon individual teachers and the overall ethos of the school. This transition from a clear play pedagogy to a potentially more didactic one at age 7 is reflective of the transition experienced by English school children when they transition from the EYFS to the National Curriculum (NC) at age 5.

In Scotland, from scrutiny of policy and curriculum documentation, it would appear to be very different. Language associated with play, playful learning and playful pedagogies is woven throughout the design of the curriculum, subject specification and teaching practice. Teachers in primary schools in Scotland are clearly being encouraged to teach in a way that enables play and playful attitudes and behaviours. It would appear that the same can also be said of primary schooling in Northern Ireland, with language associated with play being used within documentation and teachers being guided to engage in playful pedagogies.

Play and Playfulness and the Role of the Adult

Play and playfulness in the primary school is contingent upon the adult. This may be a teacher trained for the early years or the later years of primary school, teaching assistant or play time supervisor. Previous discussion has identified that when current policy and curricula documentation are interpreted in the light of the playful pedagogies, teachers are encouraged to teach in a way that facilitates play and playful behaviours. Parker and Thomsen (2019) identify specific skills and knowledge that all teachers need to deliver playful pedagogies; these include content or subject matter knowledge, specific strategies and structures to implement the different pedagogies such as guiding, scaffolding and questioning and class management techniques. However, play and playfulness are not mentioned, and one could use these skills and knowledge and not implement play and playfulness in teaching.

In the reception year of primary school in England and the first few years of primary school in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland teachers are expected to deliver a play-based pedagogy, and the role of the adult is crucial (Howard & McInnes, 2013). However, it is fraught with difficulty as there is confusion regarding the role and benefits of play in the early years setting. In addition, the policy and curriculum view of play is one of planned and directed play, which conflicts with teachers' beliefs about the value and place of free play for children's learning (Wood & Chesworth, 2017). Further research has also indicated many teachers' confusion in relation to play and learning, with teachers holding two competing views: children can learn through play but play and learning need to be enacted separately (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016). These findings have implications for the adult role in play. Teachers express uncertainty when faced with decision-making regarding whether, when and how to intervene in children's play, to the extent that they report lacking the requisite skills to accomplish this (Hunter & Walsh, 2014). However, research evidence demonstrates that when they understand play and are confident in their play practice, they are more likely to be playful and more able to implement a playful pedagogy (McInnes et al., 2011).

The training of all teachers should prepare them for practice, yet this does not appear to be the case. The training of teachers and the teaching standards which teachers must meet (National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), 2013; DfE, 2011; General Teaching Council (GTC) Scotland, 2012) do not explicitly mention knowledge and understanding of play or play-based pedagogies. Teachers repeatedly report receiving limited training on play and playfulness, which leads to limited understanding of play within early years and primary practice and of the wider discourse and use of play (Howard, 2010). However, if in-depth training is provided, both initially and ongoing, this helps to develop positive beliefs regarding play and its place in the curriculum as well as the intention and understanding to implement it in the classroom (Jung & Bora, 2015).

One issue which is possibly more dominant within the later years of primary schooling rather than the early years is related to the role of the adult and power and control (Briggs & Hansen, 2012). Classroom teachers have a specific job to do, which is to teach children. They are meant to be in control and ensure that children learn to the requirements and outcomes of the curriculum. Within a play-based curriculum, this power dynamic should shift with more control and power being devolved to children as they are given more choice. For many teachers this an unfamiliar and uncomfortable position (Martlew et al., 2011). In the playful pedagogies identified by Parker and Thomsen (2019), there should be a more equal balance of power and control. However, this very much depends on how the activities are organised and delivered. For example, an experiential learning activity can still be adult-led and delivered with children having very little power and control in the process. Nevertheless, activities which enable a sharing of power and control between teachers and children should support a more playful approach in all primary school classrooms.

Primary school teachers and other adults in the primary school should consider their own playfulness when taking a playful approach with children. Teachers need to instigate the playful pedagogies but in a playful way. First, this requires an understanding of play and playfulness and using this to develop a creative and nuanced approach to understanding and implementing primary curricula and guidance. The five

characteristics of play (Zosh et al., 2017) can also be used to develop playfulness. Adults in the primary school should be joyful when teaching and engaging with children and their activities. Adults should take time to understand children and their activities so they can interact with them in a meaningful way and potentially join in with their activities in a way that does not hijack the play or playfulness. Adults should be hands- and minds-on with children, which requires open mindedness and flexibility; it also requires the sharing of ideas through sustained discussion. Finally, choice about and within activities should be negotiated so that agency is dynamic and shared. Playfulness from the adults working with them will enable children to be playful, which fosters development and learning.

Conclusion

Children learn and develop through play, not just in the early years but throughout primary schooling (Smith, 2010). However, play within curricula documentation across the UK is patchy at best. Attempts have been made to introduce play and provide alternative ways of looking at play within the primary school, for example Briggs and Hansen's (2012) play types, but these lack clarity. Parker and Thomsen's (2019) model of playful pedagogies, informed by the characteristics of play and playful learning identified by Zosh et al. (2017), provides a way of reinterpreting UK curricula and developing a more nuanced understanding of play as well as enabling a focus on playfulness. This is already under way within the Scottish and Northern Ireland curricula and associated guidance. It is this focus on playfulness which provides a way for teachers to reimagine the curriculum, curriculum delivery and their own practice. Focusing on playfulness allows all teachers across the different age phases in primary schools, and play time supervisors, to interact with children in a playful manner. It allows curricular activities to be delivered in a playful way and potentially enables the breakdown of power relations between children and adults. Play and playfulness also need to be on the agenda when training teachers and play time supervisors so that they can be trained to understand the value of play and playfulness. In this way playfulness can infuse all aspects of the primary school day and positively impact children's learning and development.

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