Exploring opportunities for children's creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' play in the Reception setting.

Junnine Thomas-Walters

Supervisors: Dr. Jane Waters and Dr. Susan Jones

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DECLARATION SHEET

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ....(candidate)

Date ....January 10th, 2021...................................

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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ABSTRACT

This study sits within a pragmatic paradigm. It aims to explore the practices of early educators and children in role play areas in the Reception setting within a local context in Wales. The overarching research question is:

To what extent does 'real world' or 'fantasy' play allow children opportunities for creativity and imagination?

Which is explored through two research sub-questions:

How does the early educator's role contribute in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting?

What does children's engagement in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting look like?

The two research sub-questions are addressed through a six-phase approach which consists of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, field notes, the Leuven involvement scale, a focus group, general scoping survey and non-participant video observations. Within the six-phase approach three early years settings are observed.

This thesis shines a light on the lack of engagement that children are afforded in the role play but also how they have a sense of resilience and determination. The discussion draws out the value of enabling the voice of the child to ensure his/ her socio-cultural reference points are visible through role play opportunities that are facilitated rather than directed.

The findings are noteworthy and allow us to consider the importance of the reflection of the role of early years' educators understanding of role play and the role play area. They also highlight power relationships inherent in the settings alongside tensions and contradictions between stated intention and what is actually enacted.

The study has implications for senior managers, teachers, learning support assistants and higher education providers through the exploration and questioning of the place and use of the role play area in modern early years' practice.

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CHAPTER ONE   INTRODUCTION

I problematise the concepts of this study through a pragmatic research paradigm to explore creativity and imagination in the field of early years role play. This is a practical process of opening up a space in which to consider how role play is depicted through the elements of the position of others in the field with a desire to cultivate understanding and a reflexive and questioning way of thinking.

This thesis is set within a period of dramatic policy change and education reform in the Welsh context (OECD, 2017) and this research is therefore important for a range of policy and research reasons. It is also important from a personal perspective as I have been an early educator for the majority of my primary teaching career. Since working in Higher Education (HE), I have been actively involved in early years research with particular emphasis on play in the early years' classroom and early educators' interactions with young children. In both professional roles I had observed and become engaged in children's role play. I was fascinated by children's creativity and imagination and the play themes they demonstrated often showing complex constructs of the world. However, as I continued in my role as an HE mentor, supervising teaching students, my attention was drawn to the seeming lack of provision and attention to creativity and imagination within role play areas.

My previous research (Thomas-Williams, 2003) enabled me to experience reception- aged children constructing their own meaning and focused on children being active meaning makers. The primary aim of the action research at that time was to find out more about the ability of children aged five to six to form their own questions. A second aim was the development of improved practice through research for all concerned. Conclusions from

my previous research (2003) draw on the idea of a child-centred curriculum to encourage creativity and imagination, engagement and create meaningful opportunities to make connections and pathways from their own starting point.

This investigation has grown out of my thinking and practice during my career in education and the genesis of my idea which is explained further in chapter three. I wished to explore what creativity and imagination looked like in the Reception setting, but more specifically within role play. I wanted to explore the role of the early educator and that of the child in that context to see how creativity and imagination manifested themselves and where they existed, if at all. I wanted to build on the observations I made through my professional role where there appeared to be some mismatch between theory and policy and actual practice in the designated role play areas within the Reception setting. Through my visits to a range of schools I began to see an increase in early educators disrupting play which was considered too loud, too rough or inappropriate. It also appeared that there was much more attention given to that of teacher-led activities than to children's creative or imaginative play. *'Play as well as learning, are natural components of children's everyday lives. When children are asked what they like to do best, the answers are unanimous: to play.'* Samuelsson & Carlsson (2008:623). It appeared as though the early educators did not recognise the richness of children's play and did not seem to want to acknowledge it unless it followed rules and regulations.

Therefore, I sought to address a gap that I saw in professional and pedagogical knowledge by clarifying and capturing the complexities and tensions of the role play area and those within it with particular focus on creativity and imagination. My

theoretical framework which was constructed on the work of Rogoff sits within the literature review (Chapter 2.2). Rogoff (1990:85) suggests that cultural research helps to define the cultural features of mainstream practice which may not otherwise be scrutinized due to their 'dominance and pervasiveness.' This thesis addresses a gap in the literature indicating that there is more knowledge required to understand the adult's role and influence within these play settings. The literature review explores pedagogical approaches and early educator practice in detail alongside current developments in professional preparation and curriculum arrangements in Wales. It is interesting that this gap exists particularly when there has been significant investment in early years education in Wales since it was introduced as a key component of the Welsh Government's education strategy since 1999. It was this that led to the introduction of the Foundation Phase as a statutory curriculum in Wales for three to seven year olds which was fully implemented by 2011/12. The emphasis was to 'encourage children to be creative and imaginative' in order for learning to be 'more enjoyable and effective.' (Welsh Government, 2015, 2). The curriculum framework was designed for children to 'learn through first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of 'play' providing the vehicle.' (Welsh Government, 2008, 4). The policy context of role play in the Foundation Phase classroom offers some indication as to how and why practitioners might provide opportunities for role play in practice. The welsh context has been fully explored in the literature review (chapter two) which has also drawn on the experiences of international perspectives to produce a skills-based approach to early years learning. I also draw on international perspectives in more detail within the literature review.

Three Reception class school settings were used in this research. Each are described fully in the methodology chapter (three) along with the teaching and LSA provision

provided in each setting. In addition, a focus group was held at the University campus with a group of six female Early Years teachers and a facilitator. Document analysis was drawn from Welsh Assembly Government documentation and a scoping survey was carried out across one local authority.

This thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by describing the foundation on which the research question was formed. Chapter two explores the historical context of the wider education policy for the Foundation Phase in Wales and provides the context within which Early Years' educators work. The literature review explores the many features of play including defining creativity and imagination and 'real world' and 'fantasy' play. Pedagogical approaches and early educator practice are considered and enhanced through six sections of review considered pertinent to the research. Chapter two also illustrates my thinking in terms of the research process bringing my assumptions and conceptual understanding to the original phenomenon and the setting up of the research questions. My theoretical framework also sits within this chapter. The overarching research question addressed in this study is:

> *To what extent does 'real world' or 'fantasy' play allow children opportunities for creativity and imagination?*

The two research sub-questions consider:

> *How does the early educator's role contribute in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting?*

> *What does children's engagement in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting look like?*

Chapter three describes the methodological framework taken to respond to the research questions which is informed by a methodological framework. Six phases of data collection

are presented. This chapter also considers the ethical context for the study including the ethics of observing children.

Chapter four and five report the findings and analysis from the six phases. These are split into phase one to three addressed in chapter four and phase four to six addressed in chapter five. The discussion is set out in chapter six and is organised in terms of answering the two research sub questions.

Chapter seven critically considers the conclusions drawn from the research and literature and identifies the main themes which have implications for future research for teachers, learning support assistants, higher education providers and the professional development of educators; it questions the place and use of the role play area in modern early years' practice and the interactions that take place within it by both early educators and children.

CHAPTER TWO   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review is prefaced by the setting out of my theoretical framework. It is structured thematically focussing firstly on the historical context as I examine relevant background literature on the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and how this has influenced policy on Early Years education within both Wales and England in the last two decades. I then go on to review the research of a range of early years researchers and practitioners with a main focus on exploring the complexities of early years play. The work of American teacher Vivian Paley (1984) was extremely influential in inspiring my research into play in the early years due to her passionate view of it being a compelling and useful aspect of early years development. Drawing on her work alongside Welsh Assembly Guidance (WAG), which is discussed in more detail later in the chapter, has inspired me to explore further the opportunities that young children have for real world and fantasy play during role play further. In particular, I have been inspired to explore adult interactions with children within role play and this has been instrumental in taking my research forward. I explore creativity and imagination in play whilst considering challenging assumptions in relation to these themes and explore play as a socio-cultural activity. Finally, I consider reflective practice as a powerful tool in highlighting the importance of early years educators being critically reflective through self-awareness in early years play.

I adopted a staged process to review relevant literature pertinent to the field of my enquiry interest. My prior knowledge of influencing authors and existing research led the literature search in its early stages. Once I had set this body of work out, I used multiple electronic databases to extend my literature search including *Education Source*

(EBSCO), JSTOR and Taylor and Francis. I used relevant keywords (adults in play, creativity, early years play, fantasy play, imagination, real world play, role play) including variants of terms for the search and a range of synonyms. Abstracts from the database searches were useful as they aided me in selecting associated literature from unrelated peripheral articles and sifting to see if literature was worthy of inclusion. Papers presented at academic conferences were drawn on and the opportunity to work with experts in the field of early education was taken up to ensure that my previous knowledge was extended. Future research areas, drawn on from other authors helped to chart gaps in the literature. This chapter evolved further through the writing up of the thesis as particular areas of focus changed with my emerging understandings based on my research results.

The literature base on play is extensive but there are research gaps related to understanding opportunities for children's creativity and imagination specifically in the 'real world' and 'fantasy' play settings in the Reception setting. This study is an exploration into these areas.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework is built on the work of Rogoff (2003:1990) within a social-cultural framing for human development. Rogoff notes that 'human development is a cultural process' (2003:3) and it is the idea of socio-cultural participation that underpins this thesis.

Rogoff (2003) explains routine ways of 'doing' in terms of cultural processes, and cultural traditions in a community's approach to living. Her work has provided me with a structure for

what to look for in the data, to acknowledge how this fits together and make connections between elements I observed. Rogoff's socio-cultural framing has given me an opportunity to develop the theoretical framework that I use to analyse data in my research. The theoretical framework has developed from an in-depth exploration of the literature recognising the complexities in researching play and articulating the tensions.

Rogoff (2003) highlights an overarching orientating concept which in turn provides a basis for other orientating concepts for understanding cultural processes.

> *Humans developthrough their changingparticipation in the*
> *sociocultural activities of their communities, which also change.*
> *(Rogoff 2003: 11)*

Rogoff (2003: 10) draws on the work of Vygotsky (1987) where she suggested that children in all cultural communities are themselves cultural participants. Rogoff (2002) explores this within her concept of guided participation in cultural activity. Her work has shaped my understanding of human thinking and development. I have drawn on an understanding of how the socio-cultural context of everyday life with both children and adult educators frames all activity. The questions raised by Rogoff (2003) around cognitive development through social interaction and guidance were key influencing factors. Rogoff (1990:42) believes that it is 'essential to view the cognitive activities of individuals within the context in which their thinking is embedded.'

I have endeavoured to think about cultural processes and how they share development in an early years setting. Rogoff (2003) acknowledges that differences in cultural ways may create discomfort between peers and a questioning of their own community's ways can become uncomfortable. This is supported by Highwater (1995: 214) who explains that 'contrasts and comparisons tend to polarize people, making them feel either attacked or excluded, because

all of us tend to think of comparisons as judgemental.' Therefore, Rogoff (2003) suggests that

her aim is to understand patterns of cultural communities and not to judge them. This thesis

attempts to interpret the activity of early educators with a regard and understanding of their

meaning system. I strive to understand what it is the early educators 'do' within their settings

and why. This does not suggest that all ways of early educators are appropriate but instead

allows well informed judgements. Rogoff (2003) goes further in suggesting that members of

a community have difficulty noticing their own practices because they tend to take their own

ways for granted with little or no reflection.

Rogoff (2003: 24) notes that,

> *members of a community often have difficulty noticing their*
> *practices because they take their own ways for granted,*
> *like the fish not being aware of the water.*

A parallel can be drawn here with the differences between the cultures and exclusiveness

of the adult and child themselves within the classroom in addition to the complexities that

are extended to include home cultures. Therefore Rogoff (2003:26) draws attention to the

fact that,

> *what is referred to as 'truth' is simply our current agreementon what see*
> *ms to be a useful way to understand things; it is always under revision.*

As part of my understanding of social-cultural context in the early years I have recognised

that I have drawn on Rogoff's (2003) idea that learning to fit approaches flexibly to

circumstances is a key component in cognitive development and it is needed for decision

making in different communities. Learning to discriminate between appropriate ways to act

in a variety of situations is important in every community, for children as well as early

educators. The creative role of individuals is supported by social interaction in which social

partners suggest connections and cultural practices in which they have previously taken part.

Rogoff (2003) suggests that through role play and dramatic play children can free themselves from restraints and this enables them to work out the "scripts" of everyday life. Within this play they often emulate adults and social roles that they have previously observed. They can experiment with these roles but their opportunity to observe can differ greatly depending on what they are included in. In communities where children have access to many aspects of adult life they can learn through opportunities to learn and watching (Rogoff et al., 1981). Those that are recipients of direct teaching and structured adult – child engagement do not have the same opportunities.

Rogoff (2003) argues that human development must be understood as a cultural process and building upon previous work (1990) she suggested that often adult intervention in play, family life and community practices is not intended to be an instructional activity. She believes that parents, for example, find it extremely difficult to avoid helping children at points where they should be able to make independent decisions. These shared cultural practices and processes suggest learning takes place through both insider and outsider communication, but this is not necessarily easily identifiable to the learner as they are steeped in their cultural being without questioning it.

Rogoff (2003) suggests that when children play, they often imitate adult and community roles that they observe. She goes on to suggest that they experiment with and practice those social roles and this practice may later complement their current roles, for example, in playing at being a teacher or a mother or father. She notes that the children that participate in the mature life of the community often tend to play at adult work and social roles. However, in the communities where children are segregated from the adult

community their play less often reflects mature activities. To understand the nature of the interactions in the role play area it is important to draw on broad cultural experience as this is what gives the researcher the opportunity to see the extent ofcultural processes in everyday human activities and development.

By adopting this 'social-cultural' theoretical framework and the reading of the literature it allowed me to unpick my professional practice and professional observations within the area of children's creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy play' in the Reception setting. Alongside this I have considered policy within Welsh Government and locally. The research facilitates understanding of the social processes of early educators and reception aged children within the pragmatic paradigm. Much of the data comes from educators' perceptions of their professional experience and their individual understanding alongside observations of young children who are active and absorbed participants in play through their engagement and response. It addresses a gap in the literature indicating that there is more knowledge required to understand the adult's role and influence within these play settings. literature indicating that there is more knowledge required to understand the adult's role and influence within these play settings.

2.3 Historical Context

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1992) includes the right to have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities. This rights-based approach is set out in seven core aims for children and young people in Wales. The Welsh Government's policies for children and young people are centred around the seven core aims to ensure that all children and young people:

- *have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development*
- *have access to a comprehensive range of education, training and learning opportunities, including acquisition of essential personal and social skills*
- *enjoy the best possible physical and mental, social and emotional health, including freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation*
- *have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities*
- *are listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised*
- *have a safe home and a community that supports physical and emotional wellbeing*
- *are not disadvantaged by any type of poverty.*

(Welsh Government: 2008a)

The UNCRC (1990) has made a key contribution to understanding young children as citizens of today rather than as individuals in the making. It has influenced the landscape for early years care and education in a variety of ways. Papatheodorou & Potts (2013) note that in terms of pedagogical practices, awareness of children's rights but more particularly their participation in decisions that affect them, has raised awareness of listening to children's voice. They go on to suggest that there is an expectation that governments at policy level should align aims, targets and priorities that meet children's rights. As a result, I suggest that pedagogic practices are making a gradual shift to methods that are more participatory which should enable children's voices to be heard and listened to through their play in the role play area.

In the White Paper "*Excellence in Schools*" (1997), the UK Government recognised that children benefit from early years education. The Welsh Office published the White Paper "*Building Excellent Schools Together*" (1997), which set out plans for Wales. The *Government of Wales Act 1998* provided for the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales following the confirmatory devolution referendum in September 1997. This signified the devolution of responsibility for education within

Wales from the UK Government (Westminster) to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in Cardiff. The Welsh Assembly set out its intentions for education in the visionary document: "*The Learning Country"* (2001) followed by "*The Learning Country Vision into Action"* (2002a) and this guided much activity for the following decade, particularly the establishment of a Foundation Phase framework curriculum for children aged 3-7 years (detailed further below). Early years provision was planned in each local authority area through a draft "*Childcare Play and Early years Workforce Plan"* (2014) by a body representing all the relevant early years interests in the area. The plan acknowledged the need to develop services that respond to changes in society and meet the needs of families and the community. The Welsh Assembly Government long-term aim was to develop an integrated and comprehensive approach to early years education and childcare where providers work in partnership with one another to enhance opportunities for young children.

In the 1998 consultation Green Paper "*National Childcare Strategy"*, the UK Government acknowledged the links between education and care, and Early Years Development Plans in England were extended to cover childcare. It proposed that Early Years Development Plans should be extended to cover childcare, becoming "*Early Years Development and Childcare Plans*". The Green Paper also acknowledged that the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were responsible for policy relating to the development of childcare in these parts of the United Kingdom. This policy review traces policy development from devolution and focuses on Welsh policy context alone. The outcome of the consultation of the 1988 Green Paper "*National Childcare Strategy in Wales"* was that the National Assembly expanded the remit and membership of Early Years Development Partnerships (which existed in each LEA in Wales), which became Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships. In

September 1998, it became necessary for Early Years Development Partnerships to ensure a free part-time education place for all four-year-olds whose parents wanted it.

The importance of play in early education was acknowledged in policy in Wales through the introduction of the Foundation Phase in Wales. This demanded a distinctly different approach to learning for children aged 3-7 in Wales, from both the approach in England and from what was then common practice in Wales, with pedagogical priorities placed on play and experiential learning, in contrast to the more formal, competency-based approach previously adopted. This curriculum innovation followed the devolution from UK central government (1999) with enactment a critical marker in the change of direction for Wales away from English policy. *"The Learning Country"* (WAG, 2001) and subsequently *"The Learning Country: Vision into Action"* (WAG, 2002a) set out the aims and objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government for the future of education in Wales. The fundamental aim was to promote the well-being of the child through inclusive practices with the rationale behind the Foundation Phase based on holistic, active experiences. The pedagogic approach emphasised the centrality of the child, the significance of children's wellbeing and advocated a balance of child-initiated and practitioner-directed (or practitioner-initiated) activities within stimulating indoor and outdoor environments in the radical overhaul of early years education and care in Wales.

Following a two-year pilot period (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2005) which began in 2004, in 41 schools and educational settings across Wales, a framework was introduced for school children aged three to seven years (Nursery, Reception, Year One and Year Two). The Foundation Phase became statutory in 2008 for children aged three to five in schools, local authority funded nurseries, playgroups, child minders and within voluntary and private

sectors. It was rolled out in September 2009 for five to six year olds and by September 2010 the rollout was completed for the full three to seven age range. Siraj-Blatchford et.al (2005) found that there was a lack of coherence regarding Foundation Phase pedagogy during the initial roll -out period. Siraj- Blatchford et al. (2007:8&9) found that:

> *Further support was needed to develop and maintain play-based and experiential pedagogies giving sufficient emphasis to activities that involve adult guided play and learning and interaction with appropriate challenge.*

The central role of the practitioner within the Foundation Phase was considered to be a "facilitator of learning" (WAG, 2008a: 12). Maynard et al. (2013) noted that an initial challenge for practitioners was in identifying what was meant by key terminology. The claims made in the Foundation Phase documentation for "well planned play" (WAG 2008c:5) "free play" (WAG 2008c:5) and play that is "structured for children's learning" (WAG 2008c:7) has an ambiguity that is confusing and challenging to practitioners leading to inherent uncertainty. Siraj (2015) undertook an evaluation to recommend significant input into the professional development of practitioners in the Foundation Phase where practice was noted as problematic. This could be attributed to a lack of time and support to accommodate and implement pertinent philosophical and practical changes.

The Foundation Phase requires that "there must be a balance between structured learning through child-initiated activities and those directed by practitioners" (2008 p.6) Siraj noted that a significant shift in the culture of the workforce was required, particularly in relation to the role of the adult in supporting learning and the provision of appropriate learning environments. Waters (2016) notes that this shift may be described as moving from a pedagogy of facilitation to one of relational intention. This raises an important question about the role of the early years' educator within play and the experiences to which both children

and adults contribute. This question is central to my study and is the contributing factor for research sub-question one: How does the early educator's role contribute in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting?

Following extensive research into the ways that European partners organise the curriculum, the Foundation Phase framework (WAG 2008b) was designed. The Government has drawn on the experiences of Forest Schools in Sweden, Reggio Emilio in Italy, and the early years curricula of Belgium and Denmark along with others. As a result, the curriculum was formed under areas of learning rather than subjects and had a list of experiences and objectives for children's learning rather than subject content. Seven areas of learning were identified by the Welsh Government as follows:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development
- Bilingualism
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

Emphasis was placed on developing children's skills across the seven areas of learning, to provide a suitable and integrated approach for young children's learning rather than an isolated approach to each area. The intention was that stimulating structured play activities could be developed into learning experiences. Wood (2007: 127) noted the implicit emphasis in the Foundation Phase documentation on "proactive and intentional pedagogy" and goes on to note that Welsh policy has been recognised as providing

practitioners with the potential to "develop the integrated approaches that are advocated in contemporary play research." (2007: 313)

The key aim of the Foundation Phase was to raise standards of academic achievement and enhance pupils' positive attitudes to learning and address their developing needs. The role of the community is emphasised as a key focus in order to help children of three to seven become active citizens within their communities. Emphasis is also placed on helping children learn how to learn and become independent learners. Play and active involvement with a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities (WAG, 2008a) is the key pedagogic emphasis. Teachers in the Foundation Phase were charged with supporting children's curiosity, or what Laevers (2005:1) describes as the "exploratory drive." He suggests that in schools, curiosity and exploratory drive do not get the attention they deserve. His research into how children learn and how learning can be monitored and extended by the adults around them has been central to many developments in many countries around the world.

Laevers (2005) believes that it is the exploratory attitude and alertness to surroundings and the stimuli within these surroundings that will bring a person to powerful forms of concentration and involvement. He goes further to suggest that keeping this motivation alive is a major challenge for education. This has implications for organization and management of the classroom, pedagogy, the role of adults and assessment. He believes (2005: 9) that experiential education is about "exploiting and enhancing the energy in people and drawing them into a positive spiral which engenders deep level learning." He suggests that in order to make schools both effective and strong enough to meet educational challenges we must have:

the development of adults who are self-confident and mentally healthy, curious and exploratory, expressive and communicative, imaginative and creative, full of initiative, well-organised, with articulated intuitions about the social and physical world and with a feeling of being connected to the universe and all its creatures.

Laevers' work is a useful guide for those working in the Foundation Phase because of its resonance with its aims. The rationale behind the Foundation Phase is the expectation that standards will rise because the Foundation Phase has placed the child at the centre of activity, fostering a positive attitude to learning with the planned curriculum addressing developing needs while the child is involved in his/her learning. The Welsh Assembly Government justified the introduction of Foundation Phase approach by summarising the claim that it:

- motivates

- stimulates

- supports

- develops skills

- develops concepts
- develops language/communication skills

- develops positive attitudes

- demonstrates awareness/ use of recent learning and skills

- consolidates learning

(WAG, 2008a)

However, Maynard et al. (2013: p.vii) in an analysis of Foundation Phase documentation discovered that there was "no single clear explanation" that practitioners could use for the approach and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase. Maynard et al. (2013) go further in suggesting the approach underpinning the Foundation Phase remains clearly developmental in places with a distinct focus on the individual child,

notwithstanding inherent messages that are in tension with this position. They argue the

approach presented related to a broadly constructivist theory of learning;

> *We find that aspects of suggested pedagogy also reflect constructivist theory although ideas resonating with sociocultural perspectives are emphasised – for example, a clear role is indicated for the practitioner in supporting children's learning and development.* (2013: p.vii)

The Maynard et al work was part of the Wiserd (2013) independent evaluation of the

Foundation Phase through the Policy Logic Model and Programme Theory (2012). It

was also underpinned as,

> *… explicitly developmental with a clear focus on the individual child. Development is seen as essentially linear, although not tied to chronological age, and recognizes the individual variations in rate within and across all areas of development and learning. This approach broadly relates to a constructivist theory of learning.* (2013:v)

It seems then, that the original Foundation Phase documentation was at odds with regard

to its underpinning principles which may have led to a lack of coherence for

practitioners. Aasen and Waters (2006: 128) argued during the early inception stage of

the Foundation Phase that practitioners are left with little choice than to maintain a

"fallback position" if they are not given the time and support to identify with and

familiarise themselves with such philosophical and practical changes.

In her reporting of the Stocktake findings, Siraj (2015:21) refers to misconceptions about the

Foundation Phase leading to a reversion to more formal and didactic approaches, concern

over standards and a "watering down" of pedagogy leading to a "pendulum effect." The

Stocktake makes 23 recommendations for Welsh Government and out of these 9 are related

to "training" with a focus on leaders and practitioners understanding the theory and practice

implications of the Foundation Phase alongside the development of appropriate pedagogies to support children's progression. Siraj (2014) conveyed that there are noteworthy professional learning implications inherent in the future development of the Foundation Phase.

> *moving towards the Foundation Phase pedagogy is likely to involve many maintained schools and funded non-maintained settings in making a complete change in approach and practices and a fundamental shift in philosophy, understanding and knowledge of how children learn, which needs to be reflected in the training and support they are given, to enhance the adult role in supporting the Foundation Phase.* (2014:22)

Therefore, serious consideration needed to be given to increase the theoretical and practical understanding of how children learn in a play-based manner while supported by adults who have a critical role in that learning experience.

All teachers in Wales are expected to provide role play areas for their pupils in the Foundation Phase. Advice to teachers from the Welsh Assembly Government includes the provision of two kinds of role play: "real world" and "fantasy" (WAG 2008c) however these terms are not defined in the guidance. Wood (2013) draws attention to the fact that outcomes of play are often not visible or measurable even when they do support learning and development. She suggests that practitioners are caught between educational and policy-centred versions of 'purposeful' play, as well as a more ideological version of free play and free choice. It is worth noting that the evaluative research carried out by Wiserd (2013: vii) states,

> *The current analysis of Foundation Phase documentation reveals there is no single clear explanation for the approach and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase that practitioners could use.*

Therefore, the importance of clearly articulated explanations is key to early educators adopting consistent approaches and pedagogies which fit with the essence of the Foundation

Phase. Davies and Howe (2009:247) propose that within role play, playing make believe, pretending and imagining are all features of ludic play, therefore, play that draws on past experiences and includes symbolic and fantasy play. They describe a key feature of such play is a "low risk way of 'rehearsing' for the real world." Martin (2010:109) believes that play empowers a child to "be in tune with the whole self and the creative self." She draws on the work of Laevers (1994) to offer the perspective that children experience deep levels of emotional satisfaction during prolonged sustained play believing "imaginative play is essential for children to explore, investigate and realize the possibilities of cause and effect and the use of narratives in constructing social worlds as part of socio-dramatic and role play." (Martin 2010: 109). She suggests that that a confidence and ownership gained through quality play is an opportunity for children to discover their "mastery."

This highlights my view that, in Wales, early educators face difficulties in trying to unpick complex issues without appropriate guidance for approach and pedagogy within the Foundation Phase and the adult role is conflicted. The following section on play considers these complex issues in more detail.

2.4 Play

Different theorizations of play have contributed to an array of considerations of understandings of play, but these have not been resolved in a satisfactory definition of play. It would seem then that attempting to define play would constrict and limit how play is constituted. For example, attempts to define play have often led to thoughts about what play is and what it is not or have focused on a hierarchy of different types of play resulting in real world and fantasy play receiving much attention.

Whitebread et al. (2012:14) suggest that play has been tremendously difficult to research and define because of "its highly multi-faceted nature and the fact that it is an intrinsically spontaneous and unpredictable phenomenon." Therefore, strongly supporting the notion that children benefit from play but realising that the full educational potential of play is illusive because it is a multi-faceted and unpredictable occurrence. They indicate the significance of this as;

> *whilst it is almost universally accepted that children benefit from play opportunities, and particularly strongly supported amongst the early childhood professional community, realising the full developmental and educational potential in play has proved illusive.*

There is no universally agreed definition of play and so for the purpose of this thesis I have drawn together a working definition based heavily on the work of Moyles (2013) as follows:

> *Play is a disposition and a creative process. It is flexible and can be free from externally imposed goals. Play has positive, often pleasurable, effects on the players and frequently involves commitment and deep level learning. Play offers children freedom, choice and control over some aspects of their lives, where their voices can be heard.*

Canning (2011) recognises the complexities in researching play that is useful in articulating the tensions felt throughout this research. She believes that in order to support teaching, practitioners need to research different perspectives to develop a view about the value of play and the importance of it in a child's social world. She emphasizes that the real challenge is in the term "play" and how this is often misinterpreted both within the early years setting but also within the wider early years community and it is this misinterpretation that is of major note to this study. This is reiterated by Sutton-Smith (1997) in his discussion of what he calls the ambiguity of play where the varied nature of play means that defining it is difficult due to it being differently defined, and supported by Russell (2010) who puts forward the notion that as play has become so much of a part of our understanding of childhood that we have a tendency not to question it. She highlights the fact that adults are often tempted to

provide the "short cut to the adult, rational, 'right' answer, especially if what we see makes us feel uncomfortable." (2010: 316).

Chazan (2002:198) takes a broad and positive view of the functions of play.

> *Playing and growing are synonymous with life itself. Playfulness bespeaks creativity and action, change and possibility of transformation. Play activity reflects the very existence of the self, that part of the organism that exists both independently and interdependently that can reflect upon itself and be aware of its own existence. In being playful the child attains a degree of autonomy sustained by representations of his inner and outer worlds.*

Elkind (2007) explores a view of play that triangulates with both work and love to function together as a single disposition. He acknowledges that through child development this trio of concepts become increasingly separated and individualised and as a result the role of these drives changes over time. Elkind (2007) concurs with the ideas drawn from philosopher Freidrcich Schiller in that play is a basic, vital human disposition. He suggests however that play should not be treated in isolation but instead to fully explore its power then one needs to see how it develops in relation to love and work. He believes that play, work and love are essential components for ensuring learning and development are effective.

> *Play is our need to adapt the world to ourselves and create new learning experiences… Play is not a luxury but rather a crucial dynamic of healthy physical, intellectual and social-emotional development at all age levels. (2007: 3/4)*

Moyles (2009: 28) states that play is "powerful" and "deepens children's learning and understanding because it enables them to begin learning from first-hand experiences, based on what they already know and can do." Bodrova & Leong (2005) explain how Vygotsky saw play as the leading behaviour in children's development. In his theory he believed that

children play beyond their years with the play having several elements to it. First, the play must include an imaginary element, second, involved children must have assigned role(s) with implicit rules, and finally, language must be involved (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1992).

Brown (2010:14) has an interesting perception of the properties of play. He believes that one of the attributes that sets it apart from other activities is the notion of its "apparent purposelessness." This is further explained in terms of play not requiring any survival value, not helping get money or food and not for its practical value. Instead it is an activity that is done for its own sake, a voluntary action which is not obligatory or required as a duty. Brown (2010) also describes play as having an inherent attraction due to it being fun and making the individual feel good whilst avoiding boredom. He acknowledges that play provides a sense of freedom from time as thorough engagement in play involves a loss of the passage of time, due to its very nature. In play he believes that we can stop thinking about the fact that we are thinking and can experience a "diminished consciousness of self." (2010:18) Another hallmark of play highlighted by Brown (2010:18) is that it has "improvisational potential." By this he suggests we are not locked into a rigid way of doing things but are instead open to chance, to serendipity and this often leads to unintentional insights. He suggests that play has a "continuation desire." He explains this as a desire to keep returning to the pleasure of the experience that drives the desire. He notes that if something threatens to intervene to stop the feeling of fun then new rules or conditions are improvised so that the play does not have to end.

Feezell (2013) draws attention to Brown's (2010) offer of a "foundational definition" of play and suggests that for the most part, for heuristic reasons, the properties of play Brown draws on combine claims of structure, attitude, movement and experience. Brown

(2010:19) believes that the properties of play that he has outlined are what "make play." He is insistent that the very "freedom" of play is its essence. Through the elimination of guilt and other regular constraints such as, the need to be practical, organised or to make good use of time, he suggests that "play is its own reward, its own reason for being." It is therefore seemingly the very 'freedom' of play that appears to be a complex phenomenon for early educators in the early years setting. Moyles (2015:16) indicates that whilst there is some consensus that play resides with the player in a situated context the attempts to define it are consistent with "catching bubbles."

Whitebread, et al. (2012) note in their report on the value of children's play that there has been an excess of publications (for example, Moyles, 2010; Broadhead, Howard and Wood, 2010, Whitebread, 2011) noting the value of play for children's learning and development. However, they also draw attention to the difficulties documented within these publications in terms of the difficulties early years educators have in developing effective practice. These difficulties have been acknowledged as being linked to pressures to cover the curriculum and to meet government standards. Wood and Attfield assert that "play cannot easily be defined or categorized because it is always context dependent, and the contexts are varied" (2005:5). They review attempts made by play theorists to define play and goes on to highlight the various range of behaviours that may be classed as play alongside the various contexts in which play may take place emphasising that both may have "multiple meaning for children and adults" (2005:2) and that "clear definitions of play have proved elusive" (2005:3). It is therefore important to note the complexities of the use of the term "play" in curriculum documentation.

The WAG "Learning and Teaching Pedagogy" document (2008) dedicates a section to the role of play in children's learning.

> *The purpose of play/ active learning is that it motivates, stimulates and supports children in their development of skills, concepts, language acquisition/ communication skills and concentration. In addition to consolidating learning, it also provides opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes, demonstrate awareness/use of recent learning, skills and competencies.*

It is indicated that the transferable skills that would apply across the seven areas of learning could be developed through play and active learning. Wiserd (2012) note the initial challenges for practitioners in identifying key terminology such as "structured play" and the difficulties in determining a balance between "practitioner directed" and "child initiated" learning. They go further in suggesting that there are two key challenges for Foundation Phase practitioners. The first is ascertaining the meaning of terminology. The second is to establish how a play-based pedagogy, that is strongly underpinned by a developmental approach, can be integrated or intertwined into a statutory curriculum that is detailed but in which the outcomes remain essentially unchanged from previous iterations. Four key Welsh Assembly Government guidance documents (2008a, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e) contained appended glossaries to support early educators. However, these glossaries become problematic when the overall guidance directs early educators to have role play areas based on 'real world' and 'fantasy' play but these terms and explanations are not included. Instead, the following terms are used to describe different types of play within the glossaries:

- cooperative/ group play

- parallel play

- partnership/ associative play

- solitary play

- spectator play

- structured educational play

(WAG 2008a, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e)

However, some of these terms are also used within the WAG (2008c:13) Play/ Active Learning document to show developmental stages in play and are ordered accordingly:

- solitary

- spectator

- parallel

- partnership/ associative

- co-operative/group

The WAG guidance states that "practitioners working with children need to be aware of progression and stages of development so that they can plan appropriate experiences and activities" and that "as children learn through exploration and investigation within their environment, they acquire skills and concepts that impact on their future learning and understanding" (2008C: 13). It seems then that there are complications emerging from government guidance and the blurring of lines in the understanding of the difference in play for its own sake and play-based learning/ pedagogy that early educators are asked to use as an approach in the early years setting. It may then be considered helpful if the terms "play" and "play-based learning" are clearly articulated for the early educator particularly in policy documentation to ensure they are clearly understood and not confused with a play-based learning approach to all areas of early years learning.

My interpretation of play-based learning is articulated as learning while at play and is distinct from the broader concept of play whilst integrating mandated academic standards often in the form of a subject (Danniels: 2018). An example of this would be educators taking an active role in play in a board game where the focus may be on

spatial skills and numerical reasoning. It is then perhaps the intended outcome that defines whether an activity is play or play-based and there is a growing body of evidence backing the play-based learning to support multiple areas of learning and development.

2.5 Real world and fantasy play

This section of the literature review sets out my working definitions of both 'real world' and 'fantasy' play before going on to discuss them in the context of the literature. These definitions have been drawn and surmised from the literature with Janet Moyles (2010/2013/2014 and Barbara Wood (2010;2013;2014) as strong influencers in my definition of 'real world' Vivian Paley (1984:1986:1990:2004) a particular influence in my definition of 'fantasy' play.

 I describe 'real world' play is as:

> *Play that assists learning and self-development through the realm of practical or actual experience in order to emulate 'real' people and situations.*

My working definition of 'fantasy' play is:

> *Non-literal and unrealistic play that involves pretence, symbolism and draws on the imaginative capacity of the child. In this sort of play children take on different roles and explore various types of social situations and interpersonal interactions.*

Following his research Bruner (2004) suggested that the least effective and engaging role play was the "real world" kind. The kind of play children were observed to engage in, in the 'real world' of the travel agent, doctor's surgery or café for example ceased to engage children after a short time. In addition, the kind of language children produce when role-playing in 'real world' contexts he describes as mundane. This finding will resonate with many educators who find that children lack inspiration for play in such areas. Therefore, he suggests that educators do not fulfil the charge to provide emotional engagement and enjoyment for pupils. Bruner (2004) also highlights the emphasis that adults put on correct

terminology when children play in such contexts. In 'real world' role play teachers find themselves having to model the target language for children and hope they will "ventriloquate" (Bakhtin 1981) their examples when they move away. The model of the child that 'real-world' role-play conforms to is one that sees childhood as an imperfect form leading to the perfect form of adulthood, in this model the child is viewed as a potential adult. This is a deficit model of childhood that has been challenged (James et.al 1998). As an Early Years pioneer, Dewey (1902) advocated that children's freedom should be nurtured with teacher guidance in terms of allowing trusting relationships to develop and negotiating the environment. He suggests that planning and management of these are essentially all characteristics of good teaching.

Paley (1984) provides a heightened sensitivity and insight into young children and what engages them through her practice. During her thirty seven years as a kindergarten teacher she collected thousands of recordings of her pupils talking. The transcripts of this talk became the focus for a number of books written over the last twenty five years that are relevant to teachers implementing the Foundation Phase in Wales even though this work has not been used to underpin professional learning for the Foundation Phase. I believe Paley's work is relevant because of her view that fantasy play is the most compelling attraction for early years in the curriculum. Her own professional learning journey that took place through her research and self-analysis was powerful and convincing. She uses this as a platform offered against a decline of young children's creative time and makes a strong case for fantasy play as critical for psychological, intellectual and social development of young children. As stated previously I have been deeply impressed by Paley's work and it has, in part, motivated this current study; more detail about her work is therefore detailed below.

Of the thirteen books written by Paley, the book that had the most influence over me was *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (2004) which could be best described as an essay where the children in her class essentially become characters in a tale. She has a unique way of capturing key events that may so easily have passed unnoticed and interprets these into narrative inquiry. Paley (2004: 8) suggests that:

> *It is in the development of their themes and characters and plots that children explain their thinking and enable us to wonder who we might become...If fantasy play provides the nourishing habitat for the growth of cognitive, narrative, and social connectivity in young children, then it is surely the staging area for our common enterprise: an early school experience that best represents the natural development of young children.*

Within her writing she allows the reader a glimpse into "reliving and retelling" stories that "enrich and transform the lives" of the researcher and participants (Meier and Stremmel 2010:1).

In Paley's classroom research children are immersed in stories and these stories are acted out each day on the classroom "stage." The stage is created using masking tape to mark out a square. The teacher then narrates a story and children take it in turns to act it out on the "stage". The stories are either fairy tales, picture books or the children's own dictated stories. Paley (1991) believes that a child can find a natural method for concentration and continuity enabling a satisfaction of intuitive belief in hidden meanings explaining why play feels so good.

> *Discovering and using the essence of any part of ourselves is the most euphoric experience of all. It opens up the blocked passages and establishes new routes. Any approach to language and thought that eliminates dramatic play, and its underlying themes of friendship and safety lost and found, ignores the greatest incentive to the creative process. (1991: 6)*

Paley (2004), similarly to Bruner (1972) who supported the idea that children need books, argues that it is story and fantasy play, role-play and dialogue, that promote intellectual

growth and emotional intelligence. This view is supported by Lindquist (2001) whose research suggests that a story can create a context in which a child as young as two, can access abstract concepts. She argues that play creates meaning and is "a dynamic meeting between a child's inner life (emotions and thoughts) and its external world" (Lindquist 2001: 8).

'Real world' role play is expected to take place in the home corner. Such play is not always mediated by adults and observation has shown (for example, Paley 1991) it can generate a wealth of play as children explore differing family roles or even to include dogs, other family pets or fantasy guests such as tigers and dinosaurs. In such role play, the 'real world' of the home mixes with the fantasy world of fairy tales and picture books as children explore their worlds, real and imagined, together. The cross-over between home corner and fantasy role play is discussed at length by Paley (2004). For both Paley (2004) and Bruner (2004), the most effective role-play by far in terms of child development and engagement is fantasy role-play. When engaged in such play language is more likely to be rich with children more likely to maintain their play for extended periods of time and explore abstract concepts.

> *Play is the model for the life-long practice of trying out new ideas. Pretending is the most open-ended of all activities, providing the opportunity to escape the limitations of established rituals. Pretending enables us to ask "What if?" (Paley, 2004:92)*

Russell (2010) believes that the focus of a simple link between play and development also poses questions for the role of fantasy and pretend in children's play. She draws on the work of Freud (1996) who suggests that playing could be useful in helping children to gain a sense of control over events in their lives even if the type of play can make the adult feel uncomfortable. Holland (2012) supports this view and argues that even war,

weapon and superhero play can result in positive experiences in imaginative play and social development if properly supported with sensitive adult guidance. Rogers and Evans (2008) have highlighted how inappropriate adult interventions can undermine and interrupt children's play.

Holland (2012:33) suggests that the reason that many practitioners do not value superhero, war or weapon play as a form of imaginative play is because there is a sense that these themes are dictated by films, videos and television in general. Here imaginative play is considered as children being able to mentally create things in their heads that they are not currently experiencing. Fantasy is applied to elements of products of imagination that are viewed as impossible or highly unlikely to happen in reality. When children re-enact scenarios that reflect force winning out, she believes that practitioners feel this contradicts their efforts to resolve conflict in a peaceful way. She notes the difficulty in evaluating the imaginative potential of scenarios if they are not allowed to develop. Holland goes on to suggest that the media diet offered to children is not one that they are responsible for, but instead that is the responsibility of the adult. She offers the adult the choice to either leave such material at the door of the classroom, therefore withholding adult support in helping them deal with it or taking the opportunity to work with the children in order to help them process and transfer such material. Smith and Pellegrini (2013) concur with the work of Holland (2003) highlighting that an area of concern of early years educators has been war play (play with toy guns, weapons, or combat superhero figures.) In this kind of play, children are developing their co-operative and social skills in contexts which are relevant to their interests, and which arise from their real and distanced experiences (Holland 2003). Smith and Pellegrini (2013:4) offer the view that play fighting is viewed doubtfully by early educators due to disruption and noise, believing that it leads to real

fighting. However, they go on to suggest that in fact only about one percent of rough-and-tumble play bouts turn into real fighting, noting that in situations where children can be rejected by their peers and lack in social skills this can be higher.

In her work set in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Hyder (2005) in Nutbrown et al. explores the importance of play for young refugee children's development. Through her work she notes how children are often denied opportunities for play and argues that play is a healing experience for young children affected by war and conflict. This is mirrored in the early work of Bettelheim (1991) who discusses the importance of the "unconscious" being a powerful determinant of behaviour. He goes on to suggest that,

> *When the unconscious is repressed and its content denied entrance into awareness, then eventually the person's conscious mind will be partially overwhelmed by derivatives of these unconsciousness elements, or else he is forced to keep such rigid, compulsive control over them that his personality may become severely crippled. But when unconscious material is to some degree permitted to come to awareness and worked through in imagination, its potential for causing harm- to ourselves or others- is much reduced; some of its forces can then be made to serve positive purposes.* (1991:7)

Carlsson-Paige and Levin (1987) have a developmental view that play including war play is a principal vehicle for children to express themselves. Their socio-political view is that children learn military capability and values through war play. However, there is not a large research base on which to make informed judgments about whether these concerns are justified. Sutton-Smith (1994) observes that there is an adult assumption imposed over children which controls which activities are seen as appropriate. He believes in a general assumption that adults remain in control of the power struggle and therefore,

> *...the central issue for children may be how they can gain sufficient power in the relationship to allow their own deep need for fantasy empowerment to take its course.* (1994:33)

Brown (2010) explores the wisdom of being more playful or the danger that play will get out of hand.

> *My feeling is that play, by its nature, has been moulded by evolution to create a more optimistic, exploratory view of the world and more harmonious social interactions. What some call 'the dark side' of play is actually an assortment of cases in which play is being used to deal with difficult emotions or when people are not really playing at all. Sadism or cruelty as a means of gaining control over another is not play. Driven behaviour that has compulsive qualities and that cannot be interrupted is not play. (2010:178)*

Edmiston (2008) believes that the core to children's learning to survive in the human world is giving them the opportunities to learn about whatever aspects about the world they want to explore. Therefore, it would be possible to draw the conclusion that adults should be prepared to lead children, though this may take the form of leading by allowing autonomy, where they wish to be led in play rather than the children having to navigate seemingly from behind the adult.

2.6 Creativity and imagination

The WAG report "*Learning in the Foundation Phase*" (2007) states that the Foundation Phase is about "enhancing the learning experiences which enable children to be creative, imaginative and to have fun while learning." (2007:4) The Foundation Phrase Framework (2008: 11) states that:

> *Cognitive development is the development of the mind. It focuses on children's thinking and understanding, imagination and creativity.*

Duffy (2006) suggests that if creativity and imagination are under-developed then it becomes extremely difficult for a child to become an independent learner. She believes in the importance of creativity and imagination in their own right and that adults need to,

> *...resist any attempt to curtail or limit the development of creativity and imagination in the early years and beyond.* (Duffy, 2006:13)

She goes on to suggest that in order to have creative and imaginative adults then we must start providing for them from the earliest years and ensuring first-hand opportunities. Duffy does make clear the difference between creativity and imagination as they are often linked together and seen as the same thing, which Duffy (2006:13) says, in fact they are not. She believes that creativity and imagination come from,

> *the human ability to play, and civilization rests on this ability. It is essential that we foster the human capacity for creativity and play. If we do not, we will be left copying old ideas. Involvement in creative and imaginative experiences should be for life.*

I see both creativity and imagination as intimately related but see creativity as the act of creating something in the 'real world' while imagination is constructed around 'unreal' thoughts that are free from the confines of reality. Vygotsky's (2004) theory of imagination and creativity in childhood can be seen as essential for drawing on to incorporate the imaginative aspect of play in children's school learning and to develop creativity.

2.6.1 Creativity

Vygotsky (1995) believed that creativity is essential to the very existence of humanity and society but also necessary for the process of consciousness. He made the original observation that the mental process of creativity begins between the child and caregiver as an inter-personal activity.

Vygotsky (1995) goes on to explain that imagination develops creativity as it is both emotional and intellectual. He believed that creativity could arise from any human activity that produces something new and is also existent whenever an individual alters, combines or makes something new. He considered that creativity existed in every individual but considered that imagination was also an integral part because of its ability to support new combinations of things that had been pre-constructed.

In her discussions of what it is really like to be creative, Thorne (2007) suggests that creativity rarely comes in a neat package. "It can be chaotic and disorderly. It also has no sense of timing; it arrives when you least expect it" Thorne (2007: 25). She goes further in warning against the mistake to see it only in the context of the obvious artistic interpretation, as she believes creativity has a relevance in every single discipline and can be expressed in many ways.

> *Creativity is about feeling. Creative people, when inspired, have an energy.*
> *They often use their senses: they often operate through multiple intelligences.*
> Thorne (2007: 41)

Within the literature there is a general agreement that as a term "creativity" is problematic. However, Trotman (2005) in his findings suggests that within his pilot phenomenological study of educational practice and the imaginative lifeworld in primary schools study and participant discussions, creativity was revealed not as a problematic concept but rather as one that was largely absent in teacher's discussion of their day to day work with children. Russ (2003) argues that "play has been found to facilitate insight ability and divergent thinking" (2003: 291), and that "theoretically play fosters the development of cognitive and affective processes that are important in the creative act" (2003: 291).

Wyse and Dowson (2009:1) offer a definition of creativity

> *A person's capacity to produce new or original ideas, insights, restructurings,*
> *inventions, or artistic objects, which are accepted by suitably qualified people as*
> *being of scientific, aesthetic, social or technological value.*

They state there is nothing easy about defining creativity and it is indeed a complicated concept. They go on to suggest that the dictionary definitions are not scholarly enough to reflect fully on the very essence of creativity.

Moyles (1992) notes that the word "creative" is used as a blanket term which needs to be more specific to be of use but that play itself leads naturally to creativity because at all levels of play children are required to use skills and processes which provide opportunities to be creative. Beetlestone (1998) indicates a desire to expand the definition of creativity from one that is solely linked to arts and education instead encompassing aspects of learning, representation, productivity originality and problem solving. She argues that "creativity inhabits the world of the senses" (1998:142) seeing it as a pedagogical and holistic teaching practice that values the personality and experiences of the child.

Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) is a national organisation which harnesses the potential of creative learning and cultural opportunity to enhance to transform the lives of children and families to enhance their aspirations, achievements and skills (Banaji, Buckingham & Burn: 2018). The CCE acknowledge concerns in developing the education system to provide more creative learning opportunities by showing that we need to be practical and informed about what we are trying to achieve. The literature review commissioned by the CCE and carried out by Banaji, Buckingham & Burn (2018) explores what the 'discursive positions claim about creativity and how they "function as rhetorical stances." (2018: 11). They note that one of the nine rhetorics they have identified is that of 'play and creativity' (2018:70). They summarise this by stating:

> *this rhetoric turns on the notion that childhood play is the origin of adult problem-solving and creative thought. It explores the functions of play in relation to both creative production and cultural consumption.* (2018:70)

Brennan (2005) and Maisuria (2005) suggest there is widespread concern about the way in which childhood pretence and play are being squeezed out of the school curriculum to be replaced by rote literacy tasks, the learning of rules and appropriate roles, and an approximation of 'adult'-type problem solving tasks. Maisuria (2005:149) argues strongly

that the interventions of recent governments in education have created a culture of "vocationalisation" and as a result "standardization" and "rubber stamp" testing which has all but destroyed the space for creative pedagogy, playful exploration and creative work in the classroom. He goes on to state that the issue of creative education is a complex one and therefore does not lend itself to simplistic ideas. Maisuria raises a question from his study about the purpose and function of education in turn defining "whether the role of creativity in education ought to be emancipatory or driven by an economic agenda." (2005: 149) Smith and Simon (1984) suggest that play enhances children's creativity and problem-solving whilst Claxton, (1984: 228) states that "to be creative you have to dare to be different."

2.6.2 Imagination

Hedegaard (2016:60) argues that play is very important for children's development of imagination because "through play the child starts to become able to separate the object and the meaning." She believes that through play activity children start to develop creativity and imagination in order to be able to control important emotional issues. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that in the imagined play situation, the child draws from past experiences to use and interpret them to create new events in their play. However, Gaskins (2014) suggests that the roles which children act out in play have their starting point in both realistic and unrealistic roles and events. In the realistic roles the child has opportunities to reflect on the roles they know from real life situations to expand understanding of the real world whereas experimenting with fantasised unrealistic roles gives an opportunity for self-expression as there is no realistic template on which they can draw. Lindqvist (2003:249) suggests that imagination is both emotional and intellectual and describes it as a circle, which takes fragments of reality, transforms them so the "new fragments take shape and re-enter reality."

Henricks (2006) in Wood (2013) states,

> *To play fully and imaginatively is to step sideways into another reality, between the cracks of ordinary life. Although the ordinary world, so full of cumbersome routines and responsibilities, is still visible to us, its images, strangely are robbed of their powers. Selectively, players take the objects and ideas of routine life and hold them aloft. Like wilful children, they unscrew reality or rub it on their bodies or toss it across the room. Things are dismantled and built anew. (2006:1)*

Edmiston (2008) draws on the work of Vygotsky (1967:539) to begin to unpick imagination noting that "imagination is play without action" while "play is imagination in action." He notes that it is rare for adults to use imagination socially to embody other worlds unlike children but instead adults tend to rely on imagination in the mind.

Holland (2012:13) in her exploration of imagination, views it as "the thread that enables us to connect with other human minds." Through her detailed consideration of war, weapon and superhero play in the early years, she believes that practitioners may need to extend the imaginative landscape within themselves to "refresh the sense of possible worlds that we wish to bring to children."

Brown (2010:14) suggests that in imaginative play there is room to become 'a different self.' He goes on to suggest that imagination is "perhaps the most powerful human ability." (2010:86) Drawing on deprivation studies, his view of imagination purports to be a key to emotional resilience and creativity, developing empathy, understanding and trust of others, as well as personal coping skills. Trotman (2005) also found in his pilot study that imagination alongside empathy emerged as a powerful recurring structural theme in all three phases of his research.

Elkind (2007) understands that toy play is one way in which children are able to nurture their disposition for imagination and fantasy. He recognises that only through practice can imagination and fantasy be fully developed. Elkind (2007) explores the change in culture of toys being given to children and its commercialised nature. He believes that using toys to promote social acceptance and positive self-esteem has an unintended consequence,

> *Children come to see toys as vehicles of social acceptance rather than launching pads to imagination. (2007: 17)*

He goes further in stating that in a time where toys were indeed few and far between that this gave "flight to a child's imagination." In his opinion the lack of opportunity given to many children today to be able to "create" stilts their capacity for developing imagination.

> *Children are still drawn to toys that nourish their need for imaginative play, and many children still become attached to their toys and build a fantasy life around them. (2007:20)*

Paley (2004) argues in favour of fantasy play and suggests that it is a necessary precursor for every kind of learning in classrooms. Vygotsky (1986, 1962), also strongly argues for the role of fantasy play to support children's exploration of ideas and imagination. Paley provides plenty of evidence from real classroom play settings to support her belief that fantasy play should be the foundation of early childhood education. She reports stories and episodes in which she captures children playing in their imagined worlds and at times also captures the complex role of the teacher within these stories and episodes. Paley shows that children as young as five are indeed capable of dramatic thought and language. When considering how role-play areas can best support the fantasy and home corner play, the organisation of the environment is very important. Paley (1990) believes that,

> *In dramatizing a concept, the child finds the natural method for concentration and continuity and satisfies the intuitive belief in hidden meanings. This is why play feels so good. Discovering and using the essence of any part of ourselves is the*

most euphoric experience of all. It opens the blocked passages and establishes new routes. (1990:6)

In seeking to understand what opportunities children have for creativity and imagination it is important to relate this back to the opportunities that they are given, or are created for them, for real world or fantasy play by the early educator. The next section of this literature review considers pedagogical approaches and early educator practice.

2.7 Pedagogical approaches and early educator practice

Siraj-Blatchford et al. have defined pedagogy as:

> *a set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and to the learning environment (which includes the concrete learning environment, the family and community). (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden, and Bell, 2002:28)*

Therefore, pedagogy is orientated towards promoting learning processes with educational outcomes. The decisions that the early educator makes are informed by the curriculum to provide a complex learning environment and Wood (2013) assigns an active role to the early educator who uses planned play situations to enhance the learning of the child. I use the term 'early educator' to mean adults who are involved, professionally, in the education and care of young children (including both teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) and use this term in preference except where a researcher has used a specific term.

Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2001) undertook research into adult questioning of young children carried out in the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) study. The aim of the research was to provide a thorough analysis of the types of

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questions asked by early educators. The research found that 94.5% of all questions asked by the staff were essentially closed questions and therefore required a recall of fact, experience, expected behaviour, a decision from a selection of limited choices or no response at all. The percentage of open ended questions which provided for increased encouragement and/or potential for sustained, shared thinking/talking was extremely low at 5.5%. Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2008:7) go on to suggest that it has long been argued, although little robust empirical evidence has been available, that

> *...open questioning in conjunction with an ethos of shared thinking can encourage young children to contribute without any form of negative evaluation.*

The paper draws on the work of Bruner (1980) and Wood et al. (1980:77) to suggest that there is a concern regarding how children are engaged in "elaborated conversation" and how this may often be inadvertently undermined by "the power structure of adult-child conversations." Wood et al. (1980) found a significant proportion (40%) of moves by the adult in conversing with children were considered "controlling" and the incidents of adults tending to ignore or talk over children and generally dominate was the most striking feature of their data collection. They concluded that this tendency by the adult to "over control" had definite consequences for the way children responded or participated in classroom talk. This is perhaps an important indication of the autonomy of children's play being stifled. This is important in terms of where the role of the adult is constructive and scaffolds the learning but also draws attention to where the play can be undermined or undervalued.

Siraj- Blatchford and Manni (2008) surmised that their observations of the pedagogical approaches of pre-school practitioners, including their questioning techniques revealed potential strengths and weaknesses of varied approaches which could be used to inform better practice and so has implications for the initial training of early years educators.

Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) note that as Teaching Assistants (TAs) are working in schools in increasing numbers their role has changed from supporting teachers by completing more low-level administrative tasks increasingly to taking a more pedagogical role and working directly with pupils. Their research shows differences in the thinking of TAs compared to teachers and led to recommendations to examine models of teaching effectiveness in exploring the role of TAs and the role of teachers in managing them. Siraj- Blatchford and Manni (2008) draw attention to the fact that strict comparisons between the teacher and TA need to be treated cautiously as both social context and ability levels of pupils can affect each situation but they do indicate the kinds of interactions pupils experience from educators in a daily basis.

Rubie-Davies et al. (2010:443) suggest that there were two predominant differences in the interactions of pupils between teachers and TAs. The first was that teachers focussed more on learning and understanding while the TA focused on the completion of tasks. It led to a conclusion that teachers' interactions with children were more likely to "stimulate pupils cognitively and facilitate pupil learning and engagement in thinking." The second difference was that the teachers were proactive and in control of the setting whereas the TAs were seen to be in reactive roles. Muijs & Reynolds (2003) have not found that TAs have a positive effect on the educational progress of pupils. This raises an interesting question about what the role of early educators is within play as the requirement of the Foundation Phase in Wales is a 1:8/13 ratio of adults to children. This ratio was financially committed to by Welsh Assembly Government Minster for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in 2008 and meant that the Government were committed to operating a policy of additional practitioners in

classrooms. This could be further broken down to adult: child ratios of 1:8 for three to five year olds and 1:15 for 5 to seven year olds.

WAG (2008) state that,

> *Practitioner involvement in children's play is of vital importance particularly when interactions involve open questioning, shared and sustained thinking. (2008:6)*

They go on to suggest that play, for children is a "very serious business" and requires concentrated attention through perseverance, attention to detail and concentration. They go further in recognising that play is fundamental to intellectual development and is crucial in ensuring children become self-aware and learn the rules of social behaviour. Therefore, it would be appropriate to assume that the role of adults within this framework would be structured and clear ensuring they have a clear understanding of the pedagogies that surround play in the early years. Throughout many of the Foundation Phase documents (2001:2008a:2008b: 2008c) the word 'play' is mainly associated with learning through play and not about the value of play for its own sake.

2.7.1 Current developments in professional preparation and curriculum arrangements in Wales

Welsh Government published the Furlong report (2015) "*Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers*" on the future of initial teacher education in Wales as one measure to raise the quality of schooling in Wales. Furlong (2015) draws on the Donaldson Review of Curriculum and Assessment in Wales (2015), The Tabberer Review (2013) and international research evidence that put forward the single most important thing that can be done to raise quality is to invest in the teaching profession. Furlong (2015) indicates that three things need to be done in order to achieve this goal. Firstly, attracting the right candidates into the profession, secondly offering them the best initial teacher education

and training possible and thirdly offering continuing professional development support throughout their careers.

Furlong (2015) recommends that both universities and schools need to collaborate through a co-construction approach and includes a proposal to develop a new set of professional standards for initial teacher training. He goes on to suggest that teacher education in Wales is at a critical turning point and in order for the teaching profession to make proper contributions to raising standards in schools then a new form of initial teacher training is needed. One which is not restricted but instead expansive and one that gives teachers the skills, knowledge and dispositions to lead the changes that are needed. Donaldson (2015: 87) notes that existing curriculum arrangements in Wales have some solid foundations on which we can build and includes the Foundation Phase but goes on to indicate that evidence from recent evaluations "suggests that there is still some way to go to establish high-quality 'Foundation' philosophy and practice and necessary improvements in children's learning in all schools."

In 2014, the Welsh Government asked Professor Graham Donaldson to review the curriculum and assessment arrangements in schools in Wales. In terms of the breadth of the curriculum, the Donaldson review (2015: 107) proposes six 'Areas of Learning and Experience' as organisers for the entire age range from 3 to 16. The Areas of Learning and Experience are:

- *Expressive arts Area of Learning and Experience*
- *Health and well-being Area of Learning and Experience*
- *Humanities Area of Learning and Experience*
- *Languages, literacy and communication Area of Learning and Experience*
- *Mathematics and numeracy Area of Learning and Experience*

- *Science and technology Area of Learning and Experience.*

Donaldson (2015) acknowledges that the recommendations of his review will have major implications for the professional development of teachers and other practitioners. As a result, he suggests that the confidence and capacity of teachers and school leaders will need to be built in taking forward the recommendations. Therefore, professional learning in Wales' teaching profession is an issue.

Siraj-Blatchford (2009) suggests that from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) research, the first longitudinal study of a national sample of over three thousand young children between the ages of three to seven years into the impact and effects of early years provision on children's outcomes, (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva: 2004) that it is apparent that:

> *a more conscious awareness of the pedagogic processes that are involved are likely to be extremely valuable in the development of early childhood educational practice.*

In addition to investigating the effects of pre-school provision the study also explored the characteristics of pedagogy and effective early educator practice. (Sylva et. al 2004). The project had some noteworthy findings in terms of the quality of training of early years educators and results showed that adult and child interactions had a convincing impact on children's development and learning suggesting that there is a more socially complex concept of play than the one put forward by WAG.

The pedagogical practice of the early educator in the Foundation Phase was highlighted as challenging in the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effective Implementation of the Foundation Phase (MEEIFP) carried out by Siraj- Blatchford et al. (2005). It would seem therefore that it would be appropriate for the Foundation Phase practitioner in

Wales to adopt a pedagogy drawing on the theoretical understanding of the child but one that is also underpinned by sociocultural theory and this is considered in more detail later in this chapter. Pound (2015:19) argues for the need for schools to "develop a firm, evidence-based philosophy which can help teachers and support staff to steer their way through constantly changing policy decisions." She suggests that this will enable early years educators to provide both a coherent and consistent approach to the teaching of early years teaching, particularly bearing in mind the numerous policy shifts. Pound (2015) notes that whilst politicians often talk about evidence- based policy they are often reluctant to draw on research findings that do not support their policy decisions, choosing instead to ignore them.

Specific pedagogical characteristics of play-worlds (an emerging form of adult-child play) for developing children's play have been explored by Hakkarainen (2010), who illustrates what is required of the adult in children's play work and the active role this requires of the adult in children's play. Hakkarainen et al. (2013) note that the pedagogy of the play-worlds are framed predominantly through the initial communicative telling or reading of a story followed by collaboration between child and teacher creating jointly imaginative play, agreeing on the basis of a plot and organising and enacting specific roles. They argue for narrative mode being an essential prerequisite for gaining access to the play-worlds of children understood in terms of Vygotsky's concept of play. Narrative play relates to my interest in 'real world' and 'fantasy play' as it offers platforms for children to develop play for themselves through story with the support of adults. Therefore, signalling that adults need to be sincere partners in children's play using an appropriate narrative strategy for joint interaction to, in play, create a zone of proximal development (ZPD) for children. The ZPD is the range of abilities that an

individual can perform with assistance but cannot yet perform independently

(Hakkarainen: 2013). In order to define developed narrative role play they believe there

needs to be six criteria. Therefore:

> *...narrative role play must (1) have a social/collective character; (2) be imaginative; (3) be creative; (4) be developed over time; (5) be challenging; and (6) have a narrative structure.* (2013: 215)

The central play interventions used in Hakkarainen et al.'s (2013) study was story

presentation, carried out in different forms, such as dramatization or puppet show but they

note:

> *It is important to understand play as a child's narrative about the world and how they use their narrative and imagination to join the play. Dramatising stories and taking roles motivates adults to step in a joint play-world and take a role, which in turn wakes up the adult's own imagination, helps emotional involvement, and perezhivanie. It changes the adult– child relationship and 'switches' adult thinking from rational to narrative. (Hakkarainen et al., 2013, p. 223)*

Siraj-Blatchford (2009) draws strongly on the work of Vygotsky (1978), and his

understanding of the educator who supports children's learning through the 'zone of

proximal development,' in her paper concerned specifically with the pedagogies applied

in supporting learning through children's play. Through analysis she identifies a general

pattern that associates high level cognitive outcomes with sustained adult-child verbal

interaction. She discusses 'Sustained Shared Thinking' (SST) which she recognises

emerging through an *'analytical node or condensation symbol' in the process of*

qualitative research' Siraj-Blatchford (2009:77). Through her research SST became

defined as an effective pedagogic interaction:

> *...where two or more individuals 'work together' in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or extend a narrative. This can also be achieved between peers.* Siraj-Blatchford (2009:78/9)

Siraj-Blatchford (2009:80) believes that

> *when children's play is considered to support their development, this should be understood in emergent terms, where the first order (and relatively superficial) reproductive (Vygotsky, 2004) or empirical (Piaget, 1950) learning that is involved is contributing towards, but not itself constituting the achievement of, either a series, or a continuous process of the mind… 'A child's play is not simply a reproduction of what he has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he has acquired.' (Vygotsky, 2004:11)*

Nutbrown et al. (2008:155) raise the issue of teachers continuing to struggle to "fit play into their pedagogic repertoire," even though it now has a respected status in the early years. Howard (2010:201) reasons that as play is such a powerful medium, it should be an essential starting point for all play professionals and believes it is "vital that early years educators are equipped with a sound understanding as to why, and in what ways, play is a powerful medium." Howard (2010: 205) goes on to suggest that practitioners are able to support children's development in activities if they are sensitive to choice and control in play. She notes the apparent contention between "play *for* pedagogy and play *as* pedagogy." Howard and Alderson (2010) draw findings from a case study based on The Effective Play Practice in the Classroom (EPPIC) training which formed part of a Welsh Assembly government- funded project designed to support practitioners in promoting the emotional health and well-being of children. They note one of the crucial findings was that after the training practitioners became more involved with children in their play but also that this involvement was more likely to be as a play partner rather than as a role- modeller, teacher or guide.

Legget and Ford (2013) discuss their newly adopted term "intentionality" to describe the Australian educator and in turn believe the term suggests a greater positioning of the role of educator strengthening their professional identity. They note there should be careful consideration on how learning is shaped between adult-guided and child-initiated learning experiences. They draw on the tension between teacher control and

child control over the process of learning, suggesting that this raises serious debates around the philosophical idea of a child-centred curriculum. Therefore, early educators face many challenges in regard to the implementation of play pedagogies including adults' understanding of the complexity of play (Wood, 2010), confronting developmental discourses that place the adult in a privileged role with control and power over the child (Canella and Viruru, 2000; Wood 2010) and balancing their own understandings and beliefs about play with the expectations of curriculum documents (Marfo and Bierstecker, 2011).

2.7.2 International perspectives in Norway and Sweden

Stori and Hansen Sandseter (2019) draw on a Norwegian research study that is part of a larger study to look at how physical environments can influence play. They support the work of Kernan (2007) by viewing play as a fundamental right and need of all young children acknowledging it legitimises and secures the place of play in young lives. Wiltz & Fein (2006) also note that the perspectives of children's play is self-initiated, spontaneously active natural and free. There is a focus on children's well-being in Norway and within Early Childhood Education and this is closely related to children's right to participate and to be active. Within this context children also are afforded a great deal of freedom on terms of choice with their right to play regarded as a key element of the content of the curriculum. Moser & Martinsen (2010) note that the Norwegian model of ECEC practice is to have at least two hours of both indoor and outdoor free play per day.

Clark and Uzzell (2006) claim that Gibson (1979) appreciated the importance of social and cultural meaning in environmental awareness, and that the richest and most complex action within environment are those provided by other people and therefore free, spontaneous play can be physical, social, and/or cultural features of the

environment. Kytta (2004) suggests that children actualize learning behaviour in their environment through exploration and play and that cultural and social rules and practices regulate the affordances actualized in the environment. Children learn best in environments that provide them with meaningful contexts for learning and a diversity of choices and possibilities for following their interests (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & Eyer 2003).

Kytta (2004) suggests that children actualize affordances in their environment through exploration and play and that cultural and social rules and practices regulate the affordances actualized in the environment. The Norwegian Framework Plan for Kindergarten (NMER, 2017) states that the physical environment should be designed by staff both indoors and outdoors to provide opportunities for children to actively participate in play, organise space and allow time to inspire different types of play.

Storli & Hansen Sandster (2019) analysed coded data of different types of play to identify the type of play children choose to engage in when they were free to choose. It should be noted that this coded data collection included both video observation of both indoor and outdoor play. The study found that children spent approximately two thirds of their time in play activity during the allotted 'free time' allocation. They also noted that this sort of play was a combination of a wide range of play types therefore leading to experience of a range of experiences from a range of activities. Therefore, children also spent a third of their free time not playing and this raised questions and interest in exploring the factors that influence non-play among children. They note that it would be useful for future studies to understand the more complex interaction between the physical environment, the child and the physical, social and cultural affordances available to the individual child.

Lohmander and Samuelsson (2015) explore play and learning in early childhood education in Sweden and reflect on the challenges of early educators trying to balance

implementing a new learning-orientated curriculum (National Agency for Children, 2011) whilst still trying to keep play as a central aspect. Based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) Swedish democracy is the foundation on which early childhood is acknowledged to rest. In an OCED (2001) review a claim is made that:

> *the curriculum clearly enunciates the vision the Swedish society not only holds for its child-serving institutions but for children themselves. … Nothing honours Sweden more than the way it honours and respects its young" (OECD, 1999, pp. 24 & 43).*

Early childhood education in Sweden is considered internationally to be of high quality but Sheridan, Pramling Samuelsson, & Johansson, (2009) and Skolinspektionen (2013) suggest that the quality of early education varies across contexts. It is suggested that teachers in Sweden were not necessarily proactive and thought that children learned best without teacher intervention, instead when they were allowed to organise their play by themselves.

Lohmander & Samuelsson (2015) conclude that much is left to early educators to interpret themselves as the Swedish curriculum only states overarching goals. Therefore, it cannot be taken for granted that children learn when they are active participants in play.

2.7.3 Reflective Practice

This section makes the case for practitioner' engagement in play and the value of reflective practice as part of professional learning. Moyles (2010) suggests that reflection is a key facet in early educators understanding their provision for quality play for children through analysis and evaluation. She notes the importance of the need for exploring research into play and learning and the importance of early educators challenging policy initiatives. This is key to unpicking the "aspects causing confusion amongst practitioners" (2010:4). Moyles (2010) believes that to enhance reflective play practices it is necessary to critically reflect on,

analyse and evaluate the policies and initiatives that govern how we make curriculum

provision for young children. She also raises the question "are we so focussed on 'delivering'

what we think is required by those in authority that we fail to see the impact our pedagogy is

having on the children?" (2010:4).

Moyles (2010: 15) suggests the idea of early educators not appreciating the excellence or

power of play believing that if one is to "observe, analyse and reflect on children's play then

you won't be able to deny it." Thompson and Thompson (2008: 107) support this notion of

critically reflective practice being key in "moving away from uncritical, routinized or

standardized forms of practice towards more informed, imaginative and value-driven

approaches." Brock (2010) accordingly believes that while critical reflection can develop

knowledge and understanding of play it also develops understanding of how theory and

research relate to the provision of play.

> *It can refresh or change practice for practitioners aiming for higher quality provision*
> *of play that meets children's needs and interests, scaffolds their learning and*
> *promotes children's metacognition within their play experiences. (Brock, 2010:48)*

Brookfield (1998:197) defines critically reflective practice as a "process of inquiry

involving practitioners in trying to discover, and research, the assumptions that frame

how they work." Brookfield (1995) suggests there are four critical lenses for looking at

a situation. These are made up of looking at situations from four viewpoints, namely our

own, our colleagues, our learners and from theoretical literature. He also believes that

critical reflection should be considered to be a fundamental approach to teaching. He

goes on to suggest that "reviewing practice through these lenses makes us more aware

of those submerged and unacknowledged power dynamics that infuse all practice

settings." (Brookfield, 1998: 197).

McGregor and Cartright (2011) highlight the importance of being a reflective practitioner and how reflecting to improve personal development as a teacher requires effort and sustained focussed thinking. Bolton (2010) argues that in order to have responsible and ethical practice then reflection and reflexivity are essential. However, there are arguments against this as there are issues and tensions that arise that may prevent or work against teachers being reflective. The first (Copeland et al:1993) is identified as lack of time with the second argument being overstretched teachers trying to balance overloaded curriculum (Davis: 2003). Heel et.al (2006) note that reflexivity and reflection can in fact be seen as threats to position or status where practices are often prescriptive with low level engagement scaffolded with political dimension. Instead then, reflective practice only occurs in learning organisations if it is truly to lead to change and development (Gould 2004). Schon (2005) describes two types of reflection, reflection in action and reflection upon action. He describes reflection in action as a hawk metaphor in which the mind is constantly watching, circling and advising on practice. Reflection upon action is described as the consideration of events after they have taken place.

An idea developed by Flanagan (1954) was that of the critical incident which asks the participant to think about an example which illustrates a point specifically for them. Willis (1999) suggests another way to reflect critically drawing on the reflective cycle work of Smyth (1989) which uses "episodes of practice" which are experienced by the educator. The critical incidents and episodes are similar and the cycle begins by the describing of a significant event or practice. The second part of the cycle is concerned with 'confronting' which involves educators being assisted by mentors or colleagues to face up to theories as in practice. The third and final part of the cycle moves to a

"reconstructing" which is a process in which educators devise new ways of moving forward dependent on their analysis and evidence of practice. "The tool for this project is not the surgeon's analytical scalpel but the poetic pen or artist's brush." (Willis,1999:93)

McLeod (2015) argues that critical reflection requires and begins through self awareness which can be developed through CPD activities that "nurture embodied openness and readiness." She also acknowledges that deliberate thinking about more democratic classrooms comes about by an awareness by the teacher of conflicting issues of power and control. She believes that critical reflection becomes crucial for the practice of educators in the twenty-first century. Paley (2004) advocates a need for practitioners to be reflective on their own practice in order to enhance children's experiences but goes further to promote observation as essential to reflective practices in settings. Through reflection early educators are signalled towards sharing information about what they have learned from the children and also the resources they have provided for them. Paley advocated that reflection and reflecting on experiences provides early educators with an opportunity to be the utmost functioning context for interaction and intellectual growth and this is why it is drawn on as a section in its own right within this study.

2.7.4 Adults and children in play

This section is related to the previous section that makes the case for practitioner' engagement in play and the value of reflective practice as part of professional learning. Rinaldi (2006) highlights the importance of those who participate in play as both adults and children, bringing to it their own growth and development, based on their own plans and expectations. She notes a "constant relational reciprocity between those who educate

and those who are educated, between those who teach and those who learn" (2006:141). Rinaldi gives a clear acknowledgment of the value of play, of fun and of emotions and feelings which she recognises as essential elements of any authentic cognitive and educational process.

Brown (2010) suggests that play inevitably has an emotion-laden context that is essential for understanding. He illustrates the difficulties associated with defining play and acknowledges difficulties that he has had in doing so. He believes that there is no real way to understand play without remembering the feeling of play and that indeed one of the many hallmarks of play is that anybody can do it. Wood (2013b:19) believes there remains a "general mistrust of play in educational contexts" arising from three sources.

> *1. The lack of a precise operational definition of play.*
>
> *2. The persistent view that play is the opposite of work.*
>
> *3. The fear of play as subversion.*

Wood (2013) draws on the work of Chazan (2002) in her acknowledgement of the enjoyment of play for adults. She believes that the child and adult are inextricably linked in terms of children playing at being adults while adults continue to work hard at their play at a different stage. She suggests that,

> *The dressing-up box of childhood becomes the wardrobe of adulthood, whether it is a suit for work, the latest fashions for going out clubbing, a hitech outfit for a sports activity or a fancy-dress outfit for a party. (2013:19)*

Mathews (1996: 8) suggests that the concept of childhood is philosophically problematic as there are genuinely difficult philosophical difficulties standing in the way of saying "what kind of difference the difference between children and adult human beings is." Brown (2010) proposes that as adults we are built to let the play drive find opportunities

to play everywhere. The brain is designed to keep developing, adapting, learning about the world and find new ways to enjoy it. He believes that if the adult stops playing then their behaviour, in the same way as an animal, would become fixed. A lack of interest in new and different things extends into fewer opportunities to take pleasure in the world around us.

In his discussion of the complexities of both animal and human play, Feezell (2013) concurs with Brown (2010) in his view that,

> *Play is unproductive insofar as it is not obviously pursued for the sake of satisfying material needs. It seems as wasteful and superfluous as animal play, a useless squandering of energy. (2013: 16)*

He goes further in his observation of human play,

> *... the concept of 'apparent purposelessness' leads naturally to the issue of what it means to choose an action for its own sake, or what it means to desire an activity as an end rather than as a means to some further end. It leads inevitably to considering psychological elements that are involved in playing; that is, engaging in intrinsically valued activities. (2013: 16)*

The early theorists Dewey, Montessori and Piaget (Mooney: 2013) all spread the same message, that all children learn from doing and that education should reflect real life experiences and encourage experimentation and independent thinking. Vygotsky (1967) held the belief that social and cognitive development work together and build on each other. He believed that adult support and guidance was a necessity in assisting children to reach higher conceptual understanding (Legget and Ford: 2013). In order for children to be able to fulfil their need and want to explore the world through their childhood lens, the role of the teacher and LSA are key. It is essential that they carefully consider observed behaviour while at the same time addressing the notion of developing characteristics of a lifelong learner in the child. If this argument is to be upheld then

there needs to be an exploration of relational power and participation in terms of the early educator and child and this is discussed in more detail in the next section.

2.7.5 Relational power and participation

Ailwood (2011:29) suggests there is an issue with the relational power and participation between children and adults as adults have greater access to institutionally sanctioned power than children. Csikszentmihalyi (1998) suggests that the 'autotelic' processes inherent in children's play, therefore those that reflect their desires and allow them agency, are not derived from the plans and purposes of adults. Denying children agency, freedom and space to play can limit children's capacity. Gray (2013) suggests that adults who trust and support children to lead their own activities enable them to build capacity by communicating to them:

> *You are competent ... and can figure things out. You know your own abilities and limitations. Through play and exploration you will learn what you need to know. Your needs are valued. Your opinions count. You are responsible for your own mistakes and can be trusted to learn from them.* (2013: 210)

It is therefore necessary for children to be acknowledged for their own agency and motivation in order to reach independent goals. Russell in Bruce (2010: 316) suggests that as adults we no longer experience playing in the same way as children, most likely because we know too much to understand empathetically the same kinds of naive explorations, misunderstandings and "interweaving of the real and not-real" that we witness when we watch children at play. She believes that the adult is rather directed towards the short cut or rational "correct" answer and believes the adult can become distinctly uncomfortable if their ideas do not match that of the child and as a consequence the adult feels a need to correct or terminate the play.

Edmiston (2008) views children's play as allowing them the opportunity for transformation into worlds where social rules are understandable and events under control. It is the emotional and physical safety of these worlds that he believes provide "spaces" where they can feel comfortable and competent and engage in their interests. He draws particularly on the work of the Russian philosopher and literary critic, Mikhail Baktin (1885-1975) throughout his long term study of a child (aged 18 months up to seven years) and his father.

Moyles (2010) notes that in order to please adults, children can become vulnerable and as a result of this they appear to be willing participants which is not always the case. She suggests that through her own research (Moyles and Adams, 2001: Moyles et al., 2002) she has noted that practitioners almost always "state" the value of play but observations have revealed that play is "more often than not subordinate to adult-led activities" (2010:14). In play, children *communicate and interpret* continuously in the negotiation with peers and role play. At the same time as they act the play, they produce the content of it by talking about what to do and in what way it should be done, that is, the meta-communicative approach children take in their play (Bateson, 1976; Knutsdotter-Olofsson, 1993, 1996). Pramling et al. (2019: 107) suggest that teachers can support children in specific play but also the development of children's play ability by shifting their role "from acting from a position outside the play – for example as a storyteller – and acting out a role (a character in the play)." They acknowledge that learning how to play:

> *includes developing the ability of taking a role but it is also about the ability to establish plays with others through various means including meta-communication; to both be inside a framed play-world and, when necessary, to step outside it for engaging in discussions about the development of the play-world. (2019: 107)*

Siraj-Blatchford (2009: 80) states that, "Play is widely recognised as a leading context for the child's acquisition of communication and collaboration skills." However, she also recognises that play should not be considered to "predominate" in the life of a young child, or indeed that development is promoted by all kinds of play. She emphasises that instead play provides a "context" for learning and development.

Rinaldi (2006) suggests that the logical structures of children and adults are quite different. She believes that this view illustrates that children and adults will react and behave in very different ways if they are faced with the same problem. She suggests that if children and adults are placed in different concrete situations yet require them both to make an effort that is of the same extent with their respective potentials, it would seem as if the processes do not so significantly differ.

> *A learning experience is therefore an 'educational endeavour', whether it involves adults, children or both. (p. 74)*

Edmiston (2008) illustrates play as an improvised response to positions available for the child in terms of acting in particular ways, especially within problematic events, for example, living through life and death experiences or consequences. He develops this idea further by suggesting that children can become actively involved in authoring their own relationships within different imagined encounters. He emphasises that they typically do not passively accept how others position them and this perhaps contributes to conflict within the teacher child relationship and understanding of play.

Rinaldi (2006) acknowledges that human beings are able to think in two different forms. These are defined as divergent thinking which is inclined towards the reorganization of elements and convergent thinking, which is inclined towards repetition. Rinaldi believes divergent thinking is

> *...a combination of unusual elements that young children put into place very easily because they do not have a particular theoretical background or fixed relationships. (p.118)*

She goes on to suggest that adults find divergent thinking very difficult because of the convenience of convergent thinking and also because a sense of changing your mind, which is a trait that is often prevalent in play, can represent a loss of power. Rinaldi (2006) argues that children search for power by that very opportunity to change their minds. However, they are quickly led to understand that an idea that is expressed at the wrong time is not a positive thing. Howard, Jenvey, and Hill (2006) indicated that higher levels of teacher verbalization can reduce play behaviour. Similarly, Tamburrini (1982) suggested that re-direction devalued play as a learning activity whereas elaborative interaction facilitated play behaviour. It is perhaps tempting to suggest that one reason for the interruption of children's play is because it does not fit with the quality or effectiveness agenda (Wood, 2010). Pramling, Samuelsson, and Johansson (2009) believe that children want support in practical difficulties, but also want to be seen as important and competent individuals.

Canning (2007) believes that one of the most empowering experiences a child can have is autonomy over their play if they are the active participant and notes that play activities tend to occur more frequently between children rather than with teachers. Kitson and Spiby (1997) suggest that children appear to have the ability to engage in fantasy play without adult intervention and independently of educational environments. When Corsaro (2003) analyses children's own culture he emphasises that in play many children experience that they are in control explaining that children "want to gain control of their own lives and share that sense of control with each other" (2003, ix). Play, together with friends, allows children to exercise self-control and develop what they already know, take turns, cooperate and socialise with others (Glover, 1999).

Pramling et al. (2019) state that teaching is not instructing instead believing "that instruction is an action while teaching is an activity" (Pramling et al, 2019:176). They go further in their explanation to suggest that instruction is typically done by one individual to several others whilst teaching should be seen as a mutual activity where all participants are as critical as each other. Therefore, the teacher is no more critical to the experience than the children. They note that in early childhood settings it is likely to find both teaching and instruction taking place, arguing that at times direct instruction can have a place.

Hakkarainen et al. (2013) argue the reason for emphasising the importance of adults contributing to children's play is that imaginative play is "disappearing from the lives of children throughout the world" (p. 214), they go on to suggest this can be contributed in part to media use. Consequently, according to this reasoning, preschool teachers are generally critical to supporting children in finding out how imaginary plays are played out. This reasoning leads to an overarching concern about teachers' play willingness and skills and therefore to what extent are those skills an adequate part of initial teacher training. As discussed earlier in this chapter Moyles (2011) suggests that the need for continuing professional development as well as initial practitioner education is vital. She suggests that more playful pedagogies need to be carefully considered, particularly in the Reception and KS1 classes drawing on Goouch (2008) to describe them as essentially those in which the early years educator interacts in playful ways with the children. Papatheodorou and Moyles (2013: 152) go on to suggest that "roles and own learning are best served by them (teachers) seeking to become action researchers, theory builders, curriculum makers and public intellectuals."

Bruner (1972) supports the view that children need to be active, to move around and to experience real first hand direct situations and objects. In his investigation of the role of the adult in early years education he suggested that adults should be scaffolding, therefore modelling or showing how to solve a problem and then step back from it, only offering help when needed, when interacting with young children. Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2009:23) states that "play offers a key way to support the learning of whole child in developmentally appropriate play."

If the role of the adult is to support the child in play, then a deeper understanding of the implications of adult interactions and interventions is a necessary stage of development for the adults involved. The relationships between adults and children in play situations are complex and the adult must be careful to be aware of their own beliefs and values within the relationship.

2.7.6 Play as a socio-cultural activity

The need for cultural practices to fit together and become connected is a complex process but is essential (Rogoff: 2003) and is of interest in this thesis for understanding the socio-cultural dynamics in the early years' classroom between the early educators and the children.

Wood (2013) acknowledges the different values placed on play in a variety of cultures and as such, notes that practitioners need to be aware of the different home-based play themes and patterns that do not always transfer readily into school settings. She further highlights the need to consider varied contexts for play and play as a socio-cultural activity in order to understand the very nature of what it is. She acknowledges the complexity and

variation of play suggesting it often makes social and emotional demands along with high cognitive demands.

Vygotsky (2004) theorised human cognitive development and the role of play in children's development at a comparable time to Piaget with his contributions becoming accessible in Western countries in the late 1970s (Wong and Logan, 2016). He recognised that children create past experiences in their play with acknowledgment of their creative reproduction of their social and cultural experiences. Vygotsky argued that:

> *A child's play very often is just an echo of what he saw and heard adults do; nevertheless, these elements of his previous experience are never merely reproduced in play exactly the way they occurred in reality. A child's play is not simply a reproduction of what he has acquired. He combines them and uses them to construct a new reality, one that conforms to his own needs and desires.* (Vygotsky, 2004, pp.11-12)

Lindquist (2003) highlights the work of Leontiev (1982) who describes play as a reproduction of reality. Therefore, a social-realistic approach in which the description of the development of children's play contains different stages which consequently moves from actions that are socially orientated, in which the action has a logical behaviour and is realistic, to realistic social relationships between people and social activities.

> *Play is rich with meanings that children create for themselves, and may want to keep hidden from the regulating gaze of adults because they are subverting or challenging adults' rules. Wood (2013:11)*

Matthews (1996: 8) notes that the "concept of childhood is culturally problematic in that it is not shared fully by all other cultures." Therefore, the importance of learning about and from other communities and cultures is a first step in the realisation of expectation and collaboration and indeed play. Rogoff (2003: 24) notes that,

> *members of a community often have difficulty noticing their practices because they take their own ways for granted, like the fish not being aware of the water.*

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A parallel can be drawn here with the differences between the cultures and exclusiveness of the adult and child themselves within the classroom in addition to the complexities that are extended to include home cultures. Therefore Rogoff (2003:26) draws attention to the fact that,

> *what is referred to as 'truth' is simply our current agreement on what seems to be a useful way to understand things; it is always under revision.*

Within socio-cultural theory Rogoff (2003:42) suggests

> *we can conceptualise human development as a cultural process in which all children develop as participants in their cultural communities.*

Also suggesting that within the context of childhood, play can lose some of its associations with freedom and spontaneity and instead becoming a more "obligatory activity." Edmiston (2008) explains that children repeatedly and actively choose their actions to explore whatever interests them by drawing on their cultural resources within the imagined situations of play. He believes in the connection between culture and play and suggests that "humans create culture through play that is taken seriously." (2008:96). He believes that young children, unlike adults, develop less depth or attachment to whatever social and cultural worlds they occupy. Therefore, to the child, the adult world can seem "uncomplicated, irrelevant, over-powering, and largely incomprehensible" (2008:100). Rogoff (2003) emphasizes that in order for there to be a "transformation of participation" the enabling environment must be culturally meaningful.

Rogoff (2003) highlights an overarching orientating concept which in turn provides a basis for other orientating concepts for understanding cultural processes.

> *Humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities, which also change. (Rogoff 2003: 11)*

Rogoff (2003) argues that human development must be understood as a cultural process and building upon previous work (1990) she suggested that often adult intervention in play, family life and community practices is not intended to be an instructional activity. She believes that parents, for example, find it extremely difficult to avoid helping children at points where they should be able to make independent decisions. These shared cultural practices and processes suggest learning takes place through both insider and outsider communication, but this is not necessarily easily identifiable to the learner as they are steeped in their cultural being without questioning it.

Rogoff (2003) suggests that when children play, they often imitate adult and community roles that they observe. She goes on to suggest that they experiment with and practice those social roles and this practice may later complement their current roles, for example, in playing at being a teacher or a mother or father. She notes that the children that participate in the mature life of the community often tend to play at adult work and social roles. However, in the communities where children are segregated from the adult community their play less often reflects mature activities. To understand the nature of the interactions in the role play area it is important to draw on broad cultural experience as this is what gives the researcher the opportunity to see the extent of cultural processes in everyday human activities and development.

Elkonin (1988) drew a distinction between the theme of play and the content of play, suggesting that the theme of the play is in reality the part that children reproduce in their play. He puts forward the idea that these themes can change when there are changes in a child's life. He describes the content of children's play as the child's relation to people in work and their societal life and demonstrated that if children were taken to places and saw others in key roles this would influence their play differently. He noted that the observed activities of the

key persons in these roles (example of a visit to a zoo) influenced play and play activity for longer periods than when children were attentive only to the venue itself and the animals within it. Davies and Howe (2009) do not believe that children can create play in contexts they haven't experienced. They instead believe that they need to be provided with knowledge on which to base their creativity and go on to suggest that "children will mimic adult behaviour." My position would be to question this suggestion and instead offer that I believe that children can create play in contexts they haven't experienced. However, I also believe this play may look very different to what the adult would expect to see if the child had been exposed to the context in question by the adult and not lead to mimicking behaviour but instead creativity.

The cultural experience of the Early Years educator can be very different to that of the children in the setting. Lindquist (2002) argues that the central themes of the cultural life of adults in play may enter into children's play-world and in play and these can be found as dramatized characteristics of children's play.

Leggert and Ford (2013) explore the roles that educators and children play as intentional teachers and intentional learners within the Australian Early Years Learning Framework. They have a perspective that takes into consideration the sociocultural contexts in which children operate and therefore the need to recognise that young children are individuals who already have complex world views. Canning (2011) believes that it is cultural influences which are the starting point from which children place a value on play. This is where they link play experiences to the wider community, their family and their immediate play environment. This perhaps draws into question

the WAG descriptors of play and child-centred learning which are isolated from external cultural influence.

Rinaldi (2006) gives an insight into Reggio Emilia, a pedagogical experience which has so far spanned over forty years within a community, in Northern Italy. It is made up of a unique body of theory and practice about working with young children and their families and resulting in the idea that children's learning is situated in a socio-cultural context so therefore requires the construction of an interactive, interdependent environment. Rinaldi believes that every individual expresses a "unique cultural potential" and this is something that needs to be protected by schools. She goes further to suggest that this can only be done by,

> *building a context of interaction and exchange between these different 'uniquenesses.' Uniqueness manifests itself, is nourished, only through exchange. (2006:175)*

Bruner (1986) raises an interesting perspective and sees that a culture is "constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members" (2008:123). He suggests that there should be ways of:

> *... exploring possible worlds out of the context of immediate need. Education is (or should be) one of the principal forums for performing this function – though it is often timid in doing so. It is the forum aspect of a culture that gives its participants a role in constantly making and remaking the culture – an active role as participants rather than as performing spectators who play out their canonical roles according to rule when the appropriate cues occur.*

Siraj-Blatchford (2009) draws broadly on the Vygotskian model she presents in her paper, considering pedagogies applied in supporting learning through children's play, to suggest that it is the adults that children grow up with who:

> *...progressively introduce them to the cultural tools that they require to integrate fully as contributing members of the society around them.* (2009:86)

It is my belief that early educators work within a social-cultural stance and this has noteworthy bearing on this research. It raises a question as to how the activity of both early educators and children fit with the practices and traditions of the community. Therefore, depending on cultural contexts, experiences vary in relation to social roles and the expectations that are placed on individuals.

2.8 Summary

In summary this chapter has demonstrated an understanding of previous research, theoretical approaches and policy which explored different facets of play and reveals a growing appreciation of play in its own right. However, despite continuous discussion and reflection around play, less attention has been paid to the importance of exploring creativity and imagination in specific play contexts and the roles and practices of adults within them. I draw on the work of Russell (2010: 323) in her theory that there is more to play than a simple and direct link to development and learning.

> *Children are human beings in their own right, not mere adults-in waiting, and they engage in play for a number of reasons including building their own social lives as children; therapeutic, cultural and recreational reasons; as well as building a repertoire of emotional responses to the uncertainty of their worlds.*

The research questions guiding the exploration are presented in table 2.1.1 below.

Guiding research question	**To what extent does 'real world' or 'fantasy' play allow children opportunities for creativity and imagination?**
Research sub-questions	
1	How does the early educator contribute to shaping children's creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting?
2	What does children's engagement in 'real world' or 'fantasy play' in the reception setting look like?

Table 2.1.1: Guiding research questions

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter describes and discusses the methodological frame for the exploration of children's 'real world' or 'fantasy' play and the opportunities for creativity and imagination within these. It outlines the research methods used and how this guided data collection, analysis and development of my thinking. Robson (2011:70) suggests that "design is concerned with turning research questions into projects" highlighting the importance of the quality of research questions, the ability to modify the questions if appropriate and to focus the direction of the researcher. I outline the methodological framework which is informed by a pragmatic paradigm where methodological decisions were made through six research phases (see research schedule appendix nine) in an emergent process. I explain the principles and methods of data analysis to inform the defence of the frameworks for analysis. The chapter also considers the ethical context of this study and in particular the ethics of observing children.

3.2 Professional context – genesis of an idea

The genesis of my research idea came from what appeared to be a mismatch between what were considered to be enabling environments for creativity and imagination with regards to 'real world' or 'fantasy play' in the reception classroom and what I observed on visits to schools in my professional role as an HE lecturer. Previously, as an early educator I had worked as an infant teacher in a forward-thinking school which had strong pedagogy situated very strongly in experiential education. As an HE lecturer I was therefore still involved with

early education but from a different perspective as an observer and mentor of teaching

teacher education students and no longer as an early years' practitioner.

I was interested in the role of the early educator particularly as the practice I saw in schools I

visited did not reflect the pedagogical practice that I had assumed would be taking place, and

been encouraged to use in my own early years practice setting. I observed play in the areas of

the Reception classroom assigned to 'role play'. My observations of play in these specific

areas raised questions for me in terms of how they were set up, resourced, managed and

monitored but particularly how the adult engaged with the children. I noticed that the creative

and imaginative play I expected to see in the role play area, which was a standard fixture of

every early years classroom I visited, was uncommon; and that the resources provided often

appeared to reflect the adults' agenda for learning rather than children's fantasy play. I was

surprised because the policy context and rhetoric embedded within the Foundation Phase

appeared to be overshadowed by other concerns. I wondered how the teachers and teaching

support staff understood the role play area, which I understood as a space for real world and

fantasy play. I asked myself what other teachers might think the purpose of this area was, and

how they managed it. I wondered about how the adults and children interacted in this area,

and I wondered about whether and how the children engaged in real world or fantasy play in

this space. I also wondered about the opportunities provided by the real world and fantasy

play on offer, for children's creativity and imagination.

I reflected upon the early years canon and accepted practice and how this might come into

tension with other drivers for pedagogical behaviour such as policy documentation,

knowledge of play theory and child development, and expectations for children's progress in

specific skills. I was also interested in what children's involvement looked like in these areas

of play as this had been stimulated by what I had observed. My informal observations gave

me the impression that there were tensions that needed to be considered and unpicked around

what children's involvement looked like. This led to me asking questions of myself about

what drove my research interest and the location of myself within it (Clough and Nutbrown,

2012). Alldred and Burman (2005:189) suggest that through being reflective and

transparent this can help us to question cultural meaning and to look at particular interpretations which are often taken for granted when studying children's lives. In order to be able to do this there is a need to consider the social, political and historical contexts that shape and frame children's play.

James (2007:265) Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007:243) warn against the tendency of researchers to jump in and out of children's worlds in order to quickly "collect data" which they can also quickly analyze by extracting quotes from children to illustrate their findings. They indicate that this may end up caricaturing children more than really offering meaningful insights into their lives. My intention was to be sensitive to children's choices and actions through close observation and detailed analysis. This detailed observation and analysis allowed me to surface children's agency, their actions, subversions, the ways in which they created play spaces for themselves and how set their own agendas when allowed the freedom to do so. I did not set out to access, nor claim to have accessed, their reflective views about their actions in the role play area. This may possibly be an area of future area of research for me.

Spyrou (2011) suggests that it is important to consider how children's voices are produced within specific institutional contexts highlighting the role of the power in association with adult authority. He draws on the work of Leonard (2007) to illustrate how educators or what she describes as adult gatekeepers often use their power to control children's access to research. Leonard (2007) reflected on her researcher role to show how well-meaning researchers can inadvertently act as one of these gatekeepers when being a speaker or interpreter of these voices. It was my intention to attempt to lessen the inherent power balances between myself and the children but was aware that even through building rapport and trust, this did not necessarily make it more authentic or true. I sought to capture rich data through observation of the role play area and this led me to the importance of recognising children's voice should be recognised. Children's 'voice' is a complex concept but through this research I sought to listen and value children's voice through observation and not through actively seeking their views.

There are challenges for educators and policy makers through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Article 12 particularly outlines the right for children to express their views in accordance with their age and maturity. This can represent a challenge for both educators and policy-makers. I felt that these views could be expressed through observation in situ. I recognise that what is particularly meaningful to individual children is the process of enacting their agency interwoven with how things are constructed within their 'community web of significations' (Taylor, 1998). Observation allowed me to explore norms within the role play area in light of collective practices, pedagogical space and socio -cultural experiences. I wished to align my methods to align with children's preferred ways of sharing their experiences and believed that non-participant video observations allowed me to do that. Followng on from this reflection and consideration of some related literature, the following research questions were addressed in this study.

Main research question: To what extent does 'real world' or 'fantasy' play allow children opportunities for creativity and imagination?

Sub question 1: How does the early educator's role contribute in shaping children's creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting?

Sub question 2: What does children's engagement in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting look like?

3.3 Pragmatism and mixed methods research

I adopted a mixed method, pragmatic approach as it indicates "a concern for practical matters" therefore causing the researcher to "be guided by practical experience rather than theory" Robson (2011: 27). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (201:348) identify pragmatism as research which "focuses on framing and answering the research question or problem".

I took a mixed methods approach drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data. This was based on a rationale of making a number of pragmatic decisions and the belief that positioning the study purely within a quantitative or qualitative design would limit the possibilities for a detailed response to the overarching research question. Hammersley

(2013:99) suggests that neither of the terms qualitative or quantitative research are useful categories due to the major variants of each instead advocating that it is preferable to use a range of strategies that lend themselves to "research practice."

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) caution that a mixed methods approach can be more time consuming and challenging in the case of a researcher who has to become familiar with a number of methods but go on to argue that the data collected can be superior to that collated when using only one method. They believe "mixed methods research will be successful as more investigators study and help advance its concepts and as they regularly practice it." (2004: 14). They go on to suggest that mixed methods research should "use a method and philosophy that attempt to fit together the in-sights provided by qualitative and quantitative research into a workable solution." (2004: 16). Hoshmand (2003) believes that pragmatism also sheds light on how research approaches can be mixed productively. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project (Sylva et al, 2004) is an example of a mixed methods approach which was influenced by a pragmatic approach that Sammon (2010:40) suggests can "offer complementary strengths and minimise the weaknesses associated with reliance on only one paradigm."

Newby (2014: 20) highlights the necessity to avoid the "research rut" and as a result I have considered that it was important to select approaches and tools most suitable for answering my research questions. Building on this I have considered the view of Clough and Nutbrown (2010) who consider research as a creative act therefore ensuring that the researcher gives careful consideration to the purpose of the study. I firmly agree with the assertion that "mixed methods research is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering

research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers' choices" Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 17).

The focus of mixed methods research (MMR) should be to improve on the findings of both quantitative and qualitative methods rather than illustrate the limitations of quantitative or qualitative methods (Bergman 2011). However, there are many theorists that consider this type of research as insufficiently rigorous and Bergman (2011) suggests that the reason for this could be attributed to the absence of the right terminology and process description that characterised MMR before the 1990s, leading to the emergence of a generation of 'mixed methods researchers.' Bergman (2011) indicates that as the term 'mixed' is now established that moving away from using it would most likely cause confusion rather than clarification. Morgan (2014:1) argues that pragmatism can "serve as a philosophical program for social research, regardless of whether that research uses qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods."

Bergman (2011) suggests that if MMR is carefully implemented then it can complement and cross-validate individual findings leading to the researcher becoming more knowledgeable and critical towards research as they assess the possibilities and limitations of each research technique. Pragmatism as a research paradigm therefore supports the use of a mix of different research methods alongside methods of analysis and a continuous cycle of abductive reasoning while being guided primarily by the researcher's desire to produce socially useful knowledge. My desire was therefore to explore opportunities for children's creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' play in the reception setting.

Pragmatism rejects the choice associated with the binary presentation of paradigms between the two traditional main camps in the behavioural and social sciences described as positivist and constructivist (Tashakkori and Teddlie: 1998) and the strong association indicated between design approach and underlying paradigm position (Creswell et al. 2003). I adopt a

position in agreement with Howe (1988: 10) who supports the view that combining

quantitative and qualitative methods is a benefit and that "there are important senses in which

quantitative and qualitative methods are inseparable."

Denscombe (2008) ascertained four facets of the way in which pragmatism underlies the

practice of mixed methods research stating that these are not mutually exclusive but may

have a degree of overlap in them depending on the research. The first facet he describes is

that it can provide a fusion of approaches, challenging dichotomies as sterile and

unproductive and looking for a level of compatibility between them. The second facet

suggested is that pragmatism can provide an alternative when researchers decide that neither

quantitative nor qualitative approaches alone will provide adequate findings in the particular

research question they have in mind. Denscombe (2008) believes the third facet is more

radical in that it is seen as:

> *...a new orthodoxy built on the belief that not only is it allowable to mix methods from different paradigms of research but it is also desirable to do so because good social research will almost inevitably require the use of both quantitative and qualitative research to provide an adequate answer.* (Denscombe 2008:274).

The fourth and final facet of pragmatism is described as when the word pragmatic is treated

in its common sense way as meaning expedient. Denscombe (2008: 275) notes that this last

facet is dangerous and can undermine the mixed methods research as a paradigm where

"anything goes."

I have drawn on Denscombe's (2008) third facet by using methodological constructs to

address a real world issue. I have been mindful not to adopt the fourth and final facet of

pragmatism instead ensuring a more complete and comprehensive picture of the research.

Pragmatism is the philosophical underpinning for the mixed methods research paradigm

(Bergman 2011, Creswell 2009, Denscombe 2008, Feilzer 2010) as it focuses its attention on

a particular situation and is applying pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about that

situation. Feilzer (2010) & Rorty (1999) suggest that pragmatism sidesteps the contentious

issues of truth and reality focusing on solving practical problems in the real world, to provide

an ''accurate account of how things are in themselves'' but to be useful, to ''aim at utility for

us'' (Rorty: 1999, p. xxvi). Pragmatism could be described as a commitment to uncertainty,

an acknowledgement that any knowledge ''produced'' through research is relative and not

absolute, that even if there are causal relationships they are ''transitory and hard to identify''

(Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009:93).

Teddlie (2005) articulates a view that pragmatic researchers are guided in what they want to

research by their personal value systems and goes on to suggest that "they study the topic in a

way that is congruent with their value system, including variables and units of analysis that

they feel are the most appropriate for finding answers to their research questions." (Teddlie

2005: 215).

This study is framed within the assumptions and characteristics of the pragmatic

approach whilst understanding Robson's (2011) flexible design approach to be an

element of the pragmatic approach. Therefore, starting the research with a problem that

I sought to understand, which, as noted above was instigated by my noticing an apparent

mismatch between what was articulated as creativity and imagination within real world

and fantasy play settings in the reception classroom. Robson (2011:133) draws attention

to the fact that "flexible design research calls for flexible researchers" and that the

quality of the researcher is paramount. Cherryholmes (1992: 13-14) suggests that

pragmatism is driven by "anticipated consequences" and that the researcher should

begin with what they think is known then look "to the consequences he or she desires"

suggesting the "pragmatist would pick and choose how and what to research and what to do."

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) believe that pragmatism offers a middle position both methodologically and philosophically through the offer of a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to answer research questions. They suggest:

> *pragmatism includes a healthy dose of pluralism by which we mean that it is not logically contradictory to claim that quantitative and qualitative research are both useful, even if, at times, they appear to be contradictory; perhaps what is seen as contradictory are different perspectives that are complementary and enable one to more fully to see his or her world* (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006, p. 54*).*

Therefore, in terms of my own position, pluralism offers the view that there is no one correct logic or alternatively that there is more than one logic.

Real world research is practical and grounded in a specific context,

> *Much real world research focuses on problems and issues of direct relevance to people's lives, to help find ways of dealing with the problem or of better understanding the issue. (Robson, 2011: p 4)*

Robson (2011) warns of the inevitable political situations that can be raised within this sort of research. He uses the analogy that real world research "carries the suggestion of breaking out from the ivory tower and trying to deal with problems affecting people's lives directly." (p.4.) Greig et al. (2013:61) emphasize that

> *Our own understanding of what is real and true is a complex and relative process. That is, one's truth or reality is relative rather than universal.*

This resounds with my own ontological position of wanting to understand 'lived experience.'

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3.4 Research design and methods

In this section the research design is described initially from the genesis of the research question along with the mixed methods used and the six phases of research activity undertaken. I adopted a pragmatic phased approach in which each phase of activity is informed by questions that arose from the previous phase. Each phase contributes to an overall exploration and deep understanding of creativity and imagination in the reception role play area. The design includes both quantitative and qualitative data collection.

The following table 3.4.1 shows a process map with the intention for it being that the research and logic for each phase is explicit within the scope and narrative of the overarching research questions. It also shows which research tools were adopted at each stage of the research.

Phase:	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Phase Four	Phase Five	Phase Six
Research aim:	Locate how the terms 'creativity' and 'imagination' are used in key Welsh Assembly Government documentation	Explore the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and explore children engagement in these areas of the classroom	Continue to explore the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and explore children engagement these settings in these areas of a different classroom setting	Explore range of views across targeted professional early years group	Explore broader range of views across teacher community	Explore behaviours in one practice setting
Research location: Research tools:	University Document analysis	SCHOOL A Semi-structured interviews Field notes of observations	SCHOOL B Field notes of observations	University Focus group	One Local Authority General scoping survey	SCHOOL C Semi-structured interviews Non-participant video observations Field notes of informal discussions

Table 3.4.1: Process map explaining logic of each phase

3.5 Research tools

Each of the research tools illustrated in table 3.4.1 are discussed in more detail in the context of the discussion of each phase of the research.

3.5.1 Phase One

The aim of phase one was to orient myself in a systematic way as to the use of the words creativity and imagination (alongside associated words) throughout the Welsh Assembly Government documentation intended for a Foundation Phase audience. This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

3.5.1.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is a social research method used in order to elicit meaning and gain understanding. This is considered to be an efficient and effective way of gathering data where documentation is a practical and reliable resource. Bowen (2009:31) describes documents as "non-reactive" data sources suggesting that they can be re-read and re-examined numerous times. Document analysis can signpost the researcher to questions that need to be asked or to situations that need to be observed but Bowen (2009) warns about the importance of evaluating the quality of the documentation being used and ensuring that the researcher is aware of potential presence of bias. To avoid this bias Bowen and O'Leary (2009; 2014) highlight the need to evaluate and investigate the subjectivity of the documents and understanding of the data created to preserve the credibility of the research. Bowen (2009) suggests that it is important for the researcher to consider the original purpose of the document including the reason it was produced and the target audience. Document analysis is a low-cost way to determine authenticity and usefulness of certain documents whilst "taking into consideration the original purpose of each document, the context in which it was produced and the intended audience." (2009:38) Within this document analysis I am conscious that as all documentation was provided by Welsh Assembly Government at the time that the there is considerable bias in terms of the directedness of the documentation to inform policy and in the audience being addressed and I acknowledge this is steered by the Welsh Government approach to education and lifelong learning (WAG 2008b). The intended purpose of this Welsh Government communication, directed towards early educators, provides an important platform for understanding the context. In this study the six documents analysed were key Welsh Assembly Government documents that all had the same audience namely:

> *Headteachers, teachers, practitioners, governing bodies of maintained schools and practitioners and management committees in the non-maintained sector in Wales;*

local education authorities; teacher unions and school representative bodies; church diocesan authorities; national bodies in Wales with an interest in education.
(WAG 2008a: 2008b: 2008c: 2208d: 2008e: 2009)

Merriam (1988:118) suggested that "documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem." Corbin and Strauss (2008) also draw attention to the importance of the researcher being able to demonstrate the capacity to identify pertinent information and to separate it from that which is not pertinent. Therefore, my intention was to search for the words 'creativity' and 'imagination' alongside associated words namely 'imaginary, imaginative, imaginatively, creative and creatively to understand how they were portrayed in the WAG guidance.' The six key documents identified are in the public domain and documented in the table below. These six documents were selected as they were acknowledged by early years practitioner training carried out in the Local Authority as the key documentation.

Welsh Assembly Government Document A	Play/ Active Learning Overview for 3 to 7-year-olds (2008)
Welsh Assembly Government Document B	Learning and Teaching Pedagogy (2008)
Welsh Assembly Government Document C	Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity (2008)
Welsh Assembly Government Document D	Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3-7-year-olds in Wales (2008)
Welsh Assembly Government Document E	Observing Children (2008)
Welsh Assembly Government Document F	Foundation Phase Child Development Profile (2009)

Table 3.5.1: Welsh Assembly Government documentation

The search firstly took the form of a quantification in the form of a log of how many times each word was found in each document, indicating a frequency of terms being used.

Secondly, the words were organised into seven categories where I reviewed the context they

were used in. The category construction was based on the data's characteristics to uncover themes within the documentation and I remained objective in seeking to represent the research material fairly. The category constructions are illustrated in table 3.5.2 below and were derived from the content within the WAG documentation.

1. Glossary (*own term*)
2. Glossary *(within another accompanying definition)*
3. Used within case study example *(teacher observation)*
4. Heading
5. Organisation of the learning environment
6. Generalised use of word (*e.g.* "*small world play can be imaginary.*")
7. Related to theorist/ psychologist

Table 3.5.2: Category constructions

The documentation provided a sociocultural and political context which intended to set the scene for the implementation of the Foundation Phase amongst practitioners in Wales.

3.5.1.2 Summary of Phase One

The document analysis raised questions in particular about how creativity and imagination (and associated words) were portrayed in each document and how these could be perceived and led me to question how this influenced early educators. This led to my next phase where I wished to explore how the terms used in documentation played out in practice.

3.5.2 Phase Two: School A

The aims for this phase were twofold. Firstly, I was interested in finding out what the early educator's role looked like in shaping creativity and imagination and understanding how this looked in a reception classroom. Secondly, I wanted to explore what the children's engagement looked like in role play situations.

School A became part of my research through convenience sampling. As a Mentor for the University students I had links with primary and infant schools in the two neighbouring local authorities. At a Mentor meeting I asked teachers/ head teachers if they would be interested in taking part in my research and therefore was able to negotiate access to School A through existing contacts. Therefore, the identified school allowed me to explore part of my research question with the staff in the reception setting through three data collection methods.

3.5.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a female class teacher and a female learning support assistant. In order to define the analytical framework, I was selective in my questions. The participants were both provided with a scaffold of questions (appendix one), given to them in advance, but given flexibility to have the freedom to discuss as they wished. It was hoped that this would generate data and allow the participants to elaborate on points they felt were important. The advantage of the semi-structured interview is that participants can express their viewpoint, without a framework imposed on them, in a protected environment. Background reading and prior research by myself on the setting gave an opportunity to be prepared to probe each participant for more information or further clarification.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then returned to participants for checking and approval. I used them as a way of listening to and gaining an understanding of the early educators. I was free to follow the train of thought of the participants and to explore areas that may arise from their responses. Robson (2011) suggests that semi-structured interviews lend themselves well to be used in combination with other methods in a mixed method approach. Within the semi-structured interview the interviewer uses a guideline but the "wording and order are often substantially modified based on the flow of the interview, and additional

unplanned questions are asked to follow up on what the interviewee says." (2011: 280) The interview is a flexible tool which is adaptable in terms of finding out and offers possibilities to follow up interesting responses in a way that self-administered questionnaires are unable to.

Robson (2011) notes that semi-structured interviews are most appropriate when the researcher is closely involved in the research process therefore, when the researcher is also the interviewer. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018: 274) note that power is significant in the interview situation as the interview is "not simply a data-collection situation but a social and frequently a political situation." Therefore, the interview is described as a view 'between' people and therefore power resides with both the interviewer and interviewer (Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry, 2004). Scheurich (1995) argues however that more power typically resides with the interviewer. Whilst Cohen, Manion and Williamson describe the interview as a social encounter, not purely a data collection exercise and they go on to highlight that the problem with much transcription is that it becomes a record of data rather than a social encounter. Powney and Watts (1987) describe this as:

> *Talk is dynamic – a quality it loses as soon as it is collected in any way. It is somewhat ...like catching rain in a bucket for later display. What you end up with is water, which is only a little like rain."* (Powney and Watts, 1987, p.16)

I therefore attempted to make the interviews a conversation from the perspective of obtaining information from the early educators.

3.5.2.2 Field notes

Field notes are written by the researcher and are widely recommended as a means of documenting required contextual information (Phillippi and Lauderdale: 2017). They therefore differ in structure from interview transcripts and are likely to be more descriptive and the coding of the data can be more complex. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) offer

suggestions on how to deal with the mass of recorded data field notes can generate. They suggest recording the notes as soon as possible since quantity of information forgotten is accelerated the longer the period of time has lapsed since the data was gathered. This is echoed by Denscombe (2010:219) who advocates the researcher "needs to develop a strategy for writing up field notes as soon as possible." Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) also recommend the researcher needs to be disciplined in making notes quickly and enters the field notes into a secure computer file rather than relying on handwritten notes. They suggest that field notes need to make sense after time has elapsed so need to be sufficiently full and vivid. Denscombe (2010) recommends that researchers need to establish occasions during the fieldwork or as soon as possible afterwards where they can make notes.

Field notes were taken during three non-participant observations (40 mins each) which took place in the reception classroom. These were open and did not predict outcomes. I chose to complete qualitative observations for exploratory purposes in a naturalistic setting in an attempt to capture an understanding of accepted practice with regards to 'real world' or 'fantasy play.' Mukherji and Albon (2018) suggest that narrative observations where you write down what participants say or do are useful as they can possibly be used to reduce data obtained to allow quantitative analysis if so wished. My approach in school A was to take field notes in the setting but these were not used to capture quantitative analysis. Mukherji and Albon (2018) consider naturalistic observations allow the researcher to write notes of exactly what they see and hear and then write up their notes while the memory is still fresh. However, there is a disadvantage in making decisions about what exactly to record and what is likely to be missed. Therefore, it was important that notes were written up each day after visits to the settings and decisions made about what was included.

3.5.2.3 Summary of Phase Two

Phase two raised questions for me around the contradictions between action and verbalisation of early educators in terms of theory and policy. The semi- structured interviews were useful in building a picture of the early educator's role and how they contributed to shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting. The field notes taken during the observations were useful in capturing what children's involvement looked like in situ in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play and raised questions in terms of agency and freedom. I wanted to capture a holistic picture of what engagement in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play looked like. This led me to phase three where I felt it would be appropriate to look at another early years' setting within the same Local Authority. I wanted the opportunity to observe within another setting to see if I observed similar practice in terms of the early educators and the children.

3.5.3 Phase Three: School B

The aim for this phase was to continue to gather data to answer the two research sub-questions and again took place through convenience sampling drawing on my local authority links. In this case the head teacher of an infant school had suggested she would be interested in taking part in the research. I intended to complete non-participant video observations alongside gathering field notes.

3.5.3.1 Field notes

My approach in school B was to take field notes in the setting on a number of visits but it was clear from my first visit that the teacher did not want to engage with me on a research level. Reflecting on this it was interesting that it was the head teacher in this case that had

suggested that she was interested in the taking part in the research but she picked a teacher for me to work with within the setting who clearly was not interested or felt comfortable with my presence. The teacher did not have a designated role play area for the children and she stated that she had put some character cards in the reading corner so I could see some role play. The observation was interesting in that it allowed me an opportunity to surmise that 'real world' and 'fantasy' play were not valued or understood in the setting and it raised the question of whether it existed in that classroom. The children were engaged in directed activities and separated into groups of six. None of the children in the reading corner engaged with the character cards (six 2D pictures of different animals, laminated and stuck onto lollipop sticks). As no 'real world' or 'fantasy' play was observed during the observation and the context of the setting suggested that there would be no opportunity to do in future, I made the decision not to continue with the observations as my presence was clearly making the teacher uncomfortable which was not the intention.

3.5.3.2 Summary of Phase Three

The response from the teacher in terms of engaging with the me as researcher was clear from the first visit. She felt uncomfortable with my presence and appeared to think I was there to judge her rather than observe the children in play. It was therefore appropriate not to continue with any further observations in this setting. It is important that the research design should reflect the educational aims of the research being carried out and that participants only take part willingly. Sikes (2004) stresses the importance of ensuring that any work carried out is not harmful in any way. It was interesting to note though that in this setting there was no area set aside for the children to enact any kind of 'real world' or 'fantasy' play.

3.5.4 Phase Four

The aim for this phase was to gather the views of a range of early years educators that were not being observed in the classroom but instead could offer a wealth of experience and reflection about what opportunities they felt that children were given for creativity and imagination in the Foundation Phase setting. The group of six female Foundation Phase teachers were a convenience sample as they were current Masters in Education students embarking on an early years module. They all had backgrounds as practising teachers and were invited to join in a discussion forum in a MA (Masters) Early Years session. Two of the teachers were supply teachers and had an overview of a variety of early years settings. One teacher was in her first teaching year and the other teachers had at least four years early years teaching experience. The facilitator was a lecturer who was familiar to the group and had taught them previously. The session was recorded using an audio voice recorder and then transcribed. In this case the focus group was chosen as a research method because it was felt that a range of responses and reflections, in a variety of settings, from early educators could be captured.

3.5.4.1 Focus group

The focus group could be described as a form of group interview with a reliance on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic provided by the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). This leads to a collective rather than an individual view (Morgan, 1988) where the views of the participants can emerge. Focus groups bring together a specifically chosen sector of the population (Hyden and Bulow, 2003) to discuss a particular topic or theme. The purpose of the session was to for me to understand the teachers' thinking around real world or fantasy play in the foundation phase, to identify possible themes from the discussion in order to gauge understanding emerging from active reflection on their own

experiences. The six female participants in the convenience sample focus group were a group of experienced Foundation Phase early educators and invited to participate in my data collection process. I felt this would be a valuable data source to explore the issues I was grappling with at this stage of the research. The early educators brought with them a wealth of experiences of role play and fantasy play and this was considered to be of value to this research.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) note, there is a typically a skilful facilitator present to lead the discussion and to guide the group in order to keep them to the focus of the discussion. Focus groups are economical on time and may produce insights that may not have been gained from a straight-forward interview. Gibbs (2012) signposts that focus groups should be clear on the agenda and focus whilst taking place in a setting that is beneficial to the discussion. Smithson (2000) highlights that awareness should be raised around the problem of dominant voices being heard or power hierarchies affecting who speaks as this could suppress the other members of the group. Careful consideration needs to be given to the optimum size of the group. Morgan (1998) opts for a group of six to ten participants whereas Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggest eight to twelve. It is suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000) that caution should be exercised in using groups of people that know and work closely together as their relationships and hierarchies will influence their contributions. Within this focus group the participants had met each other at two previous teaching sessions but did not work together or know each other outside of the teaching group so the issue of the group knowing each other well was not an issue. Focus groups are used in conjunction with other methods within the mixed method approach and this group was a set of professionals who were in a position to make professional judgements about their experiences and give critical feedback.

3.5.4.2 Summary of Phase Four

Phase four allowed participants opportunities for professional critical reflection and the focus group drew out the complex phenomenon of play in the reception setting. It allowed for discussions around early educator practice and drew on the everyday observations of each participant including about how they felt they were perceived in their roles as early educators and the pressures upon them. These insights led me to understand better that the early educators in Wales may experience tensions regarding play provision within the FP. I wanted to explore the extent to which a wider population of teachers of FP classes experienced such issues. At this point I considered that a general scoping survey would be useful in collecting data within the LA and this led to phase five.

3.5.5 Phase Five

The aim of phase five was to draw on further data from a range of perspectives from early years educators to develop enquiry with a focus on the role of the early educator and how that role contributed in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' settings. Phase five consisted of a general scoping survey which was pilot tested, by two teachers in one local authority, before dissemination to uncover flaws and potential causes of confusion, such as misleading questions that could potentially result in invalid responses. Minor changes were made following the pilot process to the scoping survey which was produced via 'Survey Monkey.' The purpose of the scoping survey was to gather as wide a range of responses across a different local authority as possible in order to provide a broader context for understanding opportunities for creative and imaginative play in Foundation Phase classrooms.

3.5.5.1 General scoping survey

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) note the difficulty of securing a sufficiently high response rate in a survey. In order to plan for poor response rate, Punch (2003) suggests increasing the sample size rather than trying to adjust it after the event. I therefore sent the survey link to all infant and primary schools in the local authority, including both English and Welsh medium schools bilingually. Fowler (2009) suggests that response rates increase when the subject is very relevant to people or when they are interested in the subject matter. Denscombe (2009: 288) reports that if 'respondent burden' (therefore, the effort required) is quite low then the response rates increase. Fowler (2009) also notes the importance of planning the follow-up to surveys to ensure non-respondents are reminded to complete the survey, suggesting that it is possible for between a quarter and a third of respondents to agree to completing it. Roberts and Allen (2015) put forward the view that online surveys are becoming common place in many branches of educational research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018: 362) suggest some of the advantages of internet surveys are that costs are lower, enhanced speed, contact issues are overcome, a larger volume of data can be collected, response checking ("a forced response") is assured and accuracy and anonymity also prompt more honest and authentic responses. However, they go onto suggest some potential disadvantages including surveys being regarded as spam or junk mail. Also, respondents not having the expertise to complete the survey correctly, computer difficulties, time and misunderstanding instructions.

After the initial analysis of pilot survey data, some changes in survey design were undertaken. The only significant change was to amend one question, question 3 (appendix one) that on printed paper copy looked appropriate but the function behind the electronic version did not allow the participant to tick more than one box. This would have skewed the data considerably. It was noted that as the survey was bilingual,

it appeared there was a lot of text to get through and could appear off putting. It was decided that the bilingual text would remain as the survey was being sent out to both English medium and Welsh medium schools. It was noted that the questions were clear and readable and the format was thought appropriate. The time taken to complete the survey in the pilot was duly noted and reported as a guide in the accompanying email to participants.

I made the decision that an online scoping survey would be the most appropriate and efficient way of obtaining a broad spectrum of opinion from Early Years teachers. It was distributed electronically to Head teachers in 62 schools in one LA in Wales (Infant and Primary) via 'Survey Monkey' following the testing of the pilot survey. The LA was a different one than the one the pilot had been tested in but the same LA as the main case study setting in phase 6. It can be understood that surveys only capture surface opinions as there is a consideration that respondents will not necessarily report their attitudes and beliefs accurately (Robson, 2011). These attitudes and beliefs are easier to identify in interviews as prompts can be used. Additionally, the survey tends to use mainly closed questions and therefore only a limited number of responses is received. Also, the use of mainly closed questions in a survey merely allows respondents to choose between a limited number of responses (Robson, 2002). However, in this case the survey was designed to allow participants to complete 5 closed questions and 5 open questions allowing for more autonomy in their answers. Through this approach to the questions asked my intention was to ensure that this would mitigate against the potential for generating only surface opinions from the participants. A significant advantage of using a survey for this study was that it was possible to collect larger amounts of data in

a shorter time scale than would have been possible with individual interviews with teachers from one Local Authority.

I used email as a distribution medium for the survey through the point of contact (headteacher) at each school. It was considered that contacting each school individually to find a named contact to complete the survey was not feasible and the preferred option was that the email would be sent directly to head teachers which also had the benefit of ensuring that the head teacher was aware of the research taking place and could choose whether or not to allow their staff to participate. Each email included a brief explanation of the purpose of the research and included an active link to 'survey monkey.' I anticipated that there may not be a high response rate due to teacher workload and the possibility that questionnaires would not reach all foundation phase teachers depending on the policy for dissemination within individual schools. In order to maximise the response rate, the following strategies were used:

- support of the head teacher was sought in a covering letter
- confidentiality was guaranteed through the survey monkey questionnaire, no personal information was required
- each participant logged into survey monkey through a secure link
- reminders were sent out on three occasions to re-emphasise the importance of the study

I collected the data responses through the survey monkey programme and processed the survey data providing statistical information to describe the responses for the closed questions in the form of graphs and tables. Coding was undertaken with regards to the qualitative responses received and broad themes were generated initially before being reworked.

3.5.5.2 Summary of Phase Five

The general scoping survey did not yield a high response rate giving a response rate of 14.5% and therefore could be considered to be liable to sampling bias. However, data collected was considered to be useful in contributing and adding to an understanding of the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and what children's engagement looks like within those settings. I now wanted to explore practice closely for the final phase and decided to undertake a detailed series of observations and interviews in one setting in order to draw together the ideas and themes that had been generated through the prior phrases of the research. The next and final phase (six) is discussed in detail in the following section.

3.5.6 Phase Six: School C

The aim for phase six was to explore specifically the opportunities children had for involvement in 'real world' and 'fantasy' play in a reception classroom and how these opportunities were created by early educators. Sampling strategy was convenience sampling in this final stage. The school was chosen as it was one that I was working in as my role as mentor with student teachers, this was a practical arrangement as allowed me to have easier and regular access to the school and I was a regular visitor to the school so had built up relationships with the head teacher and school mentor previously. My mentor role did not impact the research as the students I was supervising were not part of the Reception setting. The research design for this final phase was made up of a framework created to find the answers to both the research sub questions and overarching research question. The research was to take place in an infant school within the reception setting. The teacher was a newly qualified teacher with a full time LSA. It was intended that both early educators would take part in interviews at the beginning and end of the research. Non-participant video

observations would take place over a series of two months. Field notes would be written up after each visit to the school to detail any conversations with the teacher to supplement activity that has occurred between the observation sessions or teacher observations.

3.5.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

In the semi-structured interviews, I used the same framework of open questions as I had in the semi-structured interviews in school A to enable the respondents to respond in their own words and therefore gain their lived experience as suggested by Bradburn et al. (2015). The female teacher and the female learning support assistant (the only staff in the reception setting at that time) were interviewed at the beginning of the research before any observations were completed. At the end of the research the teacher was re-interviewed to conclude research and reflect on the process/ changes that had taken place and this took place before the analysis of other datasets. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) draw on the work of the Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry (2004) in their discussion of the power struggle between the interviewer and interviewee, indicating that the interview is more than a data collection situation but also a social and often political situation. At times it was clear that both early educators were looking to me to confirm they were 'correct' in their answers and needed assurance that I was there to observe rather than to judge. Regular assurances that I did not have 'right' answers, along with a growing trust over the research period, ensured that interviews and discussions were handled sensitively.

Following transcription of the interviews and confirmation from both the teacher and LSA that they were a true record, I applied a coding process. A starting point in analysing the data was to adopt a holistic, descriptive approach in order to capture the

key strands of what was being spoken about. My aim following the transcription of the semi-structured interviews, was to construct themes that reflected the views of the interviewees. Interview transcripts are typically complex as there are many ideas and concepts present so I chose a coding process with four stages. Therefore, a pre-coding process took place where words and short phrases were highlighted (Layder, 1998) which was a descriptive capturing of main themes.

I carried out open coding of the data to identify patterns from which I generated categories (Abbott 2004; Bernard 2006; Flick 2014) and then identified codes according to Aurini et al. (2016) and Bazeley (2014) during the analysis. Abbott (2004:215) shrewdly likens the process to "decorating a room; you try it, step back, move a few things, step back again, try a serious reorganization, and so on." This will be exemplified in the findings and analysis chapter.

Bazeley (2014:125) suggests four main principles in order to ensure a proficient coder:

- responsiveness to data
- focus on purpose
- learning through observation of and discussion with experienced others
- practice

Aurini et al. (2016) suggest there are no hard and fast rules about how many codes you should have but they are dependent on the size of the project and the researcher's personal approach. In order to identify the coded themes, I developed assertions based on what I could see in the data, sorted through direct quotations and noted repetitive or patterned relationships in order to provide a structured rigorous approach. This required me to code and recode in order to construct my themes. Richards (2016) highlights that qualitative coding is about data retention as opposed to data reduction. There is an acknowledgment by Aurini et. al. (2016)

that the first cycle of coding is more literal and codes the data at 'face value'. The second cycle of coding is to make sense of the data by identifying patterns. I identified the themes using inductive approaches seeking patterns in the data without any pre-existing frame of reference (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015.) Key themes were identified from these subsequent patterns in discussion with a fellow educational professional who was not taking any other part in the research. The purpose of this engagement was to allow themes to be constructed, revised, refined and added to as the work progressed to develop more analytical categories.

3.5.6.2 Non-participant video observations

The non-participant video observations were used as a method of capturing data as I considered it to be a vital tool in observing young children in their imaginative and creative play settings. Prior visits to the school to spend time in the classroom were pre-arranged so that the children would be used to my presence before the data collection using video took place. The data was intended as a basis for reflection and investigation and it was hoped that it would catch the complexity and situatedness of the interactions in the role play area. Video observations gave the teacher and myself opportunities to watch the videos and discuss them together rather than relying on feedback in memory and allowed me to capture information which gave a representation of what occurred. The observations took place in a naturalistic setting where I neither manipulated nor stimulated the behaviour of those being observed (Punch, 2015). Different lengths of video clips were recorded subject to opportunities afforded within the classroom setting which included role play as a choice activity, break times or lesson organisation.

A coding system was designed as an analytical tool in order to categorise what was observed, drawn initially from the Flanders interaction analysis (IA) system (1970). This is a widely used system that encodes and quantifies the behaviour of teachers and pupils in a setting. I felt this would be a useful systematic tool enabling me to look in detail at the interactions between early educators and the reception children and classify specific variables as they arose in a learning situation as it is highly focused and structured. In order to adopt the system and make it appropriate for my research I adapted the tool to suit the needs of my research and the specifics of my situation.

I designed three additional categories of classifying systems bringing the total number of categories from ten to thirteen with a code symbol being assigned to each category. I used an interval coding system on which I coded every three seconds. In order to complete the coding it was necessary to record in a structured way and to have a complete familiarity with the category system. The thirteen categories used with a description of each can be seen in table 3.5.3 below.

Code Number	Code	Description
1	*Teacher accepts student feeling.*	Accepts and clarifies an attitude or the feeling of a tone of a pupil in a non-threatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting and recalling feelings are included.
2	*Teacher praises student.*	Praises or encourages pupil action or behaviour. Jokes that relieve tension, but not at the expense of another individual; nodding head or saying 'mm hm?' or 'go on' are included.
3	*Teacher use of student ideas.*	Clarifying, building or developing ideas suggested by a pupil. Teacher extensions of pupil ideas are included but as the teacher brings more of his/ her ideas into play, switch to category 5.
4	*Teacher questions.*	Asking a question about content or procedure, based on teacher ideas, with the intention that a pupil will answer.
5	*Teacher lecturers.*	Giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing *his/her*, giving *his/her* own explanation, or citing an authority other than a pupil.
6	*Teacher gives directions.*	Directions, commands or orders to which a pupil is expected to comply.

7	*Teacher criticizes student.*	Statements intended to change pupil behaviour from non-acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he/she is doing; extreme self-reference.
8	*Student response.*	Talk by pupils in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits pupil statement or structures the situation. Freedom to express own ideas is limited.
9	*Student-initiated response*	Talk by pupils which they initiate. Expressing own ideas; initiating a new topic; freedom to develop opinions and a line of thought, like asking thoughtful questions; going beyond the existing structure.
10	*Silence or confusion.*	Pauses, short periods of silence and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.
	Three categories added (for adaption) – JTW	
11	*No teacher presence*	Child/ children engaged in own activity, children engaged together in play. Not necessarily following adult direction regarding play in the role play area.
12	*No teacher presence*	At least one child in the area displays disruptive behaviour or disturbs another child intentionally.
13	*No teacher or child interaction*	The role play area is empty/ interactions not taking place in the role play area. Background classroom noise can be heard.

Table 3.5.3 Categories of classifying (adapted Flanders interaction analysis)

Encoding and decoding are the two processes of interaction analysis and as such the encoding process was used to capture the data using numbers derived from a thirteen category system. Table 3.5.4 below illustrates a typical coding sample from the study. There are twenty (3-second) intervals recorded with each row representing one minute of time. Colour coding was also used to support me in quickly identifying categories when transcribing the video data to the table. The colours also gave a clear visual picture as to the range of categories (and therefore behaviours) evident in each observation therefore provided a visual representation of the original events. No classroom interaction can ever be recreated and as such is a moment in history. The purpose of the interaction analysis was to preserve particular selected attributes of interaction through observation, encoding and decoding. In order to provide a systematic account of the recorded observations and to make it easier to identify any patterns that could be investigated further I added colour to the data for each category individually.

			15 sec					30 sec					45 sec					60 sec		Mins
9	6	6	6	7	7	8	7	7	4	6	6	7	5	5	7	7	7	10	10	1
10	5	5	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	5	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	2
3	4	6	7	7	6	6	7	6	4	8	4	4	8	5	5	4	4	8	8	3

Table 3.5.4 Extract from session five

3.5.6.3 Field notes of informal conversations

In school C field notes were made regarding the informal conversations I had with the teacher after each observation session. I made the field notes in order that I was able to refer back to these conversations during analysis and to inform the analysis of the video observations.

Instead, additional informal discussions were carried out with the teacher in conjunction with the nonparticipant video observations specifically and field notes were taken. The field notes were intended to add a richer picture to the non-participant video observations and to note the reactions of the early educator when she watched and reflected on them. This was a valuable opportunity to enable the teacher to take part in 'reflection-on-action' Schon (2005) and to discuss the benefits of reflection. Sellars (2014) believes that engaging teachers through collective analysis of their own practice in a powerful approach. However, care must be taken to ensure that practitioners engaged with reflective and reflexive practice carefully consider risks that can be encountered through moral judgement and ethical concerns. The next section of this chapter considers reflexive practice in more details.

The field notes were secondly used to capture informal conversations with the early educator before or after an observation during my visits to the setting where she would update me on what had happened between my visits and what she wished to draw my attention to. It should also be noted that what was actually said will be a matter of

recollection and interpretation on the part of the researcher and therefore there will never be an "objective record of the discussion" (Denscombe 2010: 195). The informal conversations with the teacher were carried out over the one school summer term. These were planned for in advance but often did not take place as planned due to changes in the classroom that affected the planned schedule.

3.5.6.4 Summary of Phase Six

This final phase generated enough data for me to end my data collection process. I built upon the previous phases in order to answer the two research sub-questions and built on the findings in the previous phases and attempted to draw together threads that linked to the literature. The following sections look at how I have explored reflexivity in order to answer the research questions, considered credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness and finally outlines the ethical considerations undertaken within this research before exploring the findings elicited from the data in the following chapter.

3.6 Reflexivity

Mukherji & Albon (2010) highlight the importance of the notion of reflexivity in qualitative research. Drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba (2000) they explore the notion of the 'self' being fluid and created in the research setting. Through the work of Reinharz (1997:5), the many selves the researcher brings to the field are outlined in three broad categories:

- research-based selves
- brought selves
- situationally-created selves

Therefore, reflexivity is a process of understanding the how the multi- positioned self is meaningful within qualitative research. The concept of reflexivity offers a key opening to explore crucial questions in the thinking, doing and evaluation of qualitative methodology (Day: 2012). Day goes on to discuss the dilemma of the 'doing' of qualitative methodology which are drawn from the reflexive interpretations of the research relationship. She draws attention to the difference between what we 'see' and 'what we think we see' (2012:64) therefore questioning the basis upon which we have interpreted. She argues that care should be taken to ensure that academic interpretations based on what we know do not expunge the knowing of our participants or their experiences. Day (2012:82) surmises that reflexive analysis can provide a 'starting point for thinking about the social process and consequences of our research practices.' In order to unpick the term reflexivity, Finlay and Gough (2003) describe the concept as forming a continuum in figure 3.1.1 below.

Reflection   Critical Reflection   Reflexivity

(Thinking about something)   (Dynamic self-awareness)
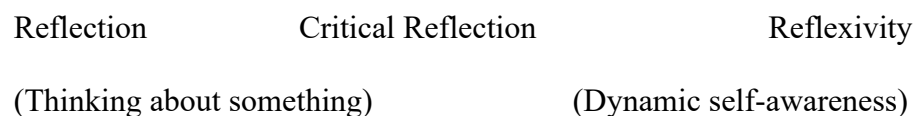
Figure 3.1.1: Finlay and Gough's (2003) reflexive continuum

Cohen, Manion & Morrion (2007:171) note that '*researchers are **in** the world and **of** the world.*' An interesting observation which illustrates the very essence of the researcher recognising that they are part of the social world they are researching. They go further in suggesting that researchers acknowledge and disclose themselves in the research in order to understand their part in it or indeed their personal influence. I was in a position throughout the research where I appeared to the early educators as someone who knew the answers to the questions I was asking. I was mindful of this throughout

and often reassured them that it was their view that I sought and not what they perceived was or could have been the 'right' answer. I was aware that my position as a HEI tutor possibly elevated my status in the eyes of the staff and this could be considered a possible limitation of the sampling process. Macbeath (2001) highlights the issue of the power and authority of the researcher in appearing to present an assured version of reality through interpretation. Day (2012: 66) argues that 'an understanding of power that goes beyond the immediate interactions of research is most useful for understanding the implications that power differentials have for qualitative methodology.'

Richards (2009) offers the perspective of reflexivity identifying a crucial feature of social research, therefore that part of the data is the researcher and that you should be alerted to the fact that you yourself are a part of the research. The notion of myself as researcher has supported me in selecting personal influences from the literal. Underpinning this research is the need for an understanding of the socially constructed nature of the world. As the researcher I understand that it is impossible to achieve complete objectivity and neutrality, and I have not sought to do this. Instead, my values and those of the participants become an integral part of the research (Smith, 1991). I will draw on my reflexive thought processes as I analyse the data and present the findings.

3. 7 Credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) state that in order to have effective research then validity is an important key but also acknowledge that it is impossible to have research that is 100 per cent valid. Stenbacka (2001) argues that the concept of validity should be redefined for qualitative research so I interpret the term validity as the extent to which data is credible, plausible and trustworthy and reject positivist notions. Therefore, validity may not be absolute but can be defended when challenged. Validity tends to

relate to the extent that research provides an authentic account of the participants' voices. Hughes (2010) in Mukherji & Albon (2015).

Aurini, Heath & Howells (2016) suggest that there is a significant difference between quantitative and qualitative methods and as such the threats to the validity within each differ distinctly. Controls are typically built into the design for both expected and unexpected validity in quantitative methods. In contrast qualitative researchers do not have a statistical means to 'control' likely threats. Therefore, these threats are often managed once the data collection has started and the qualitative researcher must consider threats before the research process and during. I acknowledge that the construction or interpretation undertaken by a researcher will inevitably be shaped by the context of the researcher, their experience and positionality. In this case, as a previous early years' practitioner with particular interest in early years real world and fantasy play, I am aware of my own professional assumptions in contributing to this research which include believing that real world and fantasy play settings should offer children opportunities for creativity and imagination. However, the pragmatic paradigm does not require absence of bias, rather a reflexive awareness of the shaping nature of the researcher within the research process.

Through the use of the Flanders (IA) system the following were acknowledged: three additional coding categories were added in discussion with a professional colleague, to the 10 (IA) categories that already existed and contributed to part of my making the reflexive process more visible. Bazeley (2013:148) proposes that credibility is key to interpretation by the researcher and participants further suggesting that they represent "one view among many." I have adopted this as a criterion for this work. Stenbacka (2001) goes further in suggesting that reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research and

believing the concept of reliability in qualitative research is in fact misleading. However, the decision was made to code the observation data for credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness to ensure that the data recorded against each code were consistent within the non-participant observation sessions. Therefore, I undertook an inter-rater reliability type process in order to ensure the credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness. A professional colleague was asked to code a sample of the video observation and to consider the coding categories generated. Any differences between myself and my colleague were discussed at length and finalised by the time the ultimate analyses were undertaken. The categories allowed for the information to be relevant to the research questions and a sample clip was used to ensure that all the codes would be relevant in reporting. I needed to become very familiar with the coding system as the (IA) system used codes every 3 seconds. The codes being colour coded also allowed me an immediate visual representation to see what behaviours were dominant and what behaviours were rarely seen in the setting during the non-participant observations.

I considered that using video-recording would strengthen the study in several ways and capture a fuller picture, Fisher & Wood (2012). It offered an opportunity for the class teacher to be involved directly in the watching of the video clips and allowed an opportunity for discussion and information gathering. The benefit of using video clips was also highlighted as the clip could be repeated should there be any clarification, checks required at any point and also allowed for discussion to establish shared understanding and context between the class teacher and researcher.

Reactivity, otherwise known as observer effect, (Aurini, Heath & Howells 2016: 62) can occur when the behaviour of participants is altered by the process of conducting the

research. Aurini, Heath & Howells (2016) recognise that reactivity can be applied to both researcher and participants and that the aim is not to remove the influence of the researcher on the research process but instead to ensure it is channelled positively.

In order to attempt to reduce the reactivity in this study I sought to normalise my presence through taster sessions with the children and early educators. This included me going into the early years setting so the children and early educators became familiar with me as an extra adult. The video camera was set up multiple times without recording so the children became used to it being there. It is inevitable that the qualitative researcher will shape the social context that they study but where possible this was kept to a minimum although I acknowledge that my presence shaped what I saw.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Within the research design, ethics surrounding the field of enquiry were carefully considered. Mukherji & Albon (2015) note that researching anything to do with young children has major ethical issues which are often understated. It is a complex process that needs careful thought and planning. Approval for the research was initially sought within the Institute guidelines (Swansea Institute) at the time which involved an ethics statement within the initial RD1 PhD approval form. At that time the supervisory team received permission for me to undertake the study and ethical approval was also granted and the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice were followed. BERA (2018) guidelines were adopted so all potential risks were considered in detail and addressed including welfare issues. UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice were followed.

It is important to consider which methods are best suited for research with children as a growing amount of research has stimulated discussion about how their involvement is best achieved. Groundwater-Smith, Dockett and Bottrell (2015) observe two strands of argument around this topic: the development of specific methods used for children's research participation and the adaption of methods used in research with adults. Palaiologou (2014) highlights methodological concerns around the rapid expansion in the development of child-friendly methods indicating concern around the popularity of the methods being lost in its pure application and that such methods oversimplify complex ethical and methodological decisions. The decision for child-friendly methods can be best brought about when children's perspectives and active participation is promoted and when methods match their expertise and competencies. These child friendly methods signal a respect for children's rights to participation which is highlighted in the UNCRC (1992) and also states that their preferences and competencies to express themselves are considered when selecting methods to obtain their perspectives. The important issue is that children and adults must experience research practice that is ethical and to support this end methods should be selected thoughtfully. Therefore, it is the researchers' responsibility to reflect on the adaptability, practicability and challenges of each technique (Dockett, Einarsdottir and Perry, 2011). Robson (2011) highlights that stakeholders are likely to have concerns about what is reported and how it is reported. I did not seek to engage the children in participatory research but instead aimed for them to be participants in my research as subjects of my observation in phases two, three and six. I intended to gather information 'on' their activity and behaviour and did not seek to research this 'with' them as this would not meet my research aim. With this in mind, all participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in any written material, presentation or other outputs. It is important that

the research design should reflect the educational aims of the research being carried out and that within the area of the classroom pupils are asked to participate and only take part willingly. Sikes (2004) stresses the importance of ensuring that any work carried out is not harmful in any way.

Approval was sought from the Head teacher of each setting before approaching the early educators in the setting. Each Head teacher and the early educators had the aims of the research explained to them and written consent was given by all. Consent for all forms of data collection was gained from all participants and head teachers and where appropriate from parents and guardians. All Head teachers were advised that either the children, parents or early educators could be withdrawn from the research at any time.

In all three school settings I was aware of that the age of the children being observed and the research was explained to the children in language appropriate for their level of understanding. I further explained that I would be in the classroom and writing in a notebook during my visits to the settings. A 'thumbs up/ down' approach was used to allow children to respond to me regarding their assent to take part in the research.

> *The notion of informed consent, or assent as it is legally known with children, because they are deemed too immature to give informed consent, is central to the ethics of research.* (Morrow & Richards, 1996:94 in RobertsHolmes 2005:60)

The children in all three settings were very responsive to this approach and all appeared to readily give assent. I also offered them an opportunity to withdraw at any time from the research by speaking to any adult in their setting but throughout I was aware that even just observing or following children into their private play spaces raises ethical

challenges of intrusion (Palaiologou, 2014; Waller, 2006). I was aware of children's body language and looked out for non-verbal cues of discomfort. Should those arise I would stop observing and move away from the scenario.

School C included video observation and so had further ethical considerations to be mindful of. Approval came under existing agreements with the school on filming for educational and professional development purposes but parents of participating children were also asked for permission before the research began. I was available at a variety of different times should parents have any questions or concerns regarding the research being carried out or need any further clarification. I am aware that the parents may have followed the perceived instructions about signing and returning the forms from a person of authority within the school but no parent wished to discuss the research and each gave written permission for each child to take part in the research. The LSA collected the signed letters from each parent, this usually took the form of the LSA collecting the forms from the children's bags when she was changing reading books with the children present. Other children brought their forms back directly to the LSA at the beginning or end of the day and some parents gave the LSA the form directly. However, it was usual practice in the classroom for collection of any forms sent out and it was the LSA rather than the teacher that had direct contact with the parents at the beginning or end of the day. For reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, the name of the school where the research took place has not been used and no participant names have been recorded. The concept of situated ethics was important here due to the nature of the video recordings and from a child's perspective, assent may be provisional (Flewitt 2005). Therefore, the children had a right to express their choices on an ongoing basis as they may not fully understand assent at a particular point in time. Therefore, continual reflexivity was needed during observations. An already established relationship between

researcher and children contributed to the success of the visits to the settings. It was explained to the head teacher, early educators, children and parents that withdrawal from any aspect of the study was available at any time. This might take the form of the children asking me to turn off the camera or remove it from the role play area or to speak to the early educators to ask not to be filmed. The early educators were alerted to the fact that they could ask for the video camera to be removed from the role play area at any point or they could ask to be withdrawn from the study including withdrawal from notes recorded for the field notes, discussions or interviews. Parents were advised that they could contact the class teacher or approach me directly should they wish to withdraw their child from the research. I acknowledged that observation is not without ethical difficulties and as suggested (Mukherji and Albon: 2010) shared the observations with the teacher. This provided clarity on exactly what was being recorded and allowed me to discuss and reflect with the teacher giving added insight.

In face-to-face interviews I ensured that the location was comfortable and that the adults had previously received the questions to read in preparation, so they were not taken by surprise or made to feel uncomfortable. In the focus group participants, were also situated in a comfortable environment and had been prepared for the session prior to their attendance. They were a cohort of students who were comfortable with each other and the facilitator was a lecturer they had previously worked with. Oakley (1981) in Mukherji and Albon (2010:42) reminds us that researchers are expected to "remain emotionally neutral, keeping their feelings and opinions to themselves" even though they may appear friendly and courteous. Interviewees and focus group participants received individual transcripts for checking and gave signed consent for them to be used as a true record.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007: 317) suggest that the survey is acknowledged to "always be an intrusion into the life of the respondent" because of the possibility of sensitivity to questions being asked, an impact on the time of the individual or possibly an invasion of privacy. However, as the choice of whether to complete the questionnaire was left to the individual, as detailed in the email sent to participants, their informed consent is assumed if they chose to complete the survey alongside reassurances that the research will not harm them (the issue of "nonmaleficence") as noted by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007:58).

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) draw on Sevenhuijsenn (1998) in distinguishing the ethics of care from universalistic ethics, or ethics of rights, in four ways. Firstly, that the ethics of care is concerned with relationships and responsibilities rather than rights and rules. Secondly that the ethics of care is connected to concrete situations instead of being formal and abstract and thirdly that rather than being a set of principles to be followed it is a moral activity. Finally, the ethical subject in the ethics of care is different from the ethical subject of universalist ethics.

> *The moral agent in the ethics of care stand with both feet in the real world. While the universalist ethicist will see this as a threat to his independence and impartiality, or as an obstacle to creating in his moral imaginary, the care ethicist sees this precisely as a crucial condition for being able to judge well.* (Sevenhuijsenn (1998:59)

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) suggest therefore, that at its heart, the ethics of care is about how to interpret and fulfil responsibility to others and does not involve conforming to a code but instead seeks answers to situated questions. For example, *what is the proper approach in this particular situation?* They go on to offer a perspective that ethical dilemmas arise from conflicts of responsibility rather than from conflicts of rights and this is the approach I felt was most appropriate in carrying out the research. Therefore, I believe it was of fundamental

importance to be ethically aware and make decisions that are located in the context of the research and the wishes of the participants. I adopted an ethic of care approach to this research as a whole. One example of this was in School B where it became clear to me that the teacher was not a willing participant in the research. It appeared that this was research that the head teacher had been interested in and perhaps was using the research opportunity as a lens with which to observe the teacher's practice rather than for the research aims themselves. The teacher was clearly uncomfortable and as a direct response I withdrew from the school following the initial observational visit to the setting.

3.9 Summary

In summary, this chapter described the pragmatic research design in this study. A mixed-methods approach was taken in order to learn more about Foundation Phase 'real world' and 'fantasy' play and the opportunities. In the following chapters (four and five) I present and report the findings and analysis from each phase of the research process. These are then discussed in depth in chapter six.

CHAPTER FOUR   FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS FROM PHASE ONE TO THREE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the themes that were constructed from data analysis in order of the phases and each respective research aim for phase one to three. Chapter five will then present the themes constructed from data analysis in respect of phases four to six. The following table 4.1.1 identifies the research tools implemented at each phase through a process map and the findings and analysis from each research tool are discussed in sequence at each phase.

Phase:	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Phase Four	Phase Five	Phase Six
Research aim:	Locate how the terms 'creativity' and 'imagination' are used in key Welsh Assembly Government documentation	Explore the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and explore children engagement in these areas of the classroom	Continue to explore the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and explore children engagement these settings in these areas of a different classroom setting	Explore range of views across targeted professional early years group	Explore broader range of views across teacher community	Explore behaviours in one practice setting
Research location: Research tools:	University Document analysis	SCHOOL A Semi-structured interviews Field notes of observations	SCHOOL B Field notes of observations	University Focus group	One Local Authority General scoping survey	SCHOOL C Semi-structured interviews Non-participant video observations Field notes of informal discussions

Table 4.1.1: Process map explaining logic of each phase

4.2 Phase One: Document analysis

As previously outlined in the methodology chapter this document analysis was chosen as a research tool to explore how the Welsh Assembly Government positioned and gave direction

in relation to directiveness to the teachers and LSAs around the terms 'creativity' and 'imagination' and their associated terms, as previously identified. For the purpose of this section each time 'creativity' and 'imagination' are discussed it will be assumed that this includes the associated terms also. Table 4.2.1 illustrates the category constructions derived from the content within the WAG documentation with an example of each to put the data into context.

1.	Glossary (*own term*)	*'Imagination is having the skills and ability to form images, ideas and concepts that either exist but are not present, or that do not exist at all.'*	Document A
2.	Glossary *(within another accompanying definition*)	*'Cognitive development is the development of the mind. It focuses on children's thinking and understanding, imagination and creativity (including problem solving/ reasoning/ concentration and memory.)'*	Document E
3.	Used within case study example *(teacher observation)*	*'small world play can be imaginary.'*	Document A
4.	Heading	*'Imagination.'*	Document A
5.	Organisation of the learning environment	*'To support children's development the learning environment should: ... offer opportunities for: ...being imaginative and creative.'*	Document A
6.	Generalised use of word (*e.g.* "*small world play can be imaginary."*)	*'Through participating in imaginative activities.'*	Document A
7.	Related to theorist/ psychologist	*'Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) ... The daily routine includes stories and poems, singing, movement, outdoor games and creative and imaginative play with natural materials and coloured fabrics.'*	Document B

Table 4.2.1: Category constructions

The documents were assessed for completeness and all words identified and captured in coding of the content of the documents in six tables (see appendix one) for tables 4.2.2/4.2.3/4.2.4/4.2.6/4.2.7).

	Document A	Document B	Document C	Document D	Document E	Document F	Total
imagination	3	4	1	9	1	9	27
imaginary	2	0	3	0	1	0	6
imaginative	7	6	0	9	1	2	25
imaginatively	1	1	0	5	0	0	7
Total	13	11	4	23	3	11	**65**
creativity	2	2	1	2	1	3	11
creative	10	3	6	15	2	2	38
creatively	0	1	3	6	0	1	11
Total	12	6	10	23	3	6	**60**

Table 4.2.2: Totality of number of times terms are presented

Table 4.2.2 is a summary of the number of times the terms in the documentation are presented within each category construction. Interestingly, there is only a difference of five presentations more of imagination than creativity It could be suggested then that the focus is similar in terms of weighting. The table shows that there are equal representations in terms of overall documents in documents D (23) and E (3). It is perhaps unsurprising that document D which is a framework for children's learning has a high number of mentions. Document E is noticeable in the lack of times the terms are noted overall and perhaps this is because this document is based around observation. This could suggest that this is not a priority for WAG and therefore early educators are not guided towards prioritising creativity and imagination in their observations. Further, it can be noted that this collection of data is based in the 'generalised use of the word' and is therefore not intended to be of noteworthy importance. Document C which is based on personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity is identified as having the biggest differential (6) between the two terms and here creativity (and associate terms) feature six more times than that of imagination.

It should be noted that 'imagination' appears in the glossary of two documents out of the six but at no time does 'creativity' appear in any glossary of any of the six documents. This is repeated in the category construction (2) of glossary (within another accompanying

definition) where again 'imagination' is acknowledged but 'creativity' is not. This could perhaps be seen as perplexing as both terms appear in documents overall, but creativity is not considered a key term to be represented in the glossaries.

Case studies are a feature of the documentation but interestingly there are only five times that the words 'creativity' and imagination' are cited, three times and twice respectively and this is only within document A. There is no other mention of these terms within the other documents within this category.

Another category that is rarely attributed to is that of organisation of the learning environment. No mention of 'creativity' or 'imagination' are made in documents A, D or E. There are two mentions in document B (one of each) and two mentions in document C (creativity only). An assumption could be made here that the organisation of the learning environment was not a focus in terms creativity and imagination for WAG.

The category construction 'related to theorist/ psychologist' only features in the 'learning and pedagogy' document B which is not unexpected as this is the document concerned with pedagogy. What is noteworthy though is the fact that this document only yields three mentions (two of imagination and one of creativity) and that these mentions are very vague and read more like passing comments rather than designed to give any insight into the pedagogy itself.

The policy context of role play in the Early Years classroom drawn out of this data analysis and discussion of findings offers some indication as to how and why practitioners are influenced to provide opportunities for role play in practice. This will be developed further in the following chapter.

The aim for this phase was to locate how the terms 'creativity' and 'imagination' are used in key Welsh Assembly Government documentation. One particular document (A) described 'planning play in the classroom' in the preamble it is noteworthy that the terms 'creativity' and 'imagination' are absent. It is noted that it is important that 'it is important to ensure that account is taken of the different ways children play and learn' (2008:43) However, there is a strong focus on structured play which is described as not being 'a rigid set of rules that are imposed on children.' (2008:43) I was interested to see how this would play out in the reality of an early years setting. The case study example given to support this section is focused on play around castles, knights and princesses. The description is of early educators involving children in the planning process and in creating the props and resources for the activity. The resources are created with a range of materials with the children for example making the castle and horses out of boxes. It also showed how the interest of the children was aroused and consolidated when they went on a visit to a real castle and the play 'came alive' (2008:45). Attention is also drawn to props the early educator has bought on the visit to the castle (quills) and the scrolls that are provided for the children to write on and suggests that the children 'play better with props that they have made themselves.' (2008:45) The case study, in part sounded as though it was a creative experience for the children with the castle becoming their role play area. What is then perplexing is that the picture accompanying the case study is of three little girls playing with a very small plastic model castle which does not capture or resemble what has been discussed in the case study.

I suggest that having completed the review there is no coherent representation through the documentation. This could possibly lead to muddled understanding for the audience it was written for. It could be said that the terms, whilst used throughout the documentation, are not used consistently or with careful thought as to how they are portrayed. Rather it appeared

they were being used as 'buzz' words without any real thought as to their importance in the early years setting. There is very little mention of either term in the document D which focusses on observation which I felt was surprising. For me personally, observation had been an important part of my practice as a practitioner and I saw it as a key position from which to capture valuable data about children both individually and in group settings. The terms in other documentation often pertained to specific areas of play such as 'small world' examples where the impression was created that creativity and imagination were centred around fixed tasks if they were deemed to be successful. I was interested to find out whether this presented itself in how teachers organised their settings. The lack of treatment of pedagogy was also surprising. Teachers were expected to respond to the documentation without an understanding of the pedagogy behind it. I would have expected to see this as a thread running through the documentation as opposed to three brief mentions of theorists/ psychologists which provided tenuous links at best. I also found it unexpected when I discovered that only 'imagination' appeared in the glossary and 'creativity' did not. I questioned myself as to why this was the case as both terms were used throughout almost the same amount of terms overall.

4.2.1 Summary of Phase One

In summary, I did not feel that the documentation set up early educators effectively for understanding the purpose of different types of play in their settings with the terms 'imagination' and 'creativity' poorly articulated and conflicted. I sensed that some of the main findings drawn out of this phase would allow me to explore some of these issues more fully in the phase two and to discover if the documentation appeared to have an influence on the early educators in their settings.

4.3 Phase Two: School A

School A gave me the opportunity to explore some of the issues that the document analysis had presented. The aim of this phase was to explore the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and explore children's engagement in these areas of the classroom. The research sample for School A included one female foundation phase teacher, two female learning support assistants and a class of 29 reception aged children (18 girls and 11 boys) in one large community primary school setting serving children from age 3-11. The school served a mixed urban area including pockets of social disadvantage where over 97% of children were considered as living in the most deprived areas of the Local Authority. School A had two designated role play areas in an open plan style room. The first role play area was an open space with lots of written questions surrounding the space on the one wall and a cupboard holding a set of trays. This area tended to be used for an LSA to take the children and 'model' role play or to read stories and then ask children to enact the characters from them. The second role play area was set up as a shop area.

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Two semi-structured interviews were undertaken at School A, one with an experienced early years teacher and one with the LSA of three years (guiding questions can be found in appendix one). The first question asked about the purpose of role play. The LSA noted that for her the purpose of role play was,

> *'for them to dress up as anything they want to dress up as and for them to be able to ... be able to experience other things like being a park keeper or a badger. Whatever they are dressed up as.'*

The teacher's response was,

> *'To develop their vocabulary, their thinking. To explore their own thinking and to think about the experiences they had, to think about past experiences… to express their own decisions and to work collaboratively and to, you know, learn how to play socially and with other children.'*

Both responses note that the purpose of role play is around experience though the LSA response is centred specifically around the idea or dressing up and being in role whereas the teacher response is more about experience in general with a focus on past events.

Much of the rest of the LSA interview is concerned with dressing up and specific characters. Some examples of this were,

> *'…sometimes they'll just dress up as a princess. We've just put the princess dresses away now, so there are things they can't always do.'*

> *'We've got paramedics.'*

She also notes that in response to her going in to play with the children that,

> *'we leave them to do it themselves but if we want them to be Percy the Park Keeper we want them to come out with, you know, what animals are in it. We do try and monitor it but sometimes they can get a bit too rowdy.'*

This is an interesting comment in terms of her noting behaviour as an issue for her within the play. When prompted she suggests that she thinks the children can play interactively together independently but also can play apart as well. She goes on to suggest that some of the children play for a long time in the role play area a uses a specific example of one little girl *'… she'll play all day. She's in the dressing up clothes all day.'* Here attention is drawn to the resources that are provided and a further example is given *'They love dressing up, the girls. The high heel shoes are really popular.'* When asked about what she thought was most important about role play she suggests that it is *'the same thing really'* which builds upon her previous comment about dressing up and therefore that the resources are important. When asked about whether she thinks children can be reflective about their role play she responds with a positive response. *'Yes, they do, yes. Normally with role play they'll play mummies*

and daddies and they'll say are you well, are you better?' This comment suggests that this play described by the LSA is based on real life experience and perhaps what children have experienced in their social-cultural experience rather than the focus previously suggested on dressing up and acting as specific characters. Here the LSA appears to suggest that reflection is about how they act in their play rather than being reflective about it. Therefore, more about repetition and repeating behaviour rather than reflection.

The teacher explains in her interview that there are two role play areas set up in the classroom currently. She noted that the children were not asked about what role play areas they would like to have but instead that she picked the areas based on the story/ focus for the term. The current focus was the Goldilocks story so:

> *'we started off with Goldilocks … we thought the cottage would be a good start… we based it around the goldilocks story and we thought we would have the real life experiences at home and in the kitchen and that scenario, so you know, we got the imagination.'*

The teacher draws attention to imagination here which is an interesting observation as the focus appeared to be centred around real life experiences e.g. learning how to use a kitchen rather than creating imaginative play around the story itself. She also adds that fairy tales would be the basis of *'everything'* for the year so the children *'had a range.'* The teacher suggests that she uses adults to 'enhance' the area *'when we've got someone in to enhance the area, you know develop the language, they tend to, they will go off and use it.'* This suggestion is established further in another comment:

> *'we did have a time where of course Miss T**** was enhancing and talking about the three bears and acting out the story and thinking about the characters, what the characters might do, what the characters might say, how they felt and after they had done it with her I found they were really going in there and you know repeating the situation. That situation which is really what you want isn't it?*

It appears that the use of an adult for enhancement purposes is of importance to the teacher within the organisation of the classroom but specifically within role play situations. The

teacher notes that one of her difficulties is how to incorporate the welsh language into the classroom and indicates that in order to help her do this she will create a shop:

'... sometimes we use our roleplay area to enhance that so we thought this time we might do a shop. We're doing 'Tedi Twt yn Siopia' so we haven't decided what is going in there other than a welsh lady in the role play with a bear.

Another difficulty she notes is how to fit the science focus into the half term. As the focus is night and dark she has chosen a book "Can't you sleep little bear?" which fits with the class bear theme. It appears that the teacher is driven by the need to adapt to the curriculum rather than any particular focus on play for play's sake.

When asked about monitoring and evaluating role play and specifically the role play area she is very honest in her response.

'Wow. I've got to be honest that's something I'm ignoring. We need to do it because at the end of the day how can we improve the quality of that if we don't evaluate how it's gone so... We'll write comments now and that will go in the assessment files under what sorts of things they may have particularly struggled doing, about a certain child, you know that's something I need to work on.'

It appears that the monitoring comments being collated are more to do with whether the child has struggled at doing something rather than any informative comments on their approach to play specifically.

The teacher reveals that the children were supposed to go to the park as part of their curriculum experience based on the 'Percy and the Park Keeper' book however the weather was too inclement, and the trip was cancelled. Instead, she wanted the LSA to create an imaginary scene with the woodland animals and *'use that as a scenario.'* She notes that the LSA was not in school the day before and so there wasn't an opportunity to put an adult in the area to enhance so *'it was just using the masks and exploring it themselves... but how it went yesterday , I couldn't tell you.'* The teacher goes on to explain that there is no set time

for the children to be in the role play area and they *'wander in and out.'* She clarifies that *'if they want to go in there and do what you are doing that's fine, but we also choose children to go in there because some children would never go in there.'* This suggests that there is usually an adult in the area and that children are sometime directed into the areas. She suggests that there are some negatives about the role play area but these are concerned with *'how much quality of language and learning is coming out of it and why.'* She does not identify any behaviour issues as the LSA did in her interview.

4.3.2 Field notes of observations

Three sets of field notes were taken during the school visits. The first included brief notes from a discussion with the teacher that explained how the role play areas were structured. Each observation lasted for forty minutes in which time the field notes were captured and then detail and clarification added to them at the end of the observation session so as much could be noted as possible.

4.3.2.1 Field note one

The teacher explained that the classroom housed two dedicated role play areas. One was more 'formal' called 'The Cottage' and one less formal called 'Show Me.' The 'Cottage' role play area was set out in a traditional way as a kitchen with lots of labelling e.g. cooker, sink, washer etc…and questions written and displayed:

> *Do you like sausages?*
> *What cutlery do we need?*
> *Would you like a cup of tea?*
> *Can you look after the pets in the house?*

The 'Show Me' role play area consisted of a dressing up area with mirror and costumes. There was learning objective written up on the wall which stated 'Retell the traditional story

Goldilocks and the three bears.' There was also a 2D picture of a bear accompanied by welsh and english vocabulary e.g. babi bach/ small. There were also pictures of the story on the wall and four (same) books were available.

The LSA had been asked to 'enhance' the provision with one LSA in 'Show Me' area and it was this area that was observed. The four children (three girls and one boy) had the story 'Percy and the Park Keeper' read to them, they had previously had the story read to them so it was known to them. I was informed by the LSA that this was the first time that children were playing in this area after being given new 'Percy' props to use therefore, masks with different character 'faces' provided. The LSA has a pile of books on hibernation next to her and reads to the children, showing pictures and asking questions. She talks about different animals with very little response from the children.

She urges one of the children to put on 'Percy's jacket' and the girl then uses a small plastic green shovel to 'dig.' The LSA calls her back to the carpeted area. A boy then leaves the area with a rake then goes to take off his coat. After taking off his coat he tries dragging it on the floor until the LSA asks him to bring it back. He gives it back then takes it again a few moments later when LSA is not looking. He goes to the construction area dragging the rake behind him. This would appear to be a reasonable place to go with the rake in order to construct a 'house' as he tells another child is his intention. A child from outside the group of four sees what he is doing and goes to the 'Show Me' area to get a shovel then returns to the construction corner. He starts using the shovel to dig, then swings it around, sits on some blocks (all the time with the shovel in his hand.) The two boys appear to be playing together although they are not playing as they have been directed as by their own choice.

Three children remain sitting with LSA get up after she finishes reading and asking them questions (mainly to do with hibernation). They go to get some puppets and leave the area. At this stage there has been no play taking place when the children are with the LSA. It could be assumed then that the 'enhanced' provision was not intended to enhance the play but more possibly the children's knowledge about hibernation.

The LSA calls a new group of children (the children are directed by the LSA in each group). Interestingly she says,*'Come and be an animal'* which could suggest that with this group she has a different intention and therefore intends to engage in play with them. She then states *'You haven't done it today'* which intimates that being an animal is an expected task and has been completed previously. She then asks the children to put on a mask each. One child asks: 'Who am I?' The LSA responds with *'You're a fox. A fox rummaging through the woods. Percy where are you going?* (directed at another child in the group – a boy). *What are you going to do?* (No response from child.) She then asks, *'Can I have the rake, please?'* (Child one returns the rake to LSA.) Then all the children head over to the other side of the classroom and the LSA calls them back. They are clearly not engaged in the activity. Three children return to the carpet (one child is missing from the group but she does not make a comment about it or recall the child.) The LSA proceeds to show the children 'how' to dig like a badger. *'Like this. This is hard work. You could use your hands, you have powerful claws, come on you can do it.'*

One child (boy) slams down the shovel on the floor, stands on it and breaks it and there is a brief disruption while shovel is removed by the LSA. This action by the child appeared to show his frustration with what he has been asked to do. The instruction is somewhat confusing, the children are being asked to dig like badgers with their 'claws' on a carpet but the added presence of a shovel and fork gives the impression it has confused them. Shortly

after the children have proved to the LSA that they can dig effectively she asks them to take off the masks and then she sits with one child and reads him a story 'Not Now Bernard.' (A story about a little boy who sees a monster.) This story does not appear to have relevance to the focus of the role play area.

The LSA then leaves the area to ask a new group of four children *'have you been an animal?* The children sit in the carpet area waiting for her while she looks for a lost mask. One boy puts on a mask then leaves the area. The teacher announces that it is tidy up time and so the children leave the area without having worked with the LSA.

The adult direction (LSA) in this observation mirrors what was said by the LSA in her interview where she suggests that *'if we want them to be Percy the Park Keeper we want them to come out with, you know, what animals are in it.'* This indicates the importance for her is on the content of the story and who the characters are. However, there does not seem to be much evidence that *'we leave them to do it themselves'* as she also stated.

4.3.2.2 Field note two

The notes from this observation were again recorded in situ and amended fully at the end of the session to enable as much detail as possible was captured. The observation was proceeded by a brief conversation with the teacher who informed me that in the previous week the children had been introduced to second Nick Butterworth story (One Snowy Night.) She explained that she was deploying one LSA (the same LSA previously observed) for enhanced provision in 'Show Me' role play area as otherwise no children choose to play there.

There was also a new focus in the other role play area this week (previously 'The Cottage') which was changed into a shop from the beginning of the week. The teacher had introduced

the story 'Tedi Twt yn Siopa' (Tedi Twt is shopping) to the class and asked them what they would like to have as their new role play area. They decided on a shop and she stated that she was 'relieved' that the children had picked this as a focus because it would 'fit in' with the theme. This is interesting as there appears to be palpable relief on the part of the teacher that the children had picked a shop especially as the stimulus for the conversation was a story about shopping, so this was perhaps unsurprising.

The new role play area comprised of two tills, two tables in the middle of the area set up with a range of milk cartons, egg boxes, weighing scales etc…with bags, a trolley and baskets available. Money, credit cards and cheques were also available. The LSA takes four excited children to the new role play area and explains that they will be '*learning to use the shop.'* She explains *'Before your mummies, daddies and grandparents go shopping they have to have a list to remind them of what to get.'* She goes on to explain *'I've written my shopping list* (proceeds to read out a list of four items). *You are going to write me a shopping list. Think about what you are going to buy in the supermarket. Try and write them down.'* At this point she takes the children out of the new role play area and they are taken to a writing area where they are given a shopping list and encouraged to write their own list. The children do not appear to be particularly enthusiastic about the written part of this activity and are keen to explore the new area, regularly asking when they can go back there.

Figure 4.3.1: Example of the shopping list given to children for writing purposes

After the written activity is complete and the children (and the LSA) have a list each they return to the role play 'shop.' The adult sits behind one of two tills *'before you start I want to talk to you about ways you pay. There are different ways to pay, cash and coins, cheque, card. If you haven't got cash on you in a shop, adults have cards. These cards send a message to the bank and the bank takes the money out of your account. You can write a cheque like this…'* she proceeds to show the children. *'When you are shopping it gets totalled up. You need a bag or a basket or a trolley. Try and get some things on your shopping list.'* In response to one girl who comes to the till she says *'A… you haven't got pop on your list, you've got sausages'* she then sends the child back to get the 'correct' item. What seems strange here is that in a real shopping scenario it is unlikely that most customers would keep strictly to the list and be sent back by the cashier if they chose to purchase something else but this does not seem to occur to the LSA.
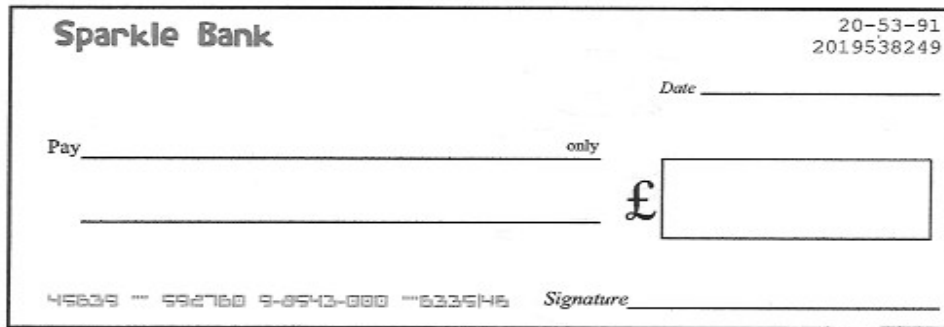
Figure 4.3.2: Example of cheque given to children to fill out (and use in shop)

Another child (boy) takes the trolley to the checkout and the LSA responds loudly with *'Apple, BEEP BEEP'* and puts the item (an apple) next to the scanner. After each item adult repeats *'BEEP BEEP.'A further example of what she says was recorded as 'It will be 62p please. Thank you. There's your change. Thank you very much sir. Next please.'* This is repeated with the rest of the group in turn and after each child has had a turn at paying they are then asked to put back their items in the shop. Each leave the area and go off to do another task. The LSA then goes to collect another group of four children and the process is repeated. Whilst collecting the new group of children various comments are made by her that included:

> *'Come and work in the supermarket with me.'*
> *'Stop your play fighting.'*
> *'Come and sit at the table with me. I'll tell you why now.'*

As the LSA works in the writing area on creating lists with the new group of children two girls go into the shop to play. One girl sits behind the till and starts looking at the money. The other takes the 'cheques' and some money. She then walks around the two table (the shop) with a small trolley and outs various items in the trolley. She then goes back to the child sitting at the till. The LSA takes the group back to the shop at this point. This is the first time she appears to have noticed the other two girls in the shop area. *'Let's go to the supermarket.*

Girls out of the supermarket. I've told you two times before this not to come in. I'm going to be cross in a minute. It isn't your turn.'

Here is an example of the activity not being one of choice. There is a level of annoyance shown by the LSA because the two girls have been using the role play area without her specific direction. The LSA then begins the same process in the supermarket with the second group. After she finishes explaining about the money and how to use it. She says: '*Go and get a shopping bag and fill it up. Oh no, it's carpet time. No time to go shopping. Never mind we'll do it next time.'* The response from the children is somewhat of a deflated and disappointed one as they have completed the written activity but have not had an opportunity to use the area. This area has been set up with the intention of 'teaching' the children appropriate play within it and not to allow them to use imagination or creativity within it. Instead, the structured approach is very dictated. The impression is given that the area will be seen as a success if the children conform to the behaviour they have been instructed to use.

4.3.2.3 Field note three

Field note three was created in the observation session three and as in the previous two observations, notes were clarified and updated after the observation. There appears to be a mix of role play situations within this session and it begins with no children in either of the designated role play areas. The teacher informed me that as they were short staffed there is no one available to 'enhance' these areas.

After a few minutes two girls enter the 'show me' area which has been changed into a nativity area and proceed to put on a tabard out of a selection of costumes kept there. They

move across the classroom to an open space and are immediately reprimanded by the LSA

'You are dressed up. You need to be in the nativity area, not anywhere else. In the nativity area.' The two girls return to the 'show me' area, remove the tabards and then leave the area. They have listened to the instructions of the LSA but this has interrupted and stopped their play before it had time to begin.

Four of the children start to play on the carpet area in a 'family' scenario and six others engage in 'school setting' scenario with the teacher being the main character. The family scenario is quickly distinguished and the child (girl) takes over as the organiser of the play and assumes the role of teacher. The children in the family play scenario are ignored and excluded but become quickly adaptive of the school setting scenario evidencing a shared knowledge of how they adapt into different roles. The children who take part in this scenario manage their roles by observing and responding to their peers' roles and listening to what they said therefore suggesting a shared knowledge. During this session the children are also reprimanded twice by the teacher *'Girls. I don't want you running back and fore. Remember our class rules.'* and *'Remember the rules, please don't run back and fore.'* and once by the LSA (as previously stated). An example of the dialogue within the play can be seen below:

Girl A (Acting in teacher role): *'Now I've got something special. It's very special. You've got to close your eyes. She should have a big star. Give her a big clap. Open your eyes. Take the register please.'* (Gives child a piece of a jigsaw.) *'Give her a clap. Put it in your bag and you'll like that.'*

Girl A: Points to mouth, ears, eyes. Children follow her as she repeats actions. *'Put your hands up.'*

Boy A: 'I am a teacher.'

Girl A: *'Cheeky. Go and sit by Zoe.'*

Boy A refuses to move.

Girl A: *'Leave him there, just leave him there. I'm giving you time out.'*

There is some discussion amongst the children sitting in front of the girl who has assumed the role of teacher and the children on the carpet talk over each other. Girl A quickly takes charge of the situation:

'Who wants to be helpwr heddiw?'
Boy B: *'I'm helpwr heddiw.'*
Child B gives the boy some welsh sentences which he hands out to the others.
Girl B (from the group on the carpet): *'Can we go on the whiteboard miss?'*
Girl A: *'I haven't got time for that.'*
Girl B *'Is it home time miss?'*
Girl B: *'No it's timeout.'*
Girl B: *'I'm not in timeout.'*
Girl A: (Ignoring her.) *'I'll put your peg there.'* (She points to an area with all the children's names on pegs on a string.)

The teacher comes over to indicate tidy up time and the children are quickly dispersed by her and the play ends. The child who took the role as teacher was evidencing a sophisticated understanding of the role and appeared to be building on practice of the scenario and the development of the characters within the scenario. Imagination enabled the children to move beyond being children in their setting and instead they pretended to be realistic characters based on their experience and enacted roles that were not directed. This was an example of the play being influenced by the various realistic contexts that the children found themselves in. Their influences originated from the social contexts in which they were playing, the home context and what they had observed or experienced. For example, playing the role of teacher was stimulated through repetition observed by the girl on a regular basis and they mirrored the behaviour of them as children within the scenario in their imaginative play, externalising it.

4.3.3 Summary of Phase Two

Within phase two there appear to be several threads that can be drawn out as noteworthy. Firstly, there appears to be a focus on dressing up as characters from a book and imitating the characters behaviour. This is quite complex as the children are, for example, being asked to 'dig like a badger' which is a concept that is alien to them. The LSA models the behaviour although it does not actually resemble a badger digging and the added complication of the shovel and rake confuse matters further. It appears that the LSA is constrained by the theme of the classroom, the focus on the story, and characters, and therefore does not really consider her actions. This dependence on the play coming from curriculum constraints is also reiterated in the interviews. It is also echoed in the fact that the role play areas are full of labelling. There are many questions and key words displayed but the children do not appear to engage with them at any point during the observations.

Secondly, it appears that for the sessions to be deemed successful that the LSAs need to have the children imitate their behaviour, so direct copying is praised and any departure from this is criticised. This can be seen in the example of the little girl who is sent back to the shop because she does not have the correct items (from her list) in her basket. This raises a serious question about what the early educators consider to be the purpose of role play or fantasy play. From this phase it appears that there is a 'correct' way to play. In both examples of the badger digging and the shopping scenario they appear to go through the motions of expected behaviour, but very little other response is elicited from them and they do not seem engaged. There is one deviation from this in the behaviour displayed by the child who is clearly so frustrated that he acts out his defiant behaviour by breaking the shovel. In both sessions the children are also directed at the beginning with a focussed task, for example listening to a

story or writing a shopping list. This suggests that the children are directed to the play from an initial activity provided for a sense of purpose, the tasks are literature-based activities.

Thirdly, from the interviews it appears that both early educators believe that the children have choice about their play and yet there is a strong sense throughout all the data collection that importance is placed on the early educators directing the play. This is evidenced in the example of the group playing 'school.' This group are the most engaged of any of the children observed and it appears to because they are choosing their own role play, they do imitate roles (particularly that of the teacher) but it is done on their own terms and it is interesting that even though they are reprimanded they show the determination to carry on until the early educators are distracted and do not reprimand them anymore.

Fourthly, there is an emphasis on the early educators 'enhancing' the role play areas in terms of their presence there. This is clearly important to the class teacher who ensures that I am aware that she is putting support into the areas to 'enhance' them. She goes further in appearing disappointed that on my last observation she has no one available to enhance the area. It is through this final observation that I observe the children taking charge of their own play (school scenario). This is play that is not suggested, no resources are provided but the children adapt the classroom resources and engage fully in the process.

It is perhaps reasonable to suggest that at the end of this phase it was not clear what the early educator's role was in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world'' and 'fantasy' settings. In reality the two concepts of real world and fantasy were mixed together offering some confusion to the children. It could also be suggested that the early educators were also

confused by their role and this was attributed by the constraints of expectations put upon them.

4.4 Phase Three: School B

Within phase three (school B) I wanted to continue to explore the early educator's role in shaping creativity and imagination in 'real world' and 'fantasy' settings and explore children engagement these settings in these areas of a different classroom setting. The research sample for School B included one female foundation phase teacher, and two female learning support assistants in a class of 24 reception aged children (13 girls and 11 boys) in one large community infant school setting serving children from age 3-7. The school served a 'Communities First' area where nearly half of the pupils come from one of the most 20% most deprived areas in Wales. I had visited the school previous to my observational visit and met with the head teacher and both teaching assistants but had been unable to meet the class teacher as she was on a training course. The consent forms had been signed by all participants before the observations took place but the first time I had the opportunity to meet the teacher in person was on the morning the first observation was to take place. There was no designated role play area in the class setting.

4.4.1 Field notes of observation

The field notes detail that there were 22 children present out of 24 on the morning of the observation. I noted that the teacher stated there was no designated role play area but so that I could see role play in action (as that was what she had been informed I was interested in exploring) she had placed some laminated cards with 'characters' on them on the floor of the reading area.

I observed two sessions in the morning observation, one after assembly until break and one after break until just before lunch. The children were split into four groups of six (cats/ spiders/ mice/sheep). At any one time each early educator was working with a designated group with one group instructed to 'choose' an activity from those set up. On the day of the observation the choice was from play dough, construction or the reading area. In the first part of the morning the teacher was completing a cut and stick lotto activity, one LSA was using playing fruit and vegetable bingo and the second LSA was working on a language activity with whiteboards. The rest of the children were instructed to play with play dough to make fruit and vegetables. I noted that four children out of the group who were sent to work alone with the play dough quickly left the table and found a bucketful of dinosaurs which they took to the carpet area. Three of the children (boys) played with dinosaurs placing them in and out of the bucket. One boy took a single dinosaur and wandered off with it in his hand saying *"Oh no another scary one"* and squeaking the dinosaur. The other two boys joined the boys on the carpet after locating another plastic box which contained dinosaur 'mats.' The boy who had initially walked away then re-joined the group and 'play' took place with the dinosaurs with all six boys immersed and engaged in creative and imaginative play with the dinosaurs. This links to Vygotsky (1995) and his belief that creativity could arise from any human activity that produces something new. The children were talking to the dinosaurs and to each other through the dinosaurs and setting up opportunities for them to 'fight.' Their engagement in the play continued until it was disturbed by the teacher stating that it was *"tidy up time."* At no time through their play did any of the early educators intervene. I found this interesting as they had been asked to make fruit and vegetables with the play dough but had chosen not to continue with that very quickly. This did not appear to be something that the early educators had an issue with.

After break (all children went out to the yard for a designated time together) the children were again brought together on the carpet before being instructed to go to certain areas. The teacher was completing an activity around estimation, one LSA was completing a number activity and the second LSA was completing a number activity. The remaining six children are instructed to "choose." Two children (girls) play with the playdough, two children (boys) play with the construction equipment and two children (girls) go towards the reading area (where the laminated character cards are still untouched on the floor from the previous session). They stop at the writing area on the way for paper and a pen. The two girls enter the reading area and sit on the seats. Both girls start to talk as though they are imitating the classroom situation including teacher conversation and responding as a pupil. Girl one has a greater command of language and is able to imitate the teacher, girl two struggles with language construction but does respond to her peer. The pen and paper become the 'register' and the two engage in the 'real world' play of the classroom. They engage in a dialogue of which an extract is recorded below:

> Girl One: *"Can we have a Mia and Lexi?"* (points to two other children in the classroom) *"Who would be working with you Miss Thomas? Who would be excellent writing"*
> Girl Two responds with a one word answer *"Callum."*
> Girl One: *"No he is baddy. He gone home now. Who else have? Who would be working with you Miss Richardson?"* (It appears here that she is taking the 'role' of the teacher and has noticed that there are two LSAs that the teacher regularly talks to and is trying to talk to each of them by imitating the teacher role.) She continues: *"Freya been excellent for me today."*
> Girl Two says nothing but smiles and then looks down at some books.
> Girl One: *"Who else have been working good for you? Rosemary? But Rosemary is always naughty. You sure?"*
> Girl Two nods and Girl One responds by stating *"I'll give her a tick then."*
> Girl One walks over to a 'word wall' and points to the key words that are placed there. She tells Girl Two *"copy the words."* Both children take a word from the wall and attempt to copy it onto their paper. They replace the words and repeat the action several times before the teacher asks them to tidy up before lunch.

The children engage in an example of 'real world' play even though there is no designated area for this. They respond to the practice and tradition of the school setting they find

themselves in and appear to adhere to the social-cultural dynamics of their classroom setting and experience.

4.4.2 Summary of Phase Three

In summary of phase two (school B) I was surprised to find that there was no designated role play area within the setting. My attention was drawn by the teacher to the laminated 2D characters that were placed on the floor in the reading area. This may suggest as in phase two (school A) that there was a link made by the early educators to literacy within role play and more specifically to the importance of characters. There was no evidence here of any modelling being carried out by the early educators as in school A. Instead, there appeared to be a lack of awareness and mistrust of role play in general. In this school setting there was no modelling or enhancement carried out by the teachers and apart from directing children to the area at the start of the session then there was no interaction from the early educators. What was interesting was the children's own role play created around the classroom where they fall into playing 'school' in a similar scenario to that seen in school A. Again, the children produce their own resources and agenda for playing without the early educators but construct a play scenario that they are fully engaged in and mimic the behaviours of those in the setting. This response is highlighted in the literature review where Gaskins (2014) notes that in realistic roles children have opportunities to reflect on real-life situations and use these situations to expand their understanding of the real world.

CHAPTER FIVE   FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS FROM PHASE FOUR TO SIX

5. 1 Phase Four: Focus group

The aim for phase four was to explore a range of views across a targeted professional early years group. Six Foundation Phase teachers all with Foundation Phase experience from a range of backgrounds, including two supply teachers, were invited to join in a discussion forum. These were students undertaking a post graduate module who were asked to discuss and explore their ideas around creativity and imagination in role play in early years settings through a facilitator (not the researcher). The participants were given a statement as a starting point from which to start the facilitated discussion. The statement was based on a statement made by the LSA in School A.

> *'The purpose of role play is for children to dress up as anything they want to dress up as and experience other things.'*

In analysing the focus group transcript, five themes were drawn out which will be discussed in this section. Braun and Clarke (2006: p.82) describe a theme as a 'patterned response' or meaning that is acquired from the data whilst informing the research question. In order to do this I firstly familiarised myself with the data and looked for a patterned response to enable construction of the themes. The themes were:

Role play scenarios and props

Socio-cultural influences

Behaviour

Modelling

Limitations in practice
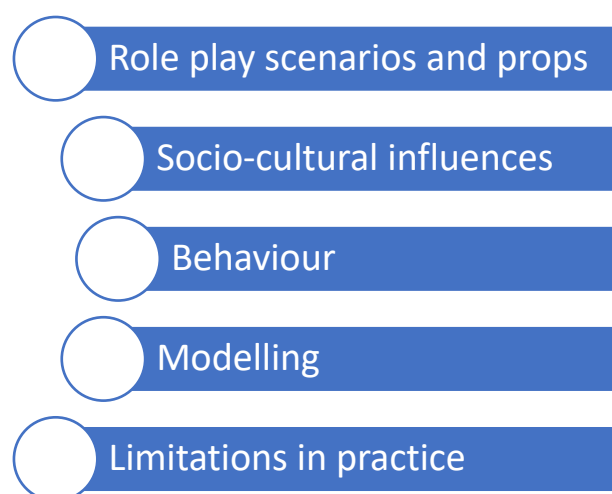
Figure 5.1.1 Five identified themes from focus group transcript

5.1.1 Role play scenarios and props

Purpose is shared as a starting point for the discussion which led quickly to role play scenarios and props being debated. Within this theme participant M suggests in her experience that *'in role play it's often a specific role play scenario like a doctors' surgery. I know they can imagine but they are limited to what they can do.'* Participant J agrees, *'Yes, there's always a specific focus. Some people perceive role play as a box of hats. There's a place for that but with more focus they get more out of it.'* She then gave an example *'because if they're a fireman then they're a fireman and they'll save someone and that's it.'* This view is agreed with and it was noted that:

> *...they don't have to dress up to be role playing. Today there are puppets and other things. With a Year One class I gave them two pictures of aliens to look after for the day and the things they were doing were amazing. They didn't have anywhere to dress up, they were teaching the little aliens all sorts of new things. We thought we'd lost one of the aliens and the whole class was in panic.*

This was an example in which the teacher had created a scenario that led to the children having the opportunity to be imaginative without an actual role play are being created and minimal props used.

Participant S1 concurs with this and suggests:

> *They carry on role play anywhere really, whether it's indoors or outdoors or on the playground. It's not only that the purpose of role play is dressing up. If they're on the playground and they've made up a game they've made up themselves, I don't think the only purpose is dressing up.*

Participant J puts forward the idea of hot seating as a type of role play that she uses regularly.

> *We do a lot of hot seating. We use masks. I suppose the use of masks from a story like 'Billy Goats Gruff' is quite limited then. We still do it even though it is quite limited but the children get a lot out of it, vocabulary wise and feelings and things because they become, they start off being Big Billy Goat Gruff but then in the end its sometimes about their own feelings and how they are feeling about things and situations.*

The facilitator challenges her on what she means by 'limits' and her response is *'I think if you give them, like we were saying about the fireman, the fireman costume. For some children it's a fireman costume, you're a fireman. For other children you're a fireman and a teacher.'*

There appears to be a suggestion here that for some children the dressing up clothes and props restrict the play to the role being intended but other children will adapt the props and use their imagination. Two further examples were given: *'It's like you have a banana and a banana can be a banana or a phone or that sort of thing'* and *'I find especially the girls like Little Red Riding Hood's costume. It is Little Red Riding Hood's costume but you can be anything. Maybe a princess*? It appears that story and the characters within stories are influencing the group, but this is not drawn out specifically in terms of any of the participants stating that they base their role play on story.

Props seem to be an area which cause some confusion. Participant V suggests:

> *They do use props and you give them their own props to use after a story. You'll observe them for five minutes and they are doing really well. You go to something else, come back and it's not a rocket anymore it's the 112 into town or they're on the bus with their baby and other things from the classroom. It just goes quickly off.*

This appears that the participant is suggesting that there is a 'correct' way to play with the props and that she is somewhat disappointed when they don't use them in the way they are intended. Participant S outlines an INSET training session she has attended in which the facilitator asked them to make an underwater adventure area *'we had to dress up in the drapes and hats and things. It was fantastic. They were just given to us. We just had to use our imagination. It was really good.'* Here imagination is mentioned, and it seems to be that this is the case when there is flexibility in the play rather than in the formal settings. They start to draw on the idea of imagination and giving the children 'situations' that are more imaginative. Participant V suggests:

> *How many times though in a half term can you go into a shop or a cafe? It gets boring. How boring is it? You know, that cafe in the classroom, day in, day out. In the first week it's great because the children have made all their own props and can't wait to use them, but after a week, after they've all had a turn it becomes something else.*

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This idea of choice is supported by participant T *'Yes, and that's why I think the most important thing is asking the children what they want.'* She goes on to state that as the children will be spending a lot of time in the role play area she didn't think that:

> They'd want to create what I'd want to create so at the start of every term we always discuss what things will be appropriate to go in the role play area and we have a vote. I think that is the most important part of building up the role play area with the children. What they want, not what we want.

Participant T indicates her preference of using *'role play boxes so you just take out boxes and if they see something they want in the box they can just choose and it becomes whatever they want it to be.'* One supply teacher says that she has seen lots of different role play situations in different classrooms but they are *'Pretty boring things really like shops, vets, florists. There's a castle sometimes'* but also notes that *'Some classes don't actually have role play areas.'* This is perhaps a surprising revelation as this is an expectation of the Foundation Phase but it is followed with a comment from participant S in which she states that,

> Even though children get older, often Junior children haven't got role play areas but if those Junior children came into the infant class that is usually straight where they head and they play. They head straight for it.

This suggests that role play is something that is desired by children even those outside of the Foundation Phase.

5.1.2 Socio-cultural influences

What is interesting is that the participants tend to draw on their own families and children for the role play examples that in several examples they discuss rather than the children that they have taught in their settings. One example is when participant S explains that she bought a pram and doll for her nephew which is what he wanted and how the reaction from her father was a negative one *'What have you bought him that for?'* She goes on to state that:

> *'I don't know where he's got it from because we have no other babies in the family so he's not copying. He's the first grandchild. He's not copying off anyone. He doesn't watch television so this has come to him naturally. Unless he's seen people out walking around but he obviously knows at such a young age that he needs to care for this doll. He knows right from wrong already at that age.'*

This is echoed by participant J who suggests that she gave her son a doll and a pram and her son adapted to what to do with the doll *'he just knew, he just knew what to do. The baby needed a nappy on and needed taking for a walk and he just knew.'* However, she also states that 'I didn't care what my husband said I just wanted to do the right thing.' This is the second example of a family member not necessarily agreeing with the reaction to a boy playing with a doll and pram but depicts a sense that social-cultural influences are noteworthy. Therefore, the children are bringing a sense of their unquestioned assumptions stemming from their own community's practice and influencing the opportunity for adults to look from a different angle. It appears from these examples that the adults are making assumptions and when the unexpected happens they are moving outside a comfort zone.

5.1.3 Behaviour

Adult intervention is mentioned in relation to the area being 'messy' or noisy, or the children bringing their play out of the area into the classroom. This appears to be an issue for some of the participants. Participant S1 suggests that adult interaction is otherwise *'unnecessary'*, especially as they've *'no idea how they'd evaluate it.'* This is a very honest reflection and one that is not contradicted by anyone else in the group. The idea of control is raised by participant M:

> *This will sound bad now but the only time we intervene is if it gets out of control. Usually when the boys are in there, it is usually the boys, I'm sad to say. They get the frying pan and it's not the frying pan anymore it's a big gun they've seen on telly and then they're a gangster and I feel that's my time to step in and say stop it or whichever way I thought was appropriate.*

This suggests what is considered poor behaviour issues are linked to props.

In terms of behaviour the group also discuss the fact there is nearly always a 'leader' in the role play *'They like to direct don't they?* The facilitator raises the question: *'Are they collaborating then?'* Participant S1 offers: *'If we go down to the forest and they are collaborating they usually end up working really well together to build or create something together.'* This is an interesting comment as the discussion has appeared to move away from role play and instead moved to collaborative play activity outside of role play, with a specific directed task.

5.1.4 Modelling

There are a few direct comments about modelling and this is why it has been drawn out as a them. Participant M suggests that in role play that **'We should just let them make it up, see what they come up with. Rather than where you have to demonstrate for them what to do.'** Participant V however appears concerned about *'there being a big thing about modelling the wrong thing though isn't there?'* She suggests that she was:

> *actually going in and my boss has said it a few times with a role play area. 'Well I hope you've been in there now Mrs J*****. I hope you've shown them how to play correctly.*

Participant S1 suggests that in the role play she notes that some children will just sit at a desk and *'they are you, maybe doing the register.'* She explains and shows concern for the fact that if she should go over to a child for example in her class who is playing with the lego and pretending to be a pilot that *'If I dare to go and speak to him or model with him, it's gone then, he'll put it away because he's not ready to talk about it.'* She seems to be rather perturbed by this and this suggests her intention for modelling was not appropriate at this time though it doesn't appear she is clear on why this is the case

There is more discussion about modelling within the group, with participant T suggesting that this is an area that is not straight forward for the group to manage. There is a feeling from participant V that she thinks it should be *'just a play area rather than the correct thing.'* Here again we are reminded that there is a 'correct' way to play, likely influenced by outside pressures. This links to the next theme of limitations in practice.

5.1.5 Limitations in practice

Within the previous theme it was suggested that the head teacher had influenced the teacher by her comments. This idea is further reinforced by Participant V:

> *I do worry sometimes that my boss will come in and she'll say "Right Mrs. J***** what exactly are your children getting out of this specifically from your planning" because you can't say, next week we're going to do this and this. How do you know?*

The facilitator responds to this by asking what she would say in response and she says:

> *What I'd like to say is stand and watch and observe for yourself but I couldn't because that's rude isn't it?*

Participant M agrees '*Yes, observe the interaction, the language skills, the enjoyment the fantasy and just being happy.'* Participant V adds, *'Now that's what my boss would be like.'*

These comments show a tension on the part of the teachers with senior management around role play. They see the dilemma between accountability therefore seemingly hoping the Head teacher won't ever ask them what they think the children have gained from it. This is followed by a concern by participant J *'I sometimes think of parents coming in if it's messy. That they think, that they wonder what it's like in the classroom, but the children know.'* This concern possibly becomes a limitation to the role play area if there is apprehension around it.

A further limitation that is brought up is that of choice. The group recognise that choice is not always the basis of the classroom organisation and appear frustrated with this.

> *Yes, like today we've got free choice and four of you can go in there and the next day it will be green group or children from another class. It depends. They can't go in there all the time.*

When the facilitator prompts them with asking why they think this is the case participant S1 answers *'Ticking boxes. Making sure every child goes in and has a role play experience.'*

Participant V offers the position that space is an issue and that not everyone is *'lucky enough to have a big space for role play'* and '*There might be one role play area for four or five classes and they get timetabled to when they can use it.'* Participant S then suggests that *'It might not always look like they have role play. If they have puppets etc. In boxes.'*

Therefore, the idea that 'ticking boxes' by having groups rotate to meet a target suggests a pressure put on the teachers to conform and led to one comment in which participant J felt *'very limited in what you can do.'*

5.1.6 Summary of Phase Four

In summary, across the targeted professional early years group they provide an opportunity to have a range of views from a range of settings. One view offers the possibility that dressing up clothes and props restrict the play. This is interesting as it is in direct contrast to what has been noted previously in phases one to three. There is some influence from stories but this is not a focus in the discussion. There is a link to the reported findings in school A where there are suggestions that there is a 'correct' way to play with props. The disappointment is palpable when the children do not play with the props appropriately or the props are taken from the role play area for which they are intended. There is a strong sense on the data from

school A and from the focus group that there is a 'correct' way to play but there appears to be some concern on how to manage supporting this.

There is an indication through the discussion that where role play situations are provided, they are generally more focussed on 'real world' settings than 'fantasy' although the 'real world' settings are acknowledged to be 'boring.' It could be argued that the discussion centred around the participants families rather than the school setting, but this was noted as what the early educators would have liked to have seen in practice if they were not constrained in their settings. There is also a link to phase one (WAG documentation) in the implication that role play is a collaborative play activity focussed on a directed task. Limitations from senior management are highlighted in this phase and emerge as problematic for the group. One of the limitations links to their awareness of the children having or not having choice. The lack of choice in both school A and B was also evident but interestingly the early educators in those settings appear to intimate that choices are offered. They appear unaware that the choice is directed by them and that they 'control' the choice in terms of what the area looks like, who is directed to the play area and what and how they would wish the children to play. The participants in the focus group seem to appear to acknowledge that this is something that they do but link this to the fact that they are directed in their behaviour by outside limitations.

5.2 Phase Five: General scoping survey

The general scoping survey comprised ten questions (see appendix three) and was distributed to a purposive sample of sixty two schools (infant and primary) to Early Years' teachers in one local authority via Survey Monkey. Nine responses were received, one of the responses was partially completed in welsh and has been translated

for the purpose of this thesis, giving an overall response rate of 14.5%. All teachers answered the ten questions. The designated play areas within the classrooms have been described in the scoping survey as the 'role play areas' as this is terminology frequently used and is familiar to the teachers. It encompasses both the 'real world' and 'fantasy' areas set up within the role play area.

The first two questions set the scene in terms of factual information regarding length of time teaching of each early educator and of specific Early Years/ Foundation Phase training undertaken. The following eight questions asked for more specific detail about individuals practice within the designated role play area in settings. Data collected in question one was in regard to how long early educators had been teaching overall and then more specifically in the Foundation Phase. Seven of the nine participants had more than ten years teaching experience in any age group with only one participant having five to ten years' experience and a further participant having less than five years teaching experience. One participant had significant teaching experience of over twenty years with no participants having over twenty years experience specifically in the Foundation Phase. Four participants had between eleven and twenty years of Foundation Phase experience with two participants having five to ten years and three participants having had less than five years Foundation Phase teaching experience.

Question two yielded interesting results in terms of specific early training received by the teachers. Four teachers had no specific early years training experience when in Higher Education (HE) with only one having had any training in the last two years. Four out of nine participants indicated that early years training had taken place as in-school training within the last two years, with two participants noting that they had

undergone in-school training in the last three to five years. One noted that they had had in-school training within the last six to ten years with one noting they had no in-school training. All but one of the participants noted that they had had some form of Local Authority training within the last five years, six within the last two years and two within the last three to five years. Local Authority training has the highest number of participants of any of the categories. Conference training accounted for training for two participants within the last two years whilst two participants noted that they had other forms of Early Years training.

All participants were asked, in question three, about the importance of four different identified categories of play. Structured 'real world' role play and structured 'imaginative/ fantasy' play were both seen as extremely important by all nine teachers. Out of the nine teachers, five of them believed that unstructured 'real world' role play was extremely important with four of them who believed that it had some importance. Six out of the nine participants felt unstructured 'imaginative/ fantasy' role play was extremely important while three of them felt it had some importance. Five out of the nine teachers felt that unstructured 'real world' role play was extremely important while four of them felt it had some importance. None of the teachers believed that any of the categories of play had little importance or weren't important at all. This data is interesting in the fact that the teachers felt that structured role play was extremely important and that the importance of unstructured role play in both real world and imaginative/ fantasy settings was less important.

Question 4 asked teachers if they had any areas set up specifically in their setting for encouraging play through a) real world or b) fantasy play and if so to give a brief

description of them and what they were called. Five out of the nine teachers specified that the role play areas set up were linked to a theme, topic or story with two teachers specifying that the role play area was changed termly. It could perhaps be suggested that this was the case in more than two of the settings as the number of examples that were given in most cases suggested that the role play area was changed during the year. From the data gathered it appeared that the majority of the teachers had multiple role play areas set up which were structured 'real world' areas e.g. travel agents/ doctor's surgery/ baby clinic/ post office/ garden centre/ space centre/ castle and with shops and a home corner both being highlighted by three teachers. One teacher noted that she had a story area with books, puppets, small world figures and dressing up clothes which appeared to encourage more 'fantasy' play alongside another example of a magic corner though no further information was given.

Another teacher noted that they had a stage area where the children acted out stories they had heard with a further teacher giving one example of an outside role play house. This was the only specific mention of an outside role play area in any of the teacher's settings. The consistent theme for the teachers appears to be the importance of linking the role play area to the theme, topic or story that is currently being taught in the Reception classroom. The example that follows from one teacher indicated the link to the role play area to the theme, topic or story, *'The Gruffalo' and a 'Travel Agents' as the overall class theme is 'Our World.'* There appears to be an overlap here between the 'real world' and story as a focus with story appearing to emerge as 'real world' rather than 'fantasy.'

Question six yielded data on how the role play area was organised. Eight teachers noted that the children had free choice at designated times with two teachers additionally

noting the children had free choice at any time. Two teachers stated that the role play areas were timetabled and four teachers noted that they directed children into groups for this activity. One teacher noted that they felt all the categories could be applicable depending on whether the area was being used by Nursery or Reception children and also according to the time of day. This perhaps explains why there are ten responses in total to the two free choice questions (at any time/ at designated times) as the teacher has likely responded to both for differing situations.

Question seven asked the teachers to respond to what they believe are the strongest factors that influence children in their 'real world' play or 'fantasy' play. The responses are reported in table 5.2.1 in order of how they were recorded by each respondent.

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Respondent 1	Resources made available to them	Children's own interests and confidence	Peers
Respondent 2	Stimulation	Imagination	Friendship
Respondent 3	Experience	Variety of resources	Language skills
Respondent 4	Going with children's own ideas	Enhancing areas to stimulate their thinking	Having a role model
Respondent 5	Personal experience	Modelled talk	Provided resources
Respondent 6	Modelled behaviour	Own experiences	Peer behaviour
Respondent 7	Real - life experiences	Language development	Relevance to children's interests

Respondent 8	Choice of interesting resources	Adult interaction	Dress up clothes
Respondent 9	Home	Stories read to them	DVDs

Table 5.2.1: Respondent responses to question seven (general scoping survey)

Following familiarising myself with the data set which provided valuable orientation to the raw data responses that were grouped together, generating from my initial interpretations, I regrouped and relinked in order to associate meaning between the responses as a whole. As a result of this and discussion with a professional colleague, categories were generated which appeared to be alike or have links to each other in terms of key words. I grouped the three strongest factors that the teachers believed influenced children in their 'real world' play or 'fantasy' play into four overarching themes (figure 5.2.1) which I constructed from the data set. The themes were actively derived.in order to use the data set to answer the research questions.

The themes were identified as:

- Relationships

- Experience

- Modelling

- Resources

I considered that I may need a miscellaneous theme to incorporate the categories but felt this was unnecessary.
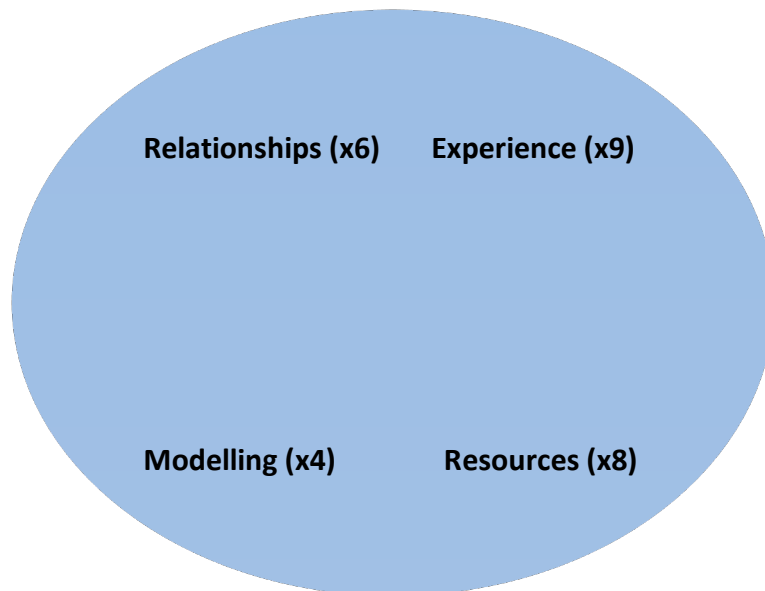
Figure 5.2.1: Categories generated from teacher responses to the three strongest factors teachers believed influenced children in their 'real world' or 'fantasy' play

Firstly, the theme of relationships was constructed from the data based on initial groupings. Six responses out of the twenty seven (22.2%) responses were considered to fall within this category. It is clear that teachers considered relationships a substantial factor in influencing children in their role play.

Secondly, the theme of experience was constructed as the most identified theme, with nine responses out of a possible twenty seven responses (33.3%). Four of these

responses were directly noted as being experience and included personal experience, own experience and real-life experience. An additional five were included in this category as it was felt that responses of *'relevance to children's interests,'* *'own interests and confidence'* and *'children's own ideas'* were linked to their experiences. Language skills and language development were also considered to fall into this theme.

The third theme of modelling yielded four responses out of twenty seven (14.8%) including role modelling, modelled talk, modelled behaviour and *'having stories read to them,'* i.e. modelled.

The fourth theme constructed was that of resources. Altogether eight responses out of twenty seven (29.6%) were attributed to this theme. There were four direct responses to teachers believing resources were influential with teacher's also suggesting *'dress up clothes'* and *'DVDs'* and another teacher suggesting '*enhancing areas to stimulate thinking.'* In addition, imagination was considered to fall into this category as it is my belief that it is a resource used by children in their role play.

In summary, the theme of experience generated a third of the responses given with the theme of resources generating marginally less. Together these two themes present just over two thirds of the responses showing these are recognised as strong factors which are seen as significantly important in influencing children in their role play by the teachers. The theme of relationships generated just over a quarter of responses but included relationships between peers, adults and children and drew on relationships at home and therefore out of the early years setting. The theme of modelling yielded the least amount of responses from the teachers.

In question eight, teachers were asked what they considered to be the role of the adult in children's role play or fantasy play. Again, several familiar themes were identified and repeated. Six of the nine teachers considered that modelling was a role of the adult with a further seventh teacher suggesting they should *'lead play'* and *'show a good example.'* At this point the modelling was taken to mean role modelling by the teacher for the children with one teacher mentioning both role modelling but also the modelling of how to use resources effectively. Only one other teacher suggested resources were the role of the adult, but this was suggested in terms of providing and not modelling the resources which is different. A further suggestion by one teacher was that they should *'supply experiences'* with another suggesting they should be part of the play. Two teachers offered the words *'facilitate'* and '*facilitator.'* With one of them advocating they should *'facilitate exemplar play.'* A further suggestion made by one teacher is that they should *'wonder out loud and support'* this could perhaps be interpreted as the teacher guiding the play the way they feel it is appropriate or perhaps indicating scenarios. Environment appeared to be linked to modelling in terms of the teacher who took the children to a real garden centre to have a *'real'* understanding of the *'functions of a garden centre, roles of people and what it sold.'* It was suggested that the role of the adult was to provide a *'stimulating and imaginative role play area'* but in a *'safe and secure manner.'*

Direct links to language were noted through four responses from the teachers, including feeding language, use of appropriate vocabulary, and good speaking and listening. One teacher noted a direct link to language and observation. Observation was a word noted by four teachers as being a role of the adult in children's role play or fantasy play with one of the teachers going further in suggesting they would record the observations. One

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teacher also used the phrase *'so that their level of understanding can be assessed'* with another seeing themselves as an '*assessor.'*

Observation is considered to be important to the teachers but assessing play does not appear to be as important. The reason for this is not clear from the data, but it may have something to do with the fact that perhaps teachers had a more informal approach to play than other areas of the curriculum. It could be proposed that observation aligns with the teachers' notion of appropriate behaviour.

Behaviour was drawn out as a key word within this question and linked with the word *'appropriate.'* A further phrase linked to behaviour was *'intervene if necessary'* suggesting there were times when intervention was necessary. Two teachers appeared to be conscious that there were appropriate times for joining in with the play, one suggesting that it should be after taking the '*lead from the child'* and another clarifying that this should only be done if the adult was *'not taking over.' 'Co-operation'* was an interesting choice of word used by one teacher. Overall, the answers to question eight appear to suggest that modelling play is important to teachers, therefore suggesting that there is a 'right way' to play but with an acknowledgment from two of the nine teachers that it has to be instigated by the children *'appropriately.'*

Question nine asked teachers directly how they monitored the designated role play areas. Observation was noted seven times within the responses with suggestions of it being both formal and incidental with both the teacher and LSA observing. One teacher specified it was the LSAs role to observe through a grid system, though they did not state what this system was. A further mention was made of 'tick sheets' which were

used as a record of who had played in the role play area, maybe suggesting that each child should play in there at certain times. One teacher noted that observation was of the class in general, whilst two stated that notes were taken, one of these teachers also suggested photos were taken and another suggested filming took place on the iPad. It is not clear from the information regarding the iPad whether the filming was completed by the children or the adults. One teachers' comment pertained to observation without *'disturbing'* the children. This comment is contrast to two teachers who suggest they would join in the play with one taking this further by suggesting *'steering it in a different direction'* if they felt *'the play is not appropriate.'*

One teacher advised that monitoring took the form of *'in class supervision by TA and teachers'* which appears to suggest it was more behaviour orientated and supervisory in nature rather than monitoring. Three teachers advised that the children would be included in the monitoring process, through feedback from them, interaction with them and talking to the children about what they enjoy in the area. Only one teacher implied that there was no monitoring taking place as the only response given was that they *'plan to assess.'*

Question ten asks teachers to give an example of an instance/ issue that may arise when children are using role play areas that the teacher felt would require adult intervention. Comments pertaining to inappropriate behaviour were made explicitly by six of the nine teachers. One teacher suggests that it is *'boys in particular'* that display behaviour *'which is not suitable for the classroom.'* The teacher states that they would intervene as the *'behaviour is disruptive to others and can be dangerous to play inside.'* An example of this is given as *'especially if there is a chase between goodies and baddies!'* Other

examples given by a second teacher pertain to issues with *'fighting, knights and chasing animals.'* A third teacher suggests that the children could be *'acting out inappropriate behaviour they may have witnessed outside school.'* Another teacher gives an example of a child using resources in an inappropriate way or not being able to share the resources therefore becoming a behaviour issue.

There are two examples given of language possibly requiring adult intervention. One is regarding children not using correct vocabulary or language patterns with the other being *'when the language turns to English and the dialogue needs to be led.'* The assumption here is that this teacher is from a welsh medium school where children would be expected to speak in Welsh. If children were speaking English, then the teacher would intervene and revert back to Welsh.

There is one suggestion made that adult intervention would be required to look for specific assessment opportunities. Another suggests they would intervene to give some ideas to the children and to *'encourage.'* There is one further suggestion *'in woodland area'* where the meaning is not immediately clear. I have interpreted it as the adult possibly needing to intervene in terms of safety or support.

5.2.1 Summary of Phase Five

The purpose of this phase was to explore a broader range of views across a teacher community and in summary of the scoping survey as a whole there are some key discussion points that can be considered and threads or anomalies between questions drawn out. The views of the early educators support what has been previously discussed in terms of there being a feeling that all structured role play was more important than

unstructured role play. Again, there is a strong indication of a theme, topic or story being the starting point for the role play. Most of the role play areas appeared to be set up for 'real world' with no specific fantasy role play areas created. Instead, these fantasy areas seemed to emerge by default, for example through the story/ book corner and use of props. This corresponds with what was drawn out in the data from school B.

Attention is drawn to the idea of 'choice' as in the previous phases but here the majority of responses suggest that the role play area is either timetabled or children are directed there. In response to the three strongest factor early educators believed influenced children in their 'real world' or 'fantasy' play, four themes were identified. They were relationships, experience, resources and modelling. All of these themes have previously been drawn out in phases one to four. In particular, teacher modelling in terms of both how to play and how to use resources appropriately emerges as a clear focus and aligns with the discussions that took place in the focus group. Observation is given more importance in the scoping survey than in the previous phases with language being highlighted as a focus for the observation. It was recognised that adult intervention was required at times with behaviour being cited as the main reason for the intervention. Examples given appear to be considered poor behaviour because of the nature of the play, therefore it was not the play that was expected or had been directed. These discussion points will be drawn out more fully in the discussion chapter (chapter six).

5.3 Phase Six: School C

The purpose of the sixth and final phase of the research was to explore behaviours in more depth in one practice setting. School C is an Infants only school (aged 3-7) with approximately 135 pupils. It is situated in one of the top ten most deprived LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) according to Welsh government statistics (Welsh Government, 2014), with 16% of children and young people in the Authority living in severe poverty (Save the Children, 2012). Just below an average of 50% of pupils at the school over the past 6 years (2010-2016) are known to have been eligible for FSM, as compared with the LA average of 24.5% and the Wales average of 20.2%. Nevertheless, the percentage of the school's pupils achieving at least level 5 of the expected outcomes in the Foundation Phase areas of learning has averaged at just below 85% in recent years, somewhat higher than the Local Authority average of 81.3% and the Wales average of 83.9%. Average attendance over the past 6 years for the school has been just over 92% as compared with the LA average of 93.4%. A very high average of pupils at the school received support under School Action, almost two thirds of the LA average. Over the past 4 years over a third of pupils designated as EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners in bands A to C (the lowest levels of English) have been identified with the LA having a significantly smaller percentage. Percentage figures have been kept deliberately rounded and nonspecific to ensure the school could not be identified within the LA. Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) has averaged around 18:1 in the past 6 years; the Reception class where data were collected had a ratio of 2 adults to 23 pupils (12:1).

A 2007 Estyn report awarded the school a Grade 2/Good status (good features and no important shortcomings) overall, noting that the

> *School provides its pupils with a safe, caring environment. The quality of*
> *teaching is good and pupils have a wide range of experiences.*

The school was again awarded 'Good' status by Estyn across all key questions in 2012/13. Likewise, the school was placed in Standards group 1 (on a scale of 1 to 4) of the National School Categorisation System in 2015, indicating that it performed strongly against agreed measures as compared with other schools across Wales.

Since September 2011 the Foundation Phase Curriculum has been in place at the school, with the aim of providing a stimulating and creative curriculum. The school website states that,

> *Children are taught through a topic based approach which aims to engage the children's interest and natural curiosity, as well as helping to make learning meaningful and relevant for them.*

English is the first language of the school, with Welsh taught as a second language, particularly through the use of incidental Welsh. The school is housed in a late nineteenth century building which has been extensively refurbished over the years. Accommodation consists of spacious and well-resourced classrooms, a large hall and large playgrounds all equipped with play apparatus. The school garden and a large wooded area adjacent to the school facilitate outdoor learning opportunities. The Reception class, where the research took place, included 23 pupils, a newly qualified teacher, who was a graduate of a three year BA(Ed) programme, and a well-established learning support assistant (LSA) who had worked at the school for over eight years. The research schedule for School C is located in appendix three. The designated role play area was situated within the reception classroom and accessed through an open doorway. It had previously been a large storage cupboard with a window opening but had been turned into a role play area by the previous teacher. It was not easy to observe activity within the role play area unless you entered the doorway or stood directly at the

window. The video camera used in data collection was placed just outside the window opening not to obstruct the children and their play.

5.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews took place in a Reception class in school C and the questions asked are noted in appendix one. One experienced learning support assistant (LSA) of over ten years was interviewed at the beginning of the research process. She was not re-interviewed at the end of the process as she was not involved in the role play area during the research period in any capacity. The newly qualified teacher was interviewed twice with semi-structured questions, once at the beginning of the research and again, six months later, following the end of the research, a six week holiday and the beginning of a new academic year. The first interviews with the teacher and LSA will be reported followed by the reporting of the second and final semi-structured interview with the teacher which took place after a period which allowed opportunities for reflection. Themes are drawn out and constructed as part of the findings. These are then exemplified and discussed across the dataset of the three interviews.

Two key themes were drawn out of the initial and only semi-structured interview held with the Reception class LSA at the beginning of the research, these were *observation* and *housekeeping*, figure 5.3.1. The LSA indicated in the semi-structured interview that she believed that the purpose of the role play area was *'so children can experience different things and learn through obviously acting out and imaginative play.'* Having experience of different roles e.g. a shopkeeper and customer was additionally seen as important although role play outside of the role play area was discouraged. Two main themes were drawn out of the semi-structured interview with the LSA and can be seen in Figure 5.3.1 below.

Figure 5.3.1: Key themes drawn out of LSA semi-structured interview

Following the first interview with the class teacher, several themes were drawn out from her responses and based on my understanding as researcher they appeared to fall into thematic categories. Themes included those seen in the LSA interview of *observation* and *housekeeping* but the themes of *behaviour, use of props, adult direction* and *modelling* were also added, see figure 5.3.2. Through the first of the semi-structured interviews with the teacher it became clear that the intended focus, from her perspective, for the role play area within the setting, would be related to a class theme. This was decided by the teacher, based on a class story or theme, with the LSA and children giving some input into the props that would be used there. This matches the response from the LSA and is important in terms of how the early educator's role shapes creativity and imagination in both 'real world' and 'fantasy settings.'

For the teacher the purpose and therefore shaping of role play was illustrated through the development of life skills and practising them. She suggested that following a visit to a garden centre the children could practice the life skills learned there to *'help their imagination and just playing creatively with one another and develop social skills I think too.'* In terms of the roles of those within the role play area the LSA suggested that

the children had *'some input'* into physically structuring the area in terms of buying resources/ props although the theme is determined by the teacher and links to the class theme. When asked about how the role play area is set up the response was *'It's just what works I suppose.'* The LSA stated that she doesn't remember having any training on setting up a role play area and that instead the role play areas are repeated each year and that *'we just know what to do.'*

Resources appear to feature strongly in both interviews and seem to suggest a measure of whether the role play area is a success or not. In terms of her role in monitoring and evaluation of the role play area the LSA states that this is *'not really'* done by her.

Figure 5.3.2: Key themes drawn out of first teacher semi-structured interview

Following the second and final semi-structured interview with the Reception class teacher, at the end of the research, I added an additional theme, *observation of self,* see figure 5.3.3.

Figure 5.3.3: Key themes drawn out of second teacher semi-structured interview

The second semi-structured interview with the teacher was carried out six months after the initial semi-structured interview took place. This was planned so that the teacher had the opportunity to reflect on her practice. She also had a new class, giving her the opportunity to amend anything she felt was appropriate. In terms of her understanding of the purpose of the role play her language had changed slightly from the first interview in that she now wanted the area to be *'inviting and comfortable'* but resources still appeared to be important as she wanted to ensure the children knew *'what things are for.'* She had continued to plan the area in line with the story emphasising the fact that *'they could act out the story or become more familiar with the props in it'* because she was *'conscious of making it worthwhile in there.'*

The teacher discusses the importance of confidence building as a perceived purpose of role play *'I want them to be really confident.'* The theme for the current term was the home corner with the intention of later supplementing it with props for when the class story 'Peace at Last' is introduced. Another purpose identified by the teacher was to make the children *'comfortable and confident in the classroom because it's reflecting*

their home environment.' She goes on to suggest that some skills are *'just haphazard but then others you plan for'* but does not identify which skills are planned for.

Behaviour was a noteworthy theme in both teacher interviews but within the theme of behaviour there are two strands that can be drawn out. Firstly, that of the teacher acknowledging and noting children's behaviour when they are in the role play area and secondly how the teacher perceives her own behaviour affects the children in the same setting. She suggests that the role play area gives the children freedom *'that's why the bad behaviour happens. It's an excuse almost.'* She goes on to indicate that conflict is caused because of limited resources *'so they're always going to have to share and things, they don't ask politely, they just pull at them if they can't get a thing.'* The teacher clarifies that she thinks the role play area creates more behaviour issues than in any other areas in the classroom because this is where their *'personalities can kind of come out.'* She draws a comparison between the role play corner and the construction corner seemingly happy with the fact that in the construction corner they do as they are directed and *'build'* not instead pretending to be *'builders or pretend to be space men.'* Interestingly, the *use of props* appears to have a close link with the behaviour theme.

The teacher identifies her role in influencing children's play *'because otherwise it doesn't develop.'* She repeatedly talks about role modelling though this could perhaps be described as her directing rather than role modelling in its most literal sense. The teacher describes a monitoring style of behaviour that she adopts, for example, to check if '*they're using everything properly.'* Also, she notes she has taught them how many children are allowed in the role play area at any one time.

The teacher suggests that she plans in line with a story as she sees it important that the children can act out a story or become more familiar with the props she provides for them. When asked directly about planning the teacher states that *'my plan at the moment is just, it's just lots of modelling.'* When asked if this modelling was to be completed by herself or the LSA or both she replied: *'Just taking it in turns I suppose, if we can see something then maybe we will go in and do some modelling.'* When asked whether she felt any training she had been given has particularly had an impact or prepared her for role play she responds with *'Not the everyday, with role play, not looking at the theorists, you know.'*

5.3.2 Non-participant video observations

This section considers the examination of seven non-participant video sessions, with a total of 211 minutes and 42 seconds, being analysed against the Flanders Interaction (IA) system (1970:34) which I adapted to include three additional categories. The 13 categories can be seen below with the additional three categories identified as 11, 12 & 13. The purpose of the additional three categories was discussed in the previous chapter with a fuller explanation of each category.

1. Teacher accepts student feeling
2. Teacher praises student
3. Teacher use of student ideas
4. Teacher questions
5. Teacher lecturers
6. Teacher gives directions
7. Teacher criticizes student
8. Student response
9. Student-initiated response
10. Silence or confusion
11. *No teacher presence but engagement (additional category)*
12. *No teacher presence but disruptive behaviour (additional category)*
13. *No teacher or child interaction (additional category)*

Table 5.3.1: Categories based on the Flanders (IA) System with additional three categories

The data analysis process has explored each of seven sessions and unpicked each category in relation to each session yielding data on the interactions of early educators and how the children respond to these interactions. There has been an unpicking of the role of the teacher in terms of when she has been interacting or not interacting with the children. The interval coding system was undertaken every three seconds and required me to memorise and internalise the coding system.

The total time of each session is noted individually in both minutes and seconds along with an additional category which highlights when communication in the video clip cannot be understood in order to categorise it appropriately. Additional information is added to this category to describe whether the teacher was present or not in the role play area when the communication is not understood by the observer. Overall, in sessions 1 to 7 (omitting sessions 5A and 5B: see below) the communication is not understood for a minimal time of 33 seconds out of a total of 12,700 seconds analysis (0.25%) and is recorded as category 10 (silence and confusion) in the IA system. Categories 1- 9 (IA) include teacher interaction with the children in the role play area. There is a total of 1,170 seconds out of 12,720 seconds (9.2%) accounted for with teacher interaction. The three additional categories 11-13 (IA) system show no teacher interaction with 11,550 seconds out of 12,700 seconds (90.9%) accounting for this.

The length of sessions differed with the shortest being ten minutes in length (600 seconds) and the two longest sessions being fifty three minutes (3180 seconds) each in

length. Sessions started as the children were set off by the teacher following a carpet session with the whole class. Sessions were filmed to the nearest minute the role play area was left empty when the children left each session. If children left the role play area and did not return within a session then the video camera was switched off (this usually occurred when the teacher called the children out of the role play area.) Sessions were governed by the class timetable and the directions of the early educators. They were filmed over seven half days in one academic term.

There are seven sessions in total. However, in the table below additional A and B categories are added to session 5. This is because session five was felt to be a different type of session and therefore not directly comparable to the other sessions. Session 5 included the teacher taking the whole class into the role play area as a 'reopening' of the role play area as she wanted to show the children how to play there with the new props. The teacher instructed the class about the role play area for nearly 15 minutes when she then left the area directing one group to play there and taking the rest of the class with her. This was different to the examples in all the other clips where the teacher had directed small groups of children to the role play area to play without her or the TA present for the majority of the time. As a result, it was felt that it would be advantageous to extract session 5A from session 5 so it could compare more effectively with sessions 1 to 4, 6 & 7. Therefore, session 5 is the overall session (including both 5A and 5B). Session 5B is used as a comparison with the other sessions 1 to 4, 6 & 7 with 5A as the extract which shows the detail of the teacher with the whole class in the role play area.

Table 5.3.2 constitutes analysis of the data collected within the non-participant video sessions and summarises the interactions within the seven sessions into two main categories:

- teacher interaction

- no teacher interaction

Session	Total Time Mins/Secs/%	Teacher Interaction Mins/Secs/%	No Teacher Interaction Mins/Secs/%	Communication not understood
1	10 minutes 600 seconds 100%	- 3 seconds 0.5%	9 minutes 57 seconds 597 seconds 99.5%	0 minutes 0 seconds
2	15 minutes 900 seconds 100%	- 33 seconds 3.7%	14 minutes 27 seconds 867 seconds 96.3%	0 minutes 0 seconds
3	15 minutes 900 seconds 100%	- 48 seconds 5.3%	14 minutes 12 seconds 852 seconds 94.7%	0 minutes 6 seconds (no teacher present)
4	31 minutes 1860 seconds 100%	- 39 seconds 2%	30 minutes 21 seconds 1821 seconds 98.0%	0 minutes 3 seconds (with teacher present)
5	53 mins 3180 seconds 100%	17 minutes 6 seconds 1026 seconds 32.3%	35 minutes 54 seconds 2154 seconds 67.7%	0 minutes 9 seconds (with teacher presence)
5A	14 mins 39 seconds 879 seconds 100%	14 minutes 39 seconds 879 seconds 100%	0 minutes 0 seconds 0 seconds 0%	0 minutes 9 seconds (with teacher present)
5B	38 mins 21 sec 2301 seconds 100%	2 minutes 27 seconds 147 seconds 6%	35 minutes 54 seconds 2154 seconds 94%	0 minutes 0 seconds 0%
6	35 minutes 2100 seconds 100%	- 9 seconds 0.4%	34 minutes 51 seconds 2091 seconds 99.6%	0 minutes 0 seconds 0%

7	53 minutes 3180 seconds 100%	- 12 seconds 0.4%	52 minutes 48 seconds 3168 seconds 99.6%	0 minutes 15 seconds 0%

Table 5.3.2: Summary of teacher interaction/ no interaction

Sessions 1, 6 and 7 all show particularly low teacher interaction taking place in the role play area, 3 seconds out of 600 seconds (0.5%), 9 seconds out of 2100 seconds (0.4%) and 12seconds out of 3180 seconds respectively (0.4%). Session 2 and 4 also show low teacher interaction of 33 seconds out of 900 seconds (3.7%) and 39 seconds out of 1860 seconds (2%) respectively. Session 3 shows an increase to 48 seconds out of 900 seconds (5.3%) and there is a continued rise in 5B to 147 seconds out of 230 seconds 6% (just over 2 and a half minutes). This could perhaps be attributed to the fact that this session directly followed the teacher taught session (5A) and that the teacher was more aware of going into the area to check on the play and how the area and props were being used.

Overwhelmingly the data shows that that for the majority of time there is no teacher interaction in the role play area within the sessions observed. Overall, the time with no teacher interaction (keeping the whole of session 5) is a total of 11,550 seconds out of 12,720 seconds (90.6%). However, it should be noted that if session 5B replaces session 5 due to the anomaly in terms of regular practice (omitting session 5A) it stays the same with 11,550 seconds but out of 11,841seconds (3 hours 17 minutes and 21 seconds) resulting in a percentage of 97.5%.

Further data which indicates a colour coded breakdown of each observation session and the context of each interaction can be found in appendix four.

Table 5.3.3 below shows the relationship of each category 1 to 13 within each of the seven sessions with the addition of a breakdown of session 5 in the form of 5A and 5B that offer different opportunities to see session 5 in a more useful way to allow for further comparisons. The blue highlighted cells show where any seconds are attributed to one of the Flanders (IA) categories (including the three additional categories) within the table in sessions 1 to 7. The green highlighted cells show where seconds are noted within sessions 5A and 5 B. Where there is no colour attributed to a cell then no indicates no seconds are attributed to the category with each session. The colour purple highlights the total session time in seconds. The colours serve to present a visual representation of where seconds are attributed within the thirteen categories as individual sessions. These also serve as a focus for analysing notions of 'disruption' in the role play area and how these are interpreted or responded to by early years educators leading to a picture of what children's involvement in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play looks like.

Session	Teacher accepts student — Category 1	Teacher praises student — Category 2	Teacher use of student ideas — Category 3	Teacher questions — Category 4	Teacher lecturers — Category 5	Teacher gives directions — Category 6	Teacher criticizes student — Category 7	Student response — Category 8	Student-initiated response — Category 9	Silence or confusion — Category 10	No teacher presence (engagement) — Category 11	No teacher presence (disruptive behaviour) — Category 12	No teacher or child interaction (area empty) — Category 13	Total Session in seconds
1	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	3 secs 0.5%	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	585 secs 97.5%	0 secs	12 secs 2%	600 secs
2	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	12 secs 1.3%	0 secs	18 secs 2%	0 secs	3 secs 0.3%	0 secs	0 secs	804 secs 89%	39 secs 4.3%	24 secs 2.7%	900 secs

3	9 secs 1%	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	9 secs 1%	12 secs 1.3%	0 secs	12 secs 1.3%	6 sec 0.7%	6 secs 0.7%	819 secs 91%	0 secs	27 secs 3%	900 secs
4	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	15 secs 0.8%	9 secs 0.5%	9 secs 0.5%	3 secs 0.2%	0 secs	3 secs 0.2%	381 secs 20.5%	1425 secs 76.6%	15 secs 0.8%	186 0 secs
5	57 secs 1.8%	15 secs 0.5%	84 secs 2.6%	216 secs 6.8%	222 secs 7%	195 secs 6.1%	78 secs 2.5%	138 secs 4.3%	12 secs 0.4%	9 secs 0.3%	1701 secs 53.5%	402 secs 12.6%	51 secs 1.6%	318 0 secs
5A	*42 secs 4.8%*	*9 secs 1.0%*	*84 secs 9.6%*	*189 secs 21.5%*	*222 secs 25.2%*	*123 secs 14.0%*	*66 secs 7.5%*	*129 secs 14.7%*	*6 secs 0.7%*	*9 secs 1.0%*	*0 secs*	*0 secs*	*0 secs*	*879 secs*
5B	*15 secs 0.6%*	*6 secs 0.3%*	*0 secs*	*27 secs 1.2%*	*0 secs*	*72 secs 3.1%*	*12 secs 0.5%*	*9 secs 0.4%*	*6 secs 0.3%*	*0 secs*	*1701 secs 74%*	*402 secs 17.5%*	*51 Secs 2.2%*	*230 1 secs*
6	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	9 secs 0.4%	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	1203 secs 57.2%	18 secs 0.9%	870 secs 41.4%	210 0 secs
7	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	0 secs	6 secs 0.2%	0 secs	3 secs 0.1%	3 secs 0.1%	15 secs 0.5%	3129 secs 98.4%	15 secs 0.5%	9 Secs 0.3%	318 0 secs

Table 5.3.3: Breakdown of sessions and categories within Flanders (IA) System with additional three categories

5.3.2.1 Session One

In session one (600 seconds or 10 minutes) there are three categories that apply.

Category 11 (no teacher presence but engagement from the children) has the greatest number of seconds attributed to it (585). Out of a clip that lasts for 600 seconds with the children engaged in the role play area without being directed by the teacher for a majority of the time (97.5%). It is worth noting here that the play/ engagement on the part of the children does not necessarily follow the play which the teacher would expect but they are never the less engaged in their play.

There are 3 seconds (0.5%) of teacher direction (category 6) within this session when the teacher briefly directs 'yellow group' to join her in the main classroom and one child responds to her request. It is interesting that the 'direction' from the teacher is not to do with the role play area, in fact there is no teacher interaction apart from this request from her. The children are not monitored in any way by either the teacher or the TA in this ten minute session. It was considered that no disruptive behaviour took place within this observation. Category 13 (no teacher or child interaction in the role play area) takes up 12 seconds of the duration of the session

(2%).

5.3.2.2 Session Two

The duration of the second observation session is 900 seconds (15 minutes) with six categories recorded as being identified. Again, category 11, where there was no teacher or child interaction in the role play area but engagement taking place within the duration of the session is considerable and accounted for 804 seconds (89%).

This high proportion of time shows that the children are engaged in their role play albeit not necessarily engaging in the way they have been instructed by the teacher. Within observation session two a further 5 categories are recorded with the second highest being category 12 where 39 seconds of time is considered to be of disruptive behaviour, although proportionately this is very low (39 seconds out of 900 seconds) at 4.3%. The teacher is not present in the role play area when this disruptive behaviour is going on but is present in the main classroom. Category 13 notes that there is no teacher or child interaction for 24 seconds (2.7%) as all have left the area within the last minute and there was no one present in the role play area.

Category 6 shows 18 seconds of directionality by the teacher (2%) in terms of practicality, e.g. *"Pick up the chairs please?"* or a further example is when she calls the class to attention when requiring a response from them, *"Class, class"* the children respond *"Yes, yes."* This response accounts for the 3 seconds (0.3%) within category 8 (student response). It is clear from the children's response that this is a practised management strategy from the teacher and one to which they are well used and they therefore respond to her accordingly. The next and final direction from the teacher is:

> *I need you to tidy up – not a big tidy up, just pick the bits up off the floor and make it a bit tidy because it's going to be playtime. Whoever was in construction come and pick things up.*

The children respond to the teacher instruction in different ways. At this point, there are only four boys in the role play area. One boy immediately leaves the role play area. One boy picks up a pencil from the floor and puts it on the table in a clear attempt to 'tidy up' as instructed by the teacher. A second boy leaves the area. Two boys are left. One is spinning a globe on a table and looking at it intently. The boy who picked up the pencil leans on the same table but then quickly leaves the area. The fourth and final child follows after him. Three of the boys have made no attempt to tidy the area, the teacher does not return to the area before the boys leave and so is unaware of whether they have followed her instructions. Category 4 in which the teacher questions the children is recorded as one of the lowest at 12 seconds (1.3%) with category 8 (student response) recorded as the lowest at 3 seconds (0.3%).

5.3.2.3 Session Three

Observation session three echoes the finding of the previous two clips by also having a particularly high time accounted for in category 11 (no teacher present, children engaged in own activity) of 819 seconds out of 900 seconds (13 minutes 30 seconds out

of 15 minutes in total) 91%. However, a child outside of the role play area has reported to the teacher that there is fighting in the travel agents although there is no disruptive behaviour noted within this session. The teacher responds by standing outside the role play area and lectures in response (category 5) for a total of 9 seconds (1%). *"This is our travel agents – do you remember? (pause) You don't fight in travel agents."* There is no verbal response from any of the children which suggests her question is rhetorical.

The other incidents of interaction with the teacher include short periods of time (in total 12 seconds at 1.3%) for the teacher giving directions (category 6). One example is when she reminds the children it is nearly home time and she receives an almost repeated response from one child to her direction *"It's one more minute to home time."* During this third session one interaction with the children and teacher is through two student-initiated responses (category 9) where in the first instance one child engages the teacher in a discussion following the proffering of his finger to show her an injury and includes the teacher accepting student feeling (category 1) for

9 seconds (1%).

> Teacher: *"Oh dear. What's in there?"*
> Child: *"It was my nail, my nail did broke."*
> Teacher: *"Was it a splinter? Oh dear me- is it alright now?"*
> Child: *"Yes."*
> Teacher: *"Give me a thumbs up then. Cool."*

The second incidence of a student – initiated response, category 9, (interpreted as the student looking for a response from the early educator) is when a child in the role play area pushes a table up against the wall and speaks to the TA who is looking into the role play area through the window space in the wall *"Watch this miss!"* The child is not given any sort of response by the TA. In total, student-initiated response (category 9) accounted for 6 seconds (0.7%) within the session.

Throughout session three, student response, (category 8) accounts for 12 seconds (1.3%). Category 10 (silence or confusion) accounts for 6 seconds (0.7%) and category 13 (with no teacher or child interaction) and therefore the area empty, accounts for 27 seconds (3%) at the end of the session.

5.3.2.4 Session Four

Observation four is 1860 seconds or 31minute session which is just over double the length of sessions two and three. There is a disproportional increase in the 1425 seconds or 23 minutes 45 seconds attributed to category 12 (disruptive behaviour without the teacher presence) to 76.6%.

Category 11 (no teacher presence but engagement on the part of the children) is a smaller but sizeable category) in which the children are engaged in their own activity and in play (381 seconds or 6 minutes 21 seconds) equating to 20.5%. However, it should be noted here that the play did not relate to the setting of the travel agents. Instead, the children are absorbed by large laminated coloured 'spots' which they use to throw but with purpose, engaging in play together.

The remaining 39 seconds are made up of teacher lecturing (15 seconds/ 0.8%), teacher directional (9 seconds/ 0.5%) and teacher criticizing student (9 seconds/ 0.5%), student response, (3 seconds/ 0.2%), silence and confusion (3 seconds/ 0.2% with teacher presence). Two examples of comments the teacher makes to the children are:

> *"You can't do that in case you hurt someone ok?"*

> *"Please look after our travel agent. You're allowed to book holidays but don't throw things."*

Category 11 (no teacher presence but engagement on the part of the children) accounts for 381 (6 minutes and 21 seconds/ 20.5%). Category 12 with no teacher presence has a high proportion of time attributed to it, compared to the previous three sessions, of 1425 seconds (76.6%). It should be noted here that this session (four) is just over twice the length of sessions two and three and just over two thirds of the length of session one. A small proportion of time 15 seconds out of the 1860 seconds (0.8%) for the session are attributed to the role play area being left empty when the children leave the area (category 13).

5.3.2.5: Session Five (including 5A & 5B)

Session five will be discussed as a whole and then session 5A and session 5 B separately.

Observation session five is considerably different to the other six observation sessions as the teacher decides that she will take the whole class into the role play area following an update and refurbishment in the travel agent role play area. The role play area has been 'closed' to the children for a week so that the educators could review and change props and display materials. The reasons for this will be discussed later but the theme of the travel agent remains.

The teacher sits on a chair behind a table and the eighteen children attempt to seat themselves on the carpet area and at tables on chairs where there is limited space. The area is small in relation to the number of children (eighteen) entering with the teacher. The session starts with some of the children not yet seated on the carpet. See appendix

four for a detailed transcription, of 879 seconds (just under 15 minutes), for the first part of the clip where the teacher is interacting with the children.

Time is allocated to all 13 categories in session five and this is the only session in which this is the case. It should be noted however that for five of the categories the time accounted for in each is minimal and under a minute in any of the cases. The lowest time accounted for is category 10 which denotes silence or confusion with the teacher present (9 seconds/ 0.3%). Category 2, (teacher praises the student) has a very low 15 second (0.5%) total recorded. Category 9 (student -initiated response) is slightly lower with a 12 second (0.4%) total recorded. Teacher accepting student feeling (category 1) shows a total of 57 seconds (1.8%) which shows there is engagement on the part of the children with the teacher. In total, 51 seconds (1.6%) are recorded as there being no teacher or child interaction as the role play is left empty (category 13).

The total recorded time allocated to category 11 within session 5 is 1701 seconds (28 minutes and 21 seconds/ 53.5%) with the children engaged in their own activity and engaged together in play. There are 402 seconds (6 minutes 42 seconds/ 12.6%) of disruptive behaviour noted against category 12 with a lack of children following teacher direction in this session. The teacher gives multiple directions (category 7) and criticizes the children quite regularly (78 seconds/ 2.5%) during this carpet session, questions are directed quickly at the children (category 4) and account for 216 seconds (6.8%) not allowing the children much opportunity to respond. Category 3 (use of student ideas) has a total of 84 seconds (2.6%). The directedness of the teacher (category 6) in modelling what she believes to be appropriate role play can be seen throughout the detailed transcript in appendix six and accounts for 195 seconds (6.1%). In addition,

category 5 (teacher lecturers) accounts for 222 seconds (7%). Observation session five shows the highest time allocation (138 seconds/ 4.3%) of all the sessions for category 8, direct student response to the teacher.

Overall there are 1026 seconds (17 minutes 6 seconds/ 32.3%) of teacher interaction in this session of 3080 seconds (fifty-three minutes). This time includes teacher interaction after she has left the role play area for the more formal teaching in the main classroom and also for the further opportunities that the teacher uses to direct and question on her brief returns to the role play area. The teacher interaction in this session stands out from the others in terms of its high percentage but this is explained as being due to the directed role- modelling that happens in this session but not in any of the other six observation sessions.

At this point it would seem feasible to discuss how session 5 would have been reported should session 5A be omitted for the purpose of being able to see a more comparable session to the other six sessions with regards to the normal practice of the teacher and the children.

Session 5A was recorded for 879 seconds (14 minutes and 39 seconds) in total with 870 seconds (99%) accounting for every category from 1 to 9 inclusive showing teacher input. This length of time is proportionately higher than any of the other recorded teacher interactions as in sessions 1- 4 recorded times were 3 seconds, 33 seconds, 48 seconds, 39 seconds respectively and sessions 6 & 7 were 9 seconds and 12 seconds respectively. In addition, the total of teacher interactions in all sessions except session 5, 5A or 5B totalled (144 seconds) slightly less altogether than the teacher interactions recorded in session 5B (147 seconds) but making session 5B more comparable.

Teacher interaction in session 5B through categories 1-9 lasts a total of 147 seconds (2 minutes 27 seconds) out of 2301 seconds (38 minutes 21 seconds) giving an overall percentage of 6.4% with categories 3 and 5 not being accounted for. This session (5B) is considered to be most comparable with sessions 1 to 4 and sessions 6 to 7. The highest total of time recorded in session 5B, 1701 seconds out of 2301 seconds (28 minutes 21 seconds/ 74%) was allocated to the category 11, where children were engaged in their own activity but not necessarily following the teacher direction. The second highest proportion of time in this session belonged to category 12, 402 seconds (6 minutes 42 seconds/17.5%) where at least one child was showing disruptive behaviour or disturbing another child intentionally. Aside from category 6 which recorded 72 seconds (3.1%) for the teacher giving directions, all other identified categories were found to be under a minute (2.6%).

5.3.2.6 Session Six

Observation session six lasted 2100 seconds (35 minutes) with only 9 seconds teacher interaction during that time and only four categories identified overall. The interaction is teacher directional (category 6) for a total of 9 seconds (0.4%) and again pertains to tidying up time although she stands outside the role play area calling from the main classroom, for example, *"Tidy up please, because reception class are coming over for a look."*

Within this session there are 870 seconds (14 minutes 30 seconds) of time (41.4%) where there is no teacher or child interaction as no one is in the role play area (category 13). This is the highest percentage of time with no child present in the area and is sporadic throughout the session with different children entering and leaving.

An interesting aspect about session six where children are engaged (category 11), is that for the majority of time that is spent in the role play area, (1203 seconds/ 20 minutes and 3 seconds/ 57.2%) they are engaged in the process of taking off their shoes and trying to negotiate putting on interactive props e.g. flippers/goggles. The children put on the props but do not engage with playing with them, instead they appear to struggle to put them on then take them off. The children are very focussed on this task, which does not come easily to them, and also very focussed on putting their shoes back on. A minimal 18 seconds (0.9%) in total within this session is perceived as disruptive behaviour (category 12).

5.3.2.7 Session Seven

Observation session seven is a substantial 3180 seconds (53 minute) session which includes two directional teacher interactions (category 6) totalling six seconds (0.2%). These two interactions take place when the teacher is at the edge of the role play area and the fire alarm has gone off three times very briefly. During this time, the children all stop, they look confused and this is recorded as category 10, silence or confusion (with no teacher presence) for 15 seconds (0.5%). Immediately after the alarm stops they resume their play. The first direction given by the teacher is *"Stop when you hear the fire alarm."* A child responds*, "Why is it going on?"* (3 seconds/ 0.1%) -category 8) but is ignored by the teacher as she walks away. The second direction given by the teacher is *"Play properly!"* as she is walking past the role play area (category 6). One of the children responds by showing the other children how to play *"like this"* waving his mobile phone in the air then holding it to his ear but does not directly respond to the teacher (3 seconds/ 0.1%) – category 8).

Interestingly, the children are engrossed in their play throughout this 3180 second (53 minute) session other than the brief stops for the fire alarm and to respond to the teacher by pausing their play very briefly when she appears. Therefore, the children spend 3129 seconds (52 minutes and 36 seconds (98.4%) of their time engaged in play with only 15 seconds (0.5%) recorded as disruptive behaviour (category 12) early on in the session (within the fourth minute), 15 seconds (0.5%) in silence or confusion (category 10) and 9 seconds (0.3%) with no teacher or child interaction as all have left the role play area (category 13).

Overall the observations within table 5.3.2 earlier in this chapter that indicate teacher interaction, no teacher interaction and when communication is not understood within each of the sessions is summarised in table 5.3.4 and table 5.3.5 below.

	Total Time Mins/Secs/%	Teacher Interaction Mins/Secs/%	No Teacher Interaction Mins/Secs/%	Communication not understood
Total of sessions	212 minutes 12,740 seconds 100%	19 minutes 30 seconds 1,170 seconds 9.2%	192 minutes 30 seconds 11,550 seconds 90.6%	- 33 seconds 0.2%

Table 5.3.4: Sessions 1, 2, 3 4, 5 & 6 (omitting both 5A & 5B)

	Total Time Mins/Secs/%	Teacher Interaction Mins/Secs/%	No Teacher Interaction Mins/Secs/%	Communication not understood
Total of sessions	197 minutes 21 seconds 11,841 seconds 100%	4 minutes 51 seconds 291 seconds 2.4%	156 minutes 36 seconds 11,550 seconds 97.5%	- 24 seconds 0.2%

Table 5.3.5: Sessions 1, 2, 3 4, 5B & 6 (omitting both 5 & 5A)

As previously discussed, the original session 5 has been included but session 5B is more comparable in terms of the similarities and consistencies of the management of the sessions by the teacher. Table 5.3.4 shows a total teacher interaction of 19 minutes 30 seconds overall out of a total 212 minutes (three hours and thirty two minutes). This is a higher percentage (9.2%) than table 5.3.5 (2.4%).The highlighted fields in table 5.3.76 draw attention to session 5 which is the anomaly and is replaced in the table by session 5B.

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 5B	Session 6	Session 7
0.5%	3.7%	5.3%	2.0%	32.3%	6%	0.4%	0.4%

Table 5.3.6: Summary of teacher interaction within each session

Session 5B, even after the section of the teacher role- modelling is omitted is still higher (6%) than the other sessions. Sessions 1, 6 & 7 all have a percentage of under 1%. However, session 4 has a percentage of 2.0% and session 3 also has a higher percentage of 5.3% which cannot be specifically attributed to teacher role modelling but are still less than session 5B. No teacher interaction for each session (category 11,12 &13) is shown in table 5.3.7 below.

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 5B	Session 6	Session 7
99.5%	96.%	94.6%	98.0%	67.7%	94.0%	99.6%	99.6%

Table 5.3.7: Summary of no teacher interaction within each session

All sessions (omitting session 5) show that there is no teacher interaction for over 93% of the time in each session. This is a particularly high percentage per session and may indicate that the regular practice of the teacher is to spend limited time in the role play area. In order to break down the categories within the sessions previously discussed, table 5.3.4 and table 5.3.5 highlight the overall breakdown of categories in minutes, seconds and percentages within each session. Table 5.3.8 gives the total time of sessions

including session 5 but excluding 5A and 5B out of a total of 11,841 seconds. Table

5.3.8 gives the total time of sessions including 5B and excluding 5 and 5A out of a total

of 12,720 seconds.

Category	Total time of sessions per category (including 5 & excluding 5A &5B)		
Teacher accepts student feeling — Category 1	66 secs	1 min 06 secs	0.5%
Teacher praises student — Category 2	15 secs	-	0.1%
Teacher use of student ideas — Category 3	84 secs	1 min 24 secs	0.7%
Teacher questions — Category 4	228 secs	3 mins 48 secs	1.8%
Teacher lecturers — Category 5	246 secs	4 mins 06 secs	1.9%
Teacher gives directions — Category 6	252 secs	4 mins 12 Secs	2.0%
Teacher criticizes student — Category 7	87 secs	1 mins 27 secs	0.7%
Student response — Category 8	156 secs	2 mins 36 secs	1.2%
Student-initiated response — Category 9	21 secs	-	0.2%
Silence or confusion — Category 10	12 secs	-	0.1%
No teacher presence (engagement) — Category 11	8,622 secs	143 mins 42 secs	67.8%
No teacher presence (disruptive behaviour) — Category 12	1,899 secs	31 mins 39 secs	14.8%
No teacher or child interaction (area empty) — Category 13	1,008 secs	16 mins 48 secs	7.9%

Table 5.3.8: Total allocation of time to each category across sessions 1-7 (including session 5 with 5A and 5B excluded)

	Teacher accepts student feeling	Teacher praises student	Teacher use of student ideas	Teacher questions	Teacher lecturers	Teacher gives directions	Teacher criticizes student	Student response	Student-initiated response	Silence or confusion	No teacher presence (engagement)	No teacher presence (disruptive behaviour)	No teacher or child interaction (area empty)
Category	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	Category 7	Category 8	Category 9	Category 10	Category 11	Category 12	Category 13
Total time of sessions per category (including 5B & excluding 5 & 5A)	24 secs - 0.2%	6 secs - 0.05%	0 secs - 0%	39 secs - 0.3%	24 secs - 0.2%	129 secs - 2 mins 09 secs 1.1%	21 secs - 0.2%	30 secs - 0.25%	15 secs - 0.1%	24 secs - 0.2%	8,622 Secs - 143 mins 42 secs 72.8%	1,889 secs - 31 mins 29 Secs 16%	1,008 secs - 16 mins 48 secs 8.5%

Table 5.3.9: Total allocation of time to each category across sessions (5 and 5A excluded)

In table 5.3.8, without the teacher instructional input included, category 1 (teacher accepts student feeling) only appears for 24 seconds of the total time 11,841 seconds (3 hours 17 minutes and 21 seconds/ 0.2%). This is increased in table 2x to 66 seconds (0.5%) where the total time is 12,720 seconds (3 hours 32 minutes). Similarly, low amounts of time can be seen continuing in category 2 (teacher praises student) and category 3 (teacher praises student) in both tables. In table 5.3.8 category 2 can be seen as having a very low time allocation of 6 seconds (0.05%) with category 3 yielding no time allocation against it. Both these categories are increased in table 5.3.7 with category 2 increasing from 6 seconds to 15 seconds (0.1%) and category 3 increasing

from 0 seconds to 84 seconds (0.7%). Whilst this is a considerable increase it is still very low in terms of the overall time allocation.

The low amount of time accounted for per category in table 5.3.9 continues in categories 4 to 9 as 39 seconds/ 0.3%, 24 seconds/ 0.2%, 129 seconds/ 1.1%, 21 seconds/ 0.2%, 30 seconds/ 0.25%, 15 seconds/ 0.1%. These categories include the teacher questioning (category 4), lecturing (category 5), giving directions (category 6) or criticizing (category 7), student response (category 8) and student-initiated response (category 9). They are most likely low because the teacher is not present for much of the time. An increase is seen in table 5.3.7 in all categories 4 to 9 with the largest increase of 1.7% seen in category 5 (teacher lectures) from 0.2% to 1.9%. Silence or confusion (category 10), accounts for only 12 seconds (0.1%) in table 5.3.7 and 24 seconds (0.2%) in table 5.3.8.

Overwhelmingly, category 11, where the children are engaged in their own activity or engaged in play in the role play area has the greatest time of 8,622 seconds in both tables 4.8 & 4.9 therefore 67.8% and 72.8% respectively. At times the children in the role play area display disruptive behaviour or disturb another child intentionally (category 12) with 1,899 seconds which is substantially lower than the time where the children are engaged in their own activity (14.8% in table 5.3.7 and 16% in table 5.3.8). The final category (13) with no teacher or child interaction and therefore when the role play area was empty was in total 1,008 seconds (7.9% in table 5.3.8 and 8.5% in table 5.3.8). In session 6 it should be noted that the pattern is very different to the other sessions, due to the children intermittently leaving the role play area for sustained periods of time, which can be seen in appendix five.

In summary, the two tables 5.3.8 and 5.3.9 show exactly the same time recorded in seconds for categories 11 (no teacher present but engagement), 12 (no teacher presence - disruptive behaviour) and 13 (no teacher or child interaction - area empty). However, it should be noted that the overall time recorded in terms of seconds is lower in table 5.3.8 and therefore the percentages reflect this. It can be seen that table 5.3.8, which includes the teacher instructional input, that there is an increase in categories 11, 12, and 13 of 5%, 1.2% and 0.6% respectively.

The non-participant video observation sessions and subsequent coding have yielded a wealth of data in order to explore how the early educator's role contributed in this particular setting. It also offered opportunities to explore what children's involvement in 'real world' and fantasy' settings looked like. There is an opportunity in the next chapter to draw out and discuss them fully in conjunction with the literature.

5.3.3 Field notes of informal discussions

During the summer term in which the research took place four sets of separate informal field notes were collected following opportunities for discussion with the teacher. I agreed to share my observations with the teacher so that we could share experiences and hopefully raise some questions for further thought. The purpose of the discussions and field notes was to supplement the data gathered in order to answer both research questions. These discussions were useful in the sense that it gave the teacher an opportunity to reflect on her practice in an informal way and gave me a further insight into her thoughts about the role play area, the play that took place there and other issues that arose.

The discussion captured in the first set of field notes was minimal and this took place before the second video observation. By the time that these field notes were collated the teacher had established the role play area as a travel agent where it had previously been a garden centre.

General observations by the teacher noted in the first set of field notes that there some children appeared in the role play area more than others. This perhaps would not be surprising in a class of children with differing interests, but she appeared surprised at this as she generally directed a number of children into the area and appeared to be under the impression that as she organised who went in there then there should have been a more even spread of children using the area. The teacher appeared to be perturbed at the idea that the children would defy her instruction regarding the role play area for example when they were actually wrestling and not playing as they had been directed too. She particularly noted that at times the children would defy her instructions, for example, when the noise level was too high one day she went in and observed that the light was off and some of the children were wrestling on the floor. She said that she put the lights back on and gave the boys a warning. Almost immediately after she left the area the lights were turned off again. This was repeated a few times until the boys were asked to leave the area by the teacher. Behaviour in the role play area appeared to be a recurring area of consternation for the teacher.

An informal discussion took place before observation three, at a time in which the children were in assembly and we had an opportunity to watch an uninterrupted video clip recorded previously. One positive and amusing example of interaction was recalled by the teacher when she had observed one child telling another to be quick as his flight

was leaving and he was going to be late. She was laughing as she recalled the episode and explained that the other child started running on the spot with both children laughing loudly. The teacher recalled asking the child whether he had packed and seemed to take a genuine pleasure in the episode. Her role in this showed that she was capable of engaging in the role play with the children and not simply directing it. In this sense she role modelled whilst engaged in the role play with the children instead of seeing it as a separate activity.

The teacher noted how pleased she was that the children were using the pictures on the wall in their play but it was very evident to her that the majority were too high for them to see/ use effectively. She stated that this was something she wanted to address straight away. We talked about the visual line of children of that age and she was quite surprised that she hadn't really thought about it previously. She was somewhat disturbed at how much one child was using a *'pretend gun'* and wanted to do something about it, planning on speaking to the children at carpet time and suggested that she may do some 'modelling' in the role play area for the children.

The teacher commented on the children using the 'language' of the travel agent. She was surprised at the level of engagement shown by the children which possibly suggests that she did not think that the children were capable of playing in role. In particular she was surprised by two children sitting at a table engaging together in 'travel agent 'play (figure 5.3.4) and then the reaction of the one child when his peer leaves (figure 5.3.5).

Figure 5.3.4 Photograph a: Children playing 'in role'

Figure 5.3.5 Photograph b: Boy left on his own (reaction is captured by the sulking face and crossed arms)

The teacher stated she was fascinated by what the children said and how the boy

responded to being left on his own. She suggested a lack of knowledge on her part of the

interactions going on in the role play area on a daily basis. She noted that she had

previously had a very different perception of the children's role play and now wanted to

see all the video clips to really understand what is going on in the area. The teacher

noted her surprise at one boy who she thought wouldn't be on task but in fact was sat at a table focussed and seemingly engrossed in a plastic globe. He shows retaliation when a girl attempts to take the globe off him and pulled it back towards himself firmly before re-engaging in it once again. The teacher is drawn to the clip of a little boy who wonders into the room with a small car in his hand. He stands with his thumb in his mouth moving his car around in the air. His eyes suggest he is in deep thought. The teacher said *"I would love to know what he is thinking, clearly something is going on in his head."*

Through her reflections the teacher observes that maybe uniforms/ tabards would help children to feel more *'in role.'* She planned to do something about this as soon as possible to give the children more of a sense of purpose when playing in role. This was clearly an important aspect of the play to her. The teacher indicated that watching the observation session had helped her to see the value of the resources and how they could be improved. Resources appear to be a central feature in the preparation of the role play area for the teacher. She believed for example that the addition of plants would create a *'more friendly atmosphere'* and that the enhancement and resourcing of the role play area a key role for her. The resources being used appropriately were seen as a measurement of success for the teacher. It was important to her that the children knew what to do with the props and therefore used them accordingly. It was also important to her to put things in the role play area that could enhance basic skills *'we could use for maths, like sorting as that is in our scheme of work at the moment.'*

In our discussion following observation three, the teacher discussed that she liked the fact that I was carrying out the observations rather than herself as she felt her presence

might influence the children to do what they thought she wanted them to do and therefore she wouldn't see a true picture. This suggests that the children were not used to the teacher in the role of observer and she herself was not comfortable in this role. She also suggested that she felt that her presence *'might influence the children to do what they thought she wanted them to do.'*

Following observation three we had an opportunity to discuss the sessions, when the children went out to play, during which time field note three was compiled. This gave us the opportunity to discuss any changes that she had made in the role play area since the previous observation. The teacher acknowledged that she hadn't made any changes which appeared rather significant after her previous enthusiasm to address certain points. I had noticed the introduction of mobile phones to the area and how these seemed to be a key focus for observation clip three but she said that the imitation mobile phones were there for them to use in the classroom but not necessarily in the travel agent. She hadn't taken them into the area personally but suggested that most likely the children had taken them in from the other areas. She appeared to not be very happy about this development, perhaps because she hadn't been the one to see the mobile phones added purpose to the play. I thought this was interesting as in a travel agent one would see regular use of a phone, by both travel agent and customers in a real-life setting. The teacher pointed out the addition of a writing sheet given to the children to work on in the writing area this week and said that she had encouraged them to do this task. This was not really a role play activity but more typically a language activity. She noted that unless she repeatedly prompted the children to do the activity then they were reluctant to do so.

The teacher noted that when she had looked into the opening in the role play area that the children had responded to her question about what they were doing by telling her that they were on the phone to *'french people.'* She wished to clarify with me whether they had continued this play after she left the role play area but I confirmed that they had not. I reported that my field notes recorded that there were mainly boys using the role play area during this session and that one girl had only briefly entered and left shortly after without having engaged in any play. The play was not centred around travel agent play which appeared to be a disappointment to the teacher. I reported that there was extremely little if any 'travel agent play' that I had noted during the filming although there was lots of interaction in the role play area. She had noted that when she looked at in at one point that the children were all gathered around one table as a group although she chose not to interact with them. She asked me what they were talking about and we discussed that much of the conversation was about whose house they would go to for tea. They also spent a notable amount of time sprinkling the pretend money from the money tray over each other's heads. The majority of time however appeared to be focussed on the mobile phones. I mentioned that I had seen some of those children really engaged previously within other observations. The teacher wondered what the reason for lack of 'travel agent play' was today. This appeared to disappoint her and her impression of successful role play was clearly not realised. There appears a reluctance on the part of the teacher to engage or interact in the play unless it is through herself role modelling or in a monitoring of behaviour. This lack of interaction does not appear to give the children an opportunity to respond to her within their play.

An interesting observation that I had noted and shared was that the children were seemingly aware of my presence with the video camera but did not appear to amend

their behaviour because of my presence. However, following any teacher intervention they quickly amended their behaviour to what they appeared to believe was acceptable behaviour in front of the teacher, attempting to convince her that they are in role.

Previously, the teacher had mentioned the possibility of modelling a session during an observation and I enquired as to whether she still wanted to do that. She said that she did but that she had done some modelling with the children already so she wanted to do something different in the travel agent so the children's interest would last until the end of the term. She was now thinking of introducing an ice-cream shop after discussion with a colleague who had suggested it worked well. Within the ice-cream shop the children had been given coloured play dough to enable them to scoop the colours and she felt this would be more interactive and give more purpose to the play. She felt that it would be useful to create an ice-cream shop instead of the travel agents by the next observation.

I noted that the teacher felt that opportunities to role model for the children would be useful as an interaction. She was interested in what impact the modelling would have on the children but there was no discussion on how she thought they would respond to the new refurbished role play area, to herself or to peers. We discussed how she wanted to introduce this and she said that she would prepare the role play area before my visit and then model how she wanted the children to play in the area whilst I carried out my next observation. We also discussed the possibility of observing the children after her modelling session when the children did not have an adult within the role play area. The teacher wanted to see what impact if any her modelling would have on the children. Our discussion raised some questions surrounding modelling:

- Will the modelling have an impact or not?

- If so, is it a positive/ negative impact?

- Is there a place for modelling in role play?

- Why model?

The teacher noted that she has felt restricted in her role this year (NQT year) so she has followed the structure/ plan already in place in the school with regards to the setting up of the role play area. She says she would like to use the next few weeks to watch/ reflect on the observation clips and conversations with myself to plan for next year's class. I raised the question of whether she felt the role play area had to fit with the theme. Her response was that she needed to think carefully about it. When I told the teacher that I had downloaded the clips for her she stated that she was *'excited to watch them.'* The teacher acknowledged that watching the one observation clip together had already made her think and that she now had an opportunity get to know individual children very well and in a different way and also that she had already seen the value of seeing problems she hadn't noted before such as the height of the pictures on the wall.

Our final informal discussion leading to the final set of field notes followed the modelling session the teacher had wanted to do as part of one observation. The teacher said she had been busy setting up the role play area and it has been 'closed' to the children so the video observation in which the focus is her modelling for the children is to reintroduce the role play area after being *'refurbished'* which she believed would *'fire new enthusiasm.'* Previously she had said that she wanted to change the travel agents into an ice-cream shop but this was not the case in reality and instead the travel agents was refurbished. The photograph below shows the teacher at the start of the session in which she intends modelling for the children.

Figure 5.3.6: Photograph c: Start of teacher modelling session

The teacher explained that she wanted to *'enhance'* the travel agents with additional props and her modelling session. She thought to add new *'cold clothes'* and *'summer clothes'* as there are skiing pictures in the new travel brochures being added to the role play area as well as summer holidays pictures. She also stated that she had added plants to create a more *'friendly atmosphere'* and also to create *'an area'* where they could explore the suitcase rather than an open space on the floor. The teacher stated that she hasn't been able to watch any more clips and feels guilty about this but hasn't had time.

> *The teacher had given them a suitcase filled with props and showed surprise that the children hadn't gone to the suitcase straight away as she thought they would get 'right in there' to interact with the props she had prepared.*

Following the modelling session the teacher left the area and left the children to play. She appeared surprised by the lack of response by the children including the fact the children had not immediately gone to the suitcase right away to explore it. The teacher indicated that she had placed writing books in the role play area and explained that she had decided on the books because a lot of the time she wanted a record of what they had been doing. The record of writing as evidence seemed to be very important to her as a

response from the children. The teacher also asked me about whether the children had been using the travel brochures during the observations and appeared to be very relieved when I reported that they had. It appeared this was a measure of success for her. The interest of one boy in particular could be evidenced through his excited response in seeing pictures of Spiderman, Harry Potter and Mickey Mouse that he had identified in the brochure. This greatly pleased the teacher.

Further discussion about the children in role led to me sharing an example of a vignette, that I had captured from a video observation, with the teacher. Vignette one (appendix six) showed one child (a girl) who was trying desperately to have the other children play with her as she played in role (as the travel agent) and who seemed very frustrated when she was ignored by the other children. The teacher noted that vignette one (appendix six) showed the power struggle between the children themselves in the role play area whilst trying to follow the instruction and direction from herself on how to play as adults in the travel agents role play area.

At the beginning of vignette one the children start to play in the way that is expected of them, therefore as adults in the travel agents. Both pairs of girls and boys meet conflict very quickly so one of each pair tries to take charge, indicating that they are not yet socially able to negotiate their roles in the role play. Girl Two is ignored for a substantial amount of time but is very persistent in her endeavours to gain a 'customer.' The disappointment showed by both Girl Two and Boy One is palpable in their demeanour and the comment *"I guess there's nobody wants to buy holidays today.'* This is somewhat of a mature realisation on the part of the children and one that they did not appear to be prepared for. It is unlikely that when role modelling had occurred with the

teacher previously that the scenario of a lack of customers had been a consideration. Wood (2014:15) supports this in her acknowledgment that 'the freedom to make choices does not always put children in control nor are they always empowered.'

There is a brief interlude where Boy Four enters to play with Boy One and they take part in what would be perceived as travel agent play. Play is often seen as the place for forming and maintaining relationships (Avgitidou, 1997; Corsaro, 2003) but in this case there is great disappointment seen in the demeanour of Girl Two at this point as she is excluded from the first interaction with a 'customer.' Shortly after this the behaviour takes a disruptive turn but even so Girl Two still tries to continue the play calling *"next please"* intermittently while being ignored. Her agitation is etched on her face. The play quickly turns to gun play, perhaps because the children have exhausted what they know of travel agent play. Also, perhaps the fact that they have no customers has dried up the opportunities for carrying on with the travel agent play and therefore it has failed to engage them. Boy One shows a moral example in trying to control Boy Four and in confirming that he *"was not allowed to go on holiday now"* as a consequence of the gun behaviour. This mirrors the adult world of recrimination within the world of the child. The play moves quickly to a 'hold up' situation and in a bid to become involved Girl one joins in the gun play. The play continues as gun play until an interruption from the teacher calling an instruction from the main classroom. Almost immediately the children amend their behaviour back to what is normal or expected travel agent play. It could be suggested by the children's response that their power struggle with the adult takes precedence over the gun play. It is almost as though the voice of the teacher has reminded them to amend their play even without specific direction. This is a detailed example of covert play away from the eyes of the teacher. The children were aware that this play would not have been acceptable to the teacher and therefore they amended

their behaviour appropriately once the teacher gaze was redirected towards them. The teacher noted that understanding that the behaviour was being amended was a development point for her. Rogoff (1990:42) suggests that it is essential to view 'the cognitive activities of individuals within the cultural context in which their thinking is embedded.'

In response to the discussion about Girl One in vignette one, the teacher told me about an activity she had completed previously with wool where each child had to pick the person that is their friend and then pass the wool to another child. This particular child was not picked by anyone. The teacher observed that the child appeared to be with other children in the school yard but she was unsure of whether she was really playing interactively with the others. The child tried to direct the play with others constantly and she became clearly frustrated when her peers did not respond to her. She was desperate to have someone play with her in role. When others did sit down at 'her table' they appeared to ignore her and did not engage in play. The teacher noted that this vignette had confirmed for her that the girl was having difficulty in forming play relationships and this was something that she needed to address and intended to do so. It was an issue she had been somewhat aware of but the opportunity to have it raised in the discussion had really made her reflect on how she should approach this. We also discussed two boys that she felt did not 'fit' with the rest of the class easily. I felt from my observation that one of the boys had wanted to 'fit' with the group but didn't seem to know how to do it. The other boy we discussed did not seem to particularly want to fit with the group and gave the appearance of being a 'drifter/ flitter' and 'lacking in focus' during this observation. A further discussion was had regarding how not every play experience was positive and this could be seen in the example of the child (Harry) in vignette two (appendix seven) which I shared with the teacher.

This second vignette captures the frustrations on the part of Harry and his experience in the role play area. He tries hard to follow the teacher's instructions on how to play in the travel agent. He attempts to use the writing books, the pictures on the wall and engage with 'customers.' He is clearly trying to engage the other children in the 'play' expected of them in the travel agents but only briefly manages this with one of the children and is then ignored again. There is evidence of a sense of social empathy displayed by child B on two occasions. The first when he accepts a pencil from Harry and the second when he responds to him in appearing to feel the same sense of disappointment as Harry in not having his own customers. Overall, within this observation Harry appeared frustrated and his play was controlled by the teacher even though she is not in the area but through her previous direction. He did appear to have learnt something about social rules recognised through his emotional response to the others in the group. It seemed that he was conforming to the directiveness of the teacher but he did not appear to have any satisfaction in the play.

The field notes recorded were intended as an opportunity to engage with the teacher on reflections of what she had observed first-hand, through the watching of the recorded video sessions and also through reflective discussion with myself and what I had observed. The teacher stated that she saw this as a professional development opportunity for herself and was eager to engage in the process. As part of this process the intention was for the teacher to watch all the video sessions, however in reality this did not happen. Instead, we watched one session together and she read vignette (one) and (two) that I produced but she didn't access any other sessions during the term. The field notes recorded during the discussion with the teacher yielded some interesting discussion points which will be followed up in discussion within the following chapter (chapter five) supported by the literature.

5.3.4 Summary of Phase six

This chapter has presented the data resulting from each research phase (four to six) in response to the overarching research question and two research sub-questions. Themes were drawn out from the interviews with both early educators that have previously been discussed in the previous phases which include observation, housekeeping, behaviour, use of props, adult direction and modelling though perhaps not specifically under these terms. It is interesting that the teacher does not believe that any training she has had has prepared her for role play situations within the classroom (particularly as she is in an NQT year and therefore just finished her training) and acknowledges that she has not drawn on any theorists. Looking back on phase one this is perhaps unsurprising as the WAG documentation did not support any depth in terms of reference to pedagogy or theoretical perspectives.

The non-participant video observations based on the Flanders (IA) system with additional categories allowed data to be captured over seven sessions. The data explores teacher and interaction and no teacher interaction in the role play area with an overwhelming majority of time where there is no teacher interaction. This appears to be identical to what was seen in school B but in stark contrast to what was seen in school A except for the teacher modelling at the start of session 5 (school C) which mirrors the enhanced provision in school A. Further discussion on the detail of data captured the sessions will be discussed further in the following chapter.

The field notes depicted the ongoing views of the teacher and were a valuable resource in terms of having the opportunity to shine a light on professional practice, experience and understanding. Reflection was a key component of the data gathered in the field notes and gave the teacher an opportunity to stand back from the busy classroom and focus on the role

play area and what emerged from it. Both teacher modelling and behaviour are key features of discussions with resources, props, observation and relationships also presenting as points of interest. Sociocultural awareness is interesting in these phases, from the perspective of the teacher and the children. This highlights the view of Rogoff (1990,1998) in offering the perspective that through those contributing to processes involved in sociocultural activities they inherit practices invented by other at the same time.

The next chapter (six) presents discussion of the final analysis. Here the findings are discussed, synthesized and relate back to the research questions, data collection, existing literature and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER SIX   DISCUSSION

This chapter directly addresses the overarching research question and two sub-questions by exploring the analysed data and their relationship to the relevant literature. Firstly, the two contributing sub-questions are answered then these are merged to answer the overall question of the study: *'To what extent does 'real world' or 'fantasy' play allow children opportunities for creativity and imagination?'* The chapter offers a window through which we can understand better this microcosm of Early Years practice from a reflective and critical perspective. In this chapter it should be remembered that each phase contributed to an overall exploration and understanding of how creativity and imagination was treated in the role play area. I draw on my theoretical framework within this discussion section.

6.1 Sub-question one

How does the early educator's role contribute in shaping children's creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting?

I would suggest that from data gathered during the document analysis that early educators were influenced by welsh government documentation in their settings. This could be observed in terms of how the classrooms were organised and resourced with an emphasis on props and case studies based on story and themes. Also, in the interviews the early educators responded with a strong sense of the importance of theme or story being a key starting point or influence. This was also reflected in the focus group discussion where there was a sense of needing to have props to play properly, 'you give them their own props to use after a story. You'll observe them for five minutes and they are doing really well' but there is palpable disappointment when the early educators recognise 'it goes quickly off.' There have been substantially more 'real world' opportunities observed in the school settings as opposed to fantasy, again potentially

influenced by the original documentation. The documentation did not demonstrate the importance of creativity and imagination in role play settings and this is likely why this was not apparent in the settings or in any following interviews or discussions.

The sociocultural context is key to creativity and imagination but this does not appear to be of note in practice. Rogoff (2003: 51) acknowledges that in an emerging sociocultural perspective that 'people can contribute to the creation of cultural processes ad cultural processes contribute to the creation of people.'

There were many examples of the early educators drawing on the importance of the idea of children dressing up and focussing and acting out being characters and there appears to be much importance placed by the teacher in believing that the role play area should be related to a theme or book though the reasons for that were not specifically highlighted. Egan (1992) believes the key strategy for developing imagination is narrative claiming that events or behaviour only become intelligible by finding a place in story. Egan (1992:71) argues that 'the tool we have for dealing with knowledge and emotions together is the story.' Therefore, it is stories that have the power to engage the emotional commitment of their listeners. It appears that a purpose of the role play area for all early educators was for the children to enact specific roles within a theme or book but the reasons for why this should be a purpose were not acknowledged. There appeared to be an acceptance that this was simply something they did without understanding why they were doing it. It is my belief that they were influenced by the welsh government documentation. Wood (2013: 99) notes that in her work with teachers, they are often 'confident about creating play environments, but less so about their roles.' This is highlighted by a response from the LSA:

They have the home corner because I think the theme is all about me. So they'll have like the kitchen part and stuff like that and a baby they have as well and a cot.

In this case it appeared that the LSA is not actually confident about what the current theme is or why it is important but instead felt that there should be a role play area and this became more about resourcing than purpose for her. Interestingly, this links to the idea of choice which is again something that the early educators appear to believe the children have. The evidence drawn out in the data suggests that this is not the case and in fact the children have very little autonomy, instead being driven by the directionality of the early educators and timetabling constraints.

Free choice appears to be a contradictory theme in this research. All teachers in the scoping survey acknowledged that the children had free choice in the role play area. The class teacher in all three schools stated that the children had free choice but in reality, what was observed was that the children were consistently directed to the role play area and had to observe strict 'rules' on how many children could remain there at any one time. This raises a question about what the teachers perceive 'choice' to be. Indeed, one teacher in the scoping survey suggests that the LSA in one setting is responsible for recording the children who played in the role play area through recording on 'tick sheets.' There seems to be a sense of realisation on the part of the early educators that it is appropriate or 'right' to have a free choice area but in reality, they do not seem to recognise that this is something that is not offered. Rogoff (1990) offers the perspective that the success of children in determining their own activities needs to rely on the willingness or supportiveness of others to allow them a choice of activities.

Wood (2014) draws on research from Markstrom and Hallenden (2009) and Wisneski and Reifel (2012) in her summary of research problematising free choice and free play. She summarises free choice from this body of research as a structural perspective where constraints are suggested as being policy frameworks, space, time, rules, parents' expectations and effects from the pushdown from the primary curriculum. However, Wood (2014) goes on to suggest that this is different in reality and instead 'free choice and free play are always controlled within educational settings because of teachers' beliefs and values, the different meanings they assign to play the variations in enacting the curriculum and more comprehensive goals for children's behaviour and classroom regulation. Kapasi and Gleave (2009) drawing on play policies across the UK and the UNCRC propose that choice is characteristic of play with research on children's perspective consistently showing that they value freedom from structure, making choices and having time to themselves.

Wood (2013: 49) notes that 'if play is overly directed and controlled children may not experience the full potential of play.' Stewart (2012) more emphatically notes that unless play is freely chosen it ceases to become play, instead becoming work. He notes that freely chosen play is a reward of its own and therefore becomes engaging for the child and involves both imagination and exploration. The pattern of the both the teacher in School A and School C before each session was to direct a small group of children every time to the role-play area usually following a carpet-led session where she has instructed them on how to play in the area. Both teachers in both settings pick the children who will play in the role play area initially. The regulated routine of both teachers does not allow the children many opportunities for free play. For example, by directing them to the area stopping the play for tidy-up time, the direction in terms of

who is able to access the area at any one time, the direction of what the play is to be or indeed when play is shut down by directions or criticism towards the children. It is interesting to think about why the teachers are so regulated in terms of their directedness. It is likely that the constraints of the school day for example, playtime and assembly along with teaching and assessment requirements encourage the teacher to work in a directive manner.

The interviews in School A and C suggest that both teachers appear to genuinely want play to take place in the role play area but appear to be constrained by what they perceive are regulatory expectations of the teacher role. In addition, the LSA (School C) highlighted that children having experience of different roles was an important purpose of the role play area but that role play outside of the role play area was discouraged. An example was given later in the interview when the LSA talks about the fact that the children sometimes brought the role play out of the designated area.

> *When they had like the home corner they would like bring out the baby and take it into like the story corner because there's sofas in there and they'd use that as part of the role play. We do try to encourage them to keep things in areas.*

Therefore, it appears that for the LSA keeping the play in the designated area is more important than the quality of interaction and play taking place.

Behaviour has been a regular area of discussion throughout this study and seemingly one of much contention. The teacher (school C) clarifies in the semi-structured interviews that for her the role play area is the area that causes more behavioural difficulties than any other area in the reception classroom attributing some of this to the fact that role play spills into other areas. This links to what was previously said by the LSA where she suggests she would not think it appropriate if role play overlapped into

the other areas. There appears to be a feeling, by both early educators, that appropriate play should be kept in the role play area and not overlap into the rest of the classroom *'someone will use the area not as a role play area but use the room up as we are having a wrestle in here because we can't be seen so easily.'* Holland (2012:3) believes that however vigorously early educators attempt to enforce a ban on types of war, weapon or superhero play that some children (almost exclusively boys) will still persist in making and using pretend weapons and acting out superhero scenarios. She suggests that 'practitioners are trapped into spending a great amount of negative energy in policing boys' play to enforce this approach.'

The teacher (School C) thought the behaviour was influenced by the location of the role play area and that the children should comply with the intended aim for each specific area within the setting. There appears to be little flexibility in this regard and therefore a key purpose for the teacher appears to be to ensure compliance on the part of the children in learning how to play appropriately. This aligns to the LSAs (School A and C) believing that the role play should stay in the role play area. It appears to be a necessity for both the teacher and the LSA that the children are *"using everything properly."* Where this does not happen and where the play is not contained within the role play area it causes tension in the classroom. It appears to be an area of consternation for both early educators with the LSA (school C) stating:

> *… they do tend to bring the role play out so it was when they had a home corner they would like bring out the baby and take it into like the story corner because there's sofas in there and they'd use that as part of the role play.*

It seems that the children are using the role play area in a way that would make sense. Therefore, they go looking for the sofas to sit on (as they likely do at home) in order to play in the spirit of the home corner and in different areas of the home to replicate the

play of 'home.' The role play area is seen by the early educators as something that can be compartmentalised which is an interesting notion. The LSA goes on to confirm that *'We do encourage them to keep things in the areas.'* The teacher appears to contradict herself by stating that,

> *I've seen some of them using the watering can as a gun, boys tend to do that, but you know it can be what they want it to be, it's not stuck as a garden centre. It depends on the children who are in there really.*

It also appears that the success of the role play area is actually monitored through its state at the end of the day or session which appears to suggest a lack of focus on children's experience and learning by early educators. It would not be unexpected that a role play area, prepared with props to play with, would attract young children to interact with them in whatever way they choose. Early educators in school A and C do not appear to value independent role play in its own right but instead seem to view it as a distraction and disturbance which perhaps suggests a link to lack of pedagogical guidance in this area. Rogoff (1990) suggests that in situations where the adult is not focussed on teaching, the child's in turn more likely to take a large role in structing interaction. The children in school A, determined to engage in their own play, evidence this view.

Therefore, if the children comply then this is seen as a measurement of success and perhaps it is in terms of reception age children learning organisational strategies. However, it does not necessarily show that their role play activity is of quality or that their behaviour is indeed disruptive. Maybe instead it is just different to that expected by the early educators. An example of this is when the teacher was somewhat disturbed at how much one child was using a *'pretend gun.'* Here was the first hint of her being conscious of *'inappropriate behaviour'* in the role play area. She saw her role to be that of shaping appropriate behaviour and it was her decision what the prop became not

allowing autonomy on the part of the child. There also appears to be an overwhelming need for early educators to contain role play within the role play area and that if role play that spills out into other areas of the classroom it is considered disruptive and unacceptable. Russell (2010) suggests that one view may be that the adult perceives play behaviour as indicative of future adult behaviour and therefore that begins to explain the need for control. 'We may feel the need to correct or redirect what might appear to be aggressive or violent play.' (2010: 317) Another purpose she has suggested is that playing out trauma or uncertainty could be a vehicle in which to understand and 'play out' any anxieties.

The teacher (School A) suggested that it was the staff that decided what resources would be put in each role play area although she acknowledged:

> *It's nice to ask the child what they want but at the beginning of the term we didn't…we based it around the Goldilocks story and we thought we would have the real life experiences at home and in the kitchen and that scenario, so you know, got the imagination.*

She went on to state that *"next time we could ask what they would like."* There is a suggestion here that this wasn't something that would be normal practice but she was tentatively considering it for future practice. The teacher (School C) in the first semi-structured interview believed that planning was one of her roles in conjunction with the role play area. *'I'm just really conscious of making it worthwhile in there, I don't want them to go in and just continue with the same play.'* However, she suggests she plans in line with a story or theme because for her it is important that they can act out the story/theme or become familiar with the props in the area. This appears to contradict her earlier statement because if the children are acting out the story repeatedly then they are continuing with the same play and are less likely to be creative or imaginative. She suggests that part of her planning is to include modelling *'my plan at the moment is just,*

it's just lots of modelling.' She clarifies that both her and the LSA will take turns to model but her response does not suggest that this has been thought about in any depth and implies an ad hoc approach or perhaps a lack of knowledge on how to approach the play. Wood (2013) suggests it is inappropriate to plan a pre-determined rolling programme of topics or themes for young children as interests change, with some play themes lasting a few days and with others lasting weeks.

The teacher (School C) uses interesting language in the semi-structured interviews when asked about who sets up the role play area. *'It links to our class story which is obviously decided by myself and it's in our scheme of work.* The word *'obviously'* suggests that she would not have discussed this with the LSA, a key early educator within the setting.

Play does take time to develop so teacher interruptions, for example regarding timetabling or re-organising groups of children directed to play in the role play area or 'tidy-up time,' can break down the play. Frequent interruptions by the adult can hinder creativity and imagination in play and examples of this could be seen particularly throughout the seven non-participant observation sessions in School C as children were called away from their play. It was interesting that often the teacher was unaware of the play going on in the role play area when she was directing the children from the main classroom. This happened when the teacher would call a group to work with her. In session one (school C) for example, during the ten minute clip the children were fully engaged in their play when they were in the role play area except for the interruption from the teacher where they briefly paused and stopped their play as she called for *'yellow group'* from the main classroom. She appeared unaware that she would be shutting down the play for some of the children. If she had perhaps gone to the role play area and seen very focussed role play being developed, then she may have changed her

mind about interrupting the play. However, as the play that was taking place included a child who had brought an element of 'shooting' into the travel agent role play area encouraging others to follow the play and interact in it, this would have been unlikely. The likelihood is that the teacher would have shut down the play when she saw the type of play being carried out even though it was not disruptive. The above example indicates that the play of the children was not inherently valued in this setting and subordinate to the important work of the children being with the teacher to learn. The children were subjected to her governance in her role as teacher in these cases and were expected to follow her instruction without question even though she was unaware of what was going on in the role play area. Here there is a link to the power struggle notable with an imbalance of power tipped towards the teacher which Canning (2011: 26) suggests usually goes unnoticed where the 'adult world will almost always trump the child's world.' Further examples of how power stays within the early educators' grasp, most likely for practical reasons, can be seen in the following directive statements from the teacher in School C:

- *One more minute and it's home time.*

- *This is our travel agents, do you remember? You don't fight in travel agents!*

- *Ok boys and girls, stop and listen. Mae hi'n amswer taclusio. (It's time to tidy up.)*

- *It's nearly playtime.'*

- *Tidy up please because reception class are coming over for a look.*

Ouvry and Miller (2015:34) discuss the idea of 'enabling environments' and note that the Reception year is one of the most influential times for children to shape 'their feelings about themselves as learners.' They introduce two pedagogical approaches: the transmission model approach and the co-construction approach which can be seen in table 6.1.1.

If teachers believe in the transmission model approach they believe:	If teachers believe in the co-construction approach they believe:
- that learning is all about transmitting pre-selected content and skills and not about the process by which children learn - that children will soak up knowledge even if it is not meaningful to them - that play is a time filler and recreation after children have finished their adult-directed task - that outdoor play is just "letting off steam."	- that learning happens when children make connections and is holistically constructed by the children from all their experiences (people and things) and that knowledge is meaningful to them - that it is efficient and is effective to plan from children's observed interests - that play needs adult involvement and attention - that children learn by making connections - that teachers develop warm relationships through playing with children and become partners with their parents - that outdoors is valued as an essential place where children learn actively.

Table 6.1.1: Transmission and co-construction approaches to pedagogy (Ouvry and Miller (2015: 35)

Whilst both models are proposed by Ouvry and Miller (2015) in response to enabling environments both indoors and outdoors in the Reception class generally and not specifically to describe the role play area in this case study, the overall beliefs are drawn on for that purpose in this case. It appears that in all three schools that the early educator's role may be categorised within the transmission model in terms of contributing shaping creativity and imagination in the role play area. Rogoff (2003) believes that often the intervention by adults is not intended as instructional but it is interesting that this is the case in most examples drawn from the data. It should be noted

that facilitation by adults can provide a structure and support. It appears this is difficult in practice within the Reception setting.

The teacher (School C) highlighted a purpose of the role play area for her was in terms of confidence building and the importance she held that the children felt '*comfortable and confident in the classroom because it's reflecting their home environment.*' This appears to show awareness that she believes that the role play area should be linked to real life situations. This is expanded upon in the attention the teacher pays to the importance of what she calls life skills, for example, matching activities and resources:

> *to match the right fork, the right bowls… they don't know how to lay the table, that the knife and fork go next to things, its's not massively important but it is a life skill.*

and also acknowledges confidence building through her suggestion that '*I want them to be really confident.*' Skills appear to very important to the teacher, as described in the field notes, during the discussion of the children completing basic skills (through completing a writing worksheet). The importance is placed on the children completing the writing worksheet and not on their play in the role play area. She appears to have seen the purpose of the role play area in this instance more as a classroom teacher in terms of going back to the importance of basic skills which appears to be a clear purpose for her rather than as a facilitator of children's role play. This does not appear to be a creative and imaginative process but instead a more formal teaching opportunity. This is further reiterated in the teacher role modelling session within session five non-participant observation:

> Teacher: *"Book a holiday. How are you going to book a holiday? How are you going to book one? What will you use to find a holiday?"*
>
> C (Child:) "*I use the books.*"

Teacher: "*You'd use the books? Would you use any of these? (Pointing to the pictures on the wall.) Because they've got words on them so you could copy the words down. Couldn't you? You could write Tower of Pisa or you could write Houses of Parliament.*"

The LSA in School A also held importance by the writing activity which was her introductory activity before the children were introduced to the role play area. The teacher in school C appeared to shut down the idea of the children using the books to find a holiday as she doesn't respond to that suggestion but instead moves straight to what is clearly her expectation of what the children should do, indicating the pictures on the wall. It could be suggested that the child had wanted to use the books (which were travel magazines) and this seems to be logical in terms of the question the teacher had posed for them. It appeared important to the teacher that the children could copy write the words 'Tower of Pisa' or 'Houses of Parliament which is perhaps a surprising for not only the play in the role play area but also for the appropriateness of the age of the children within it. The adult is taking control in this example and shutting down the child's suggestions even though the response by the child is appropriate. There appears to be a dominance of regulatory voice about the hierarchical value given to literacy over play, the importance of the writing not the play. This example is reiterated in the shopping observation in school A where the children have to complete a written shopping list before they use the role play area.

From the scoping survey the teacher responses have resulted in four themes being constructed and identified as important in influencing children in their real-world role play or fantasy play; relationships, experience, modelling and resources. Teacher perceptions of the adult role in children's role play or fantasy play also include modelling and resources but include environment notably linked to modelling (of the behaviours expected in that environment), language, observation and behaviour. The semi-structured interviews from both teacher and

LSA provide similarities to the scoping survey in terms of what the early educators perceive to be the purpose of the role play area, the roles of those within it, resources provided and behaviour issues that emerge. The field notes draw out the importance of planning and of role-modelling for the teacher alongside resources or 'props.'

The following figure 6.1.1, is drawn from the semi-structured interviews the scoping survey and the field notes, with a particular importance drawn to planning and role-modelling for the teacher alongside resources or props.

Figure 6.1.1 Summary of the roles that early educators have identified within the role play area

In School A, role- modelling was seen as a key to supporting the play. Through the observation sessions, I noted that the teacher detailed which staff would be 'enhancing'

and modelling the play for the children in each session as this was clearly important to her. This ensured that the play was contributed to and directed by adults with the children having little autonomy. An extract from her interview also suggests that she holds importance around an adult being present *'When we've got someone in to enhance the area, you know develop the language, they tend to, they will go off and use it. The children that wouldn't normally go there will tend to use it.''* other than the role-modelling in session five there is very little interaction with the children in the role play area evidenced at all possibly giving a message from the teacher about the perceived value of her interactions with the children or because of the practical reason she has to manage the rest of the setting and does not realistically have the time to spend in the role play area. Intervention by the early educator can be crucial but also detrimental and therefore needs responsive planning. There needs to be constant re-thinking on the part of early educator but without observation and reflection this becomes an almost impossible task. Therefore, Hutchin (2015: 154) suggests that;

> *planning from what has been observed means planning the adult role, responding in a different way, or providing sensitive support through getting more involved in the child's play without taking it over. This could include subtly modelling a particular skill whilst involved in the play.*

It is apparent that the teachers see role modelling as part of their professional role with a direct link to modelling language for children and the assumption that there is therefore a correct way to speak whilst in the role play area and also a correct language to speak in. The teacher (school C) felt it was important to be able encourage good language and modelled it in the role play area with the children the way she would do it if she was in a garden centre. She stated that particular groups of children became very engaged in role play but then that *'socially I don't think they'd go in there by themselves and play.'* This highlights the importance she attaches to her professional role and that of her modelling for the children but also that the children are likely not to go in and play by themselves.

I believe what she means by this is that actually the children wouldn't 'not play' but would not play the way she intended. Interestingly though she also notes that she *'hasn't really noticed what they were doing in there, you know, voluntarily without my support.'* Here she appears to be indicating that in fact the role play is only validated in her opinion if she is a part of modelling it. Rogoff (1990) offers a view that children are very active in determining their own level of involvement in play alongside a level of support from adults. However, rather than supporting there appears to be a shut down in terms of wanting children to participate in their own play activity.

In the second semi-structured interview (school C) the teacher did show pleasure that the children had role played without her needing to role model the new role play area for them:

> *This week we've had a birthday and the class bear had a party so we enhanced it a bit more with streamers and balloons, cakes and I didn't even model it. I just left it and they just went in and I could hear them singing happy birthday and then they sung it in welsh. I was really pleased.*

The teacher shows here that the children creating their own play is not what she expected. She draws heavily on modelling throughout the interview reporting that she had to model answering the phone *'a little bit'* and also modelled good behaviour with regards to life skills

> *They don't know how to lay the table, that the knife and fork go next to things. You know it's not massively important but it is a life skill.*

The teacher indicated that her plan for the year is *'lots of modelling'* which appears to be at odds with her pleasure at the fact that they were playing without her modelling for them. She also specified that this would be a role for both herself and the LSA. When I asked her if she felt modelling play was important she said that she thought it was but

also indicated that she didn't want to be too directional and didn't want to encourage repetition:

> *I don't want to say this is what we do in here and this is the only thing you can do in here, but if they do the same thing over, I think, well what is the point?*

An example she gave to illustrate this point is when the children weren't using the mobile phones as she felt they should because they were only using one of the phones and there were a few phones in the role play area.

> *They weren't using it for anything so I picked one up and said 'oh hello' and had a pretend conversation and then they were using their phones.*

The teacher seemed unaware of what the children were doing with the one mobile phone and whether in fact she was interrupting their play. She appeared to be unaware of what the play was when she went into the role play area at that time. When I asked her if she thought her modelling was useful she responded positively indicating that the phone calls were:

> *'getting really good and they were phoning Santa and putting someone on the good list or asking what they wanted for Christmas.'*

This again shows how the teacher is drawn into how the play will follow expectations that she sets. The following comment *'It was so much more than this is my phone and you're not sharing it'* emphasizes the link the teacher has between expectation and behaviour which is intertwined with her idea of modelling for the children. The teacher is very clear that she wants the children to take on different roles but again believes that this come from her modelling and *'giving them the ideas.'* The teacher appears to emphatically believe that the children could not effectively play in the role play area without adult modelling being a key contributor. There appear to be unequal power relationships that are socially and culturally being shaped with context as the key.

Seemingly then, there is a place for intervention by the early educator, but this needs to be handled sensitively. The idea of responsive planning both in advance and in situ does not appear to be one any of the early educators engage with. Perhaps this can be attributed to the fact that she rarely observes the play in the role play area although following the watching of the clip she acknowledges that there were significant opportunities for her to learn from. Terhart (1998: 434) engages with the notion that professional ethics can be seen as a 'controlling and balancing element' to teacher autonomy. He observes that there are two solutions to 'controlling the uncontrollable.' The first solution involves 'moralising' educators into a traditional idea of the ideal or perfect teacher and can lead to teachers grappling with a sense of guilt when they realise they are not professionally flawless. The second solution he offers is that of standardising their work so there is little autonomy. Sellars (2014) notes that much reflection is needed as a result of this and recognition on the part of the early educator that they are not a perfect teacher or slave to standards is important as this is an impossible feat.

A strong thread that appears throughout the phases is the evidence of a power struggle between the early educators and the children. An example of a power struggle within School A can be identified in the return of the observation of an LSA working with a small group of four children in which she is attempting to get them to *"dig like a badger"* and becomes seemingly frustrated when they appear to be confused by her instructions. The LSA animatedly enacts her version of how a badger digs would use its paws to dig and the children copy her actions for a short period before becoming distracted. It was unclear whether the LSA considered the play to be 'real world' or 'fantasy' but was it was based initially on a fictional book based on animated creatures (Percy the Park Keeper). In addition to the book that was taken into the role play area were non-fiction books on hibernation and

these were read to the children. The activity was described as being an *'enhanced role play activity'* by both the teacher and the LSA. One child left the area and returned with a small plastic green shovel and begins to 'dig' near the LSA but the shovel is confiscated by the LSA and the child is told that the shovel belongs in the sand pit not the role play area. The confusion is evident on the face of the child. She has been asked to *'dig'* by the adult and has responded in a reasonable way by going to fetch the spade, but the adult does not accept this and the power moves away from the child who had shown autonomy to the adult in an instructive and directive way. A further example of a power struggle in School A is illustrated through interaction between a different LSA in the new 'shop' set up as a 'real world' area. This was a newly set up role play area where the LSA was instructing the children in small groups of four how to use it for the first time. Before being allowed into the new role play area the children were taken to a table in order to write a shopping list so they each had an individual list before entering the role play. In the observation one child was sent back to the shop because she did not have the items in her basket that she had written on her list. Children's perceptions are influenced by messages that are send through educator's actions in the classroom. The message being sent here was that the child had not confirmed to the adult expectation within the play situation.

A further example of the power struggle between the teacher and children in School C can be evidenced through non-participant observation session five. This shows the teacher teaching in a didactic way whilst transmitting the language and setting of the travel agent rather than drawing on connections from the children themselves. For example, there are large periods of time where the teacher talks continuously, not encouraging student response or drawing on connections but instead attempting to act like a travel agent.

Teacher: "… It is a telephone book. So maybe you want to put people's telephone numbers in the book, if you've, if they've phoned and said can I book a holiday please and you say hang on, shall we pretend? (Teacher puts phone to her ear.) Yes, do you want to book a holiday, ok. What's your telephone number please? Hang on then, let me just get a pen and I can write that down. Ok so that's 124 yes 762 and what's the name? Mrs Davies. Ok Mrs Davies and where do you want to go? Spain. Oh, how lovely. And have you got a price? How much money do you want to spend? money do you want to spend? Two hundred pounds no problems. I will have a look for a holiday and I will phone you straight back and your telephone number 124762. Okey doke I'll phone you back soon – bye. (Teacher puts down the phone on the table.) I need to find Mrs Davies a holiday. What can I use to find a holiday?"
(Child H): "That globe. I've got a little one I have."
Teacher: "You could use a globe."
(Child F): "You could see Santa."
Teacher: "We've got to book Mrs Davies a holiday. What can we use that you've found T…? What are they called? Travel bro-ch-ures."
Children (chorus together): "Travel brochures."
Teacher: "I can look in a brochure to find her a holiday. What's this big thing over here?" (Teacher taps the wall behind her.) *Teacher: "A map. Could I look at a map to find a country for her?"*

The teacher appears to ignore anything that the children say that does not fit with her idea and this can be seen in the extract above where she responds to the child who mentions a globe by repeating the word globe in a confirmatory sentence but ignores the child who mentions Santa. She immediately changes the subject back to *'Mrs Davies'* and reverts back to her technique of getting the children to chorus the perceived correct word or phrase after her. This appears to confirm to her that they are learning. This is a technique she employs regularly through the session. Her teaching does not appear to mirror the typical or expected behaviour of a travel of a travel agent however. For example, there are few travel agents that would use a large wall map to find a country for a customer. Many of the interactions followed a similar pattern. This example reflects the ways in which adults do not acknowledge children's opinions and input when it is not what they want to hear highlighting the ways in which the decision-making capacities and power can be used by adults (Jones 2011). Rogoff (2003: 257) suggests that an important accomplishment in all communities is how children learn 'to

distinguish the appropriate ways to act in different situations.' There is no evidence in the findings to show that early educators appear to be aware of the conflict this could potentially cause for young children. The fact that play is so regulated and directed in the school setting diminishes the children's role in their own play where it becomes controlled and unnatural. An example to illustrate this can be seen at the end of the teacher role modelling session (five) with the teacher directing the children towards the end of her input as to who will be able to use the newly refurbished role play area.

> Teacher: "*Right, so, how many children can use our travel agents though?"*
>
> Children (Chorus together): "*Six."*
>
> Teacher: "*Six yes. So I'll have to use six super duper children to come and use it first."*
>
> C (Child): I want to…
>
> Teacher: "*Put your hands on your shoulders if you want to come in. Oh this is really, really difficult. I'm just going to count one, two, three, four, five, six ok and then the others can have a turn later after they're finished. You can swop over. Right let's have a look at who's been brilliant. You've been a really good boy, one* (teacher points to six children one at a time) *two, three, four, five and T… six. Everyone else Sefwych yn dawel?* (Were you quiet?) *Off you go and we can come in after. Don't forget to phone Mrs Davies back.*"

Here again we see directive behaviour by the teacher but also seemingly the choice of who uses the role play area is taken away from the children. It appears that good behaviour on the part of the children was a prerequisite of being picked by the teacher. The last sentence from the extract *'Don't forget to phone Mrs Davies back'* shows the teacher re-engaging with the role play that she had previously engaged in with the children though there is no direct response to that from the children indicating a lack of dialogue. The only response to the teacher is from a child who asks *'After play is there PE?'* This could suggest an immediate lack of engagement on the part of the children but the teacher appears unaware of this. Holland (2012:83) suggests that 'we are only

going to know what children think if we invite and enter dialogue with them.' It is this dialogue which will then in turn produce increasing challenge, planning, resourcing and a broadening of children's interests and skills. Rogoff (2003) suggests that progress in understanding different perspectives are necessary in order to see and understand. She draws on the analogy of both people with intense identification within a community (insiders) and those with little contact (outsiders). In this case it appears that the early educators can sit outside the understanding of the children's role play with their focus on regulatory practice and therefore could 'run into difficulties in making and interpreting observations' (2003:26). The teacher appears to interpret the symbolic play behaviours literally and as these do not fit in with her idea of how the children should behave then she corrects or terminates the play (Russell 2010).

Waller (2005) suggests that the play experience offered to children by practitioners reflects a socially constructed view of childhood. Therefore, their understanding of positive experiences within play environments largely stems from their experiences. The teacher (school C) was perhaps then mirroring her own classroom experiences for the children in her classroom but also her own recent experiences for example when she kept returning to her 'honeymoon' in the role modelling session. In session five there are further discussions between the teacher and children about some of the pictures of famous places that have been put on the wall. The teacher is generally directive when she adopts a playful attitude with the children. In the extract below she directs the first part of the conversation about her and where she wanted to go on her honeymoon. It could be suggested that she believed the children will soak up some knowledge that she is imparting even though it is not meaningful to them. When the child asked a question

that could have explored a more childlike understanding of travel she directs the focus

back to herself.

> *Teacher:* "Look at this, the Tower of Pisa but it's also called the leaning Tower of Pisa. Have a look at it, it's leaning. It's in Italy where I went on honeymoon but I didn't see that. I really wanted to go there but I didn't see it. So maybe if I come in here to book a holiday I'll be asking you to please can you find me a holiday to Italy. I really want to go to Pisa. Ok so if I give you
> a ring or pop into the shop that's where I want to go."
> *Child: "So why don't you go to the beach?"*
> *Teacher: "I'd like to go to the beach but I'd prefer to go to Italy please. So if you come along here and choose a holiday, if you do that you can book Mrs X a holiday."*

Appleby (2011:134) discusses the importance of developing children who are both

'players and learners.' She believes that in order to do this that practitioners would be

required to understand children as 'players and learners.' The role-modelling of teachers

in general for the children appears to also be a driver for both modelling of environment

and the modelling of language. Hutchin (2015: 152) notes the importance of

'responding sensitively' to the child rather than *'following one's own intentions or*

moving on to the next thing.' This is in stark contrast to many of the responses that the

teacher and LSAs are seen to give the children being particularly evident in the first part

of session five (School C) where the teacher both lectures and criticises the children. In

contrast to this research, Rubie-Davies (2010) et al. found that in their study of

comparing teachers and LSAs, criticism and negative feedback was very uncommon

among both teachers and LSAs.

Edmiston (2008) highlights a co-authoring role between early educators and children in

an attempt to consider numerous perspectives during imaginary play. He believes that

children must be encouraged to express both appropriate and inappropriate actions and

emotions during these interactions but recognises that this could be a challenge for adults in three ways. Firstly, he believes that for authentic engagement in adult-child play to take place adults must be able to release their hierarchical power and positioning and be willing to 'learn and see through the eyes of the child as well as co-construct meaning and knowledge during the pretend play experiences.' (2008:185) Secondly, he suggests that early educators should deviate from being observers and facilitators of children's learning, instead engaging in co-authoring experiences with children as active participants. Thirdly, he claims that ethical pedagogy is maximized 'when adults make an ideological shift towards allowing children to see through the lens of "evil" characters even though such mock violence "threatens adult authority" and our belief in children as innocent beings.'

The notion of facilitator is highlighted in the scoping survey and is thought provoking in terms of the facilitator facilitating exemplar play. Again, here is the idea that there is a 'right and acceptable' way to play. This appears to suggest that the teacher should be able to explain what the right and acceptable way to play is with a clear pedagogical underpinning. This appears to be at odds with the idea of the 'stimulating and imaginative role play area' which would suggest an autonomy rather than constraint.

Kalliala (2009) supports the idea that there is a correlation between the practitioner as an activator of children's interest and the consequent engagement of a child in play. This would allow the early educator to support an initial intervention at the start of the play which could lead to productive play opportunities for the child. Dunkin and Hanna (2001) suggest that the facilitator role is about sustaining play by providing strategies and ideas, extending children's thinking, giving children time to think and speak whilst

recalling and creating opportunities for children to make next steps. Wood (2013:99) suggests that too much intervention can be as problematic as too little intervention and that free play should be seen as 'the private world of children, where they should have choice, ownership and control.' She takes this further in suggesting that intervention may well be intrusive and unwanted, particularly when the direction of play is altered in ways that were not intended by the children. The examples gathered within this research do not indicate that the children are able to exercise much choice, ownership or control unless covertly. When they are discovered then their play is immediately shut down. The children often show persistence and resilience in terms of their determination to continue the play in the way they wish to but are repeatedly governed by the directiveness of the teacher or LSA.

In my view this could be because of an attempt to ensure children are learning to play in the way the teacher sees as acceptable and to direct them effectively to the are designated for role play. An example of this can be evidenced from School A where the children take responsibility for their play by defiantly ignoring the teacher and LSA instructions until they give up repeating the request that they move from the carpet (not a designated area for role play but one that the children appeared to favour) and back to the areas designated for role play. For example, *"You are dressed up. You need to be in the nativity area, not anywhere else. In the nativity area."* The governance of the teacher is persistent but also the persistence of the children is maintained. This power struggle could indicate that the children are not engaged as the play that is being directed is not the play they want to engage in. Burke (2008:26) notes that play is a key element in children's culture and highlights the importance of understanding the 'subversive, hidden and intimate aspects of their play'. She goes on to warn against the

adult inclination to want to know about and control all aspects of children's lives. Interestingly, in this research the non-participant video observations in School C do not appear to show the teacher wanting to know all about the play in the role play area as she is preoccupied with the rest of the classroom organisation and teaching. However, the teacher in School C believes that the practice of learning to behave appropriately is a key purpose for her role play area. This statement seems to indicate that actually there is an assumption that the children should play in a certain way particularly through the use of the word *'appropriate'* and that this should be regulated by the early educators. The teacher sees that this area could give the children a sense of freedom suggesting, *'that's why the bad behaviour happens. It's an excuse almost.'* This could suggest that opportunities for imaginative play or role play are removed from the children when their play is stilted.

Wood's (2013:49) example suggests that play could be used 'to tame children through behaviour management routines' as an example of an early educator's regulatory dominance of play. Question seven in the scoping survey, in which the teachers were asked what they considered to be the role of the adult in children's role play or fantasy play, draws out behaviour as a key word again linked to the word *'appropriate'* therefore emphasising that early educators appear to feel there is an appropriate way for children to play in the role play area. Another phrase that was used was to *'intervene if necessary'* this would seem to suggest that the view of the early educator is that there are times when intervention is necessary. The question could be raised here about whether the intervention was necessary because the early educator felt that the behaviour was disruptive and potentially dangerous or because they felt that it was

'inappropriate' in terms of how they expected the child/ children to act when they were in the role play area.

It appears that the driver for when intervention is considered necessary in the setting stems from two main ideas. The first when the role play area is noisy, therefore evoking a reaction to modify the noise by the teacher (School C) as would typically be the case in a classroom. The second when teacher notices that the role play area is messy or not being used as it should. An example of this comes from the teacher in the first interview, *'If I notice it's becoming really messy than they are probably not using at as intended.'* This is an interesting comment as naturally children in play would be likely to create a mess through the very nature of their play. Another example to support this is recorded in the field notes (School C) when in one incident the teacher recognises that there is a group in the role play area who have become very loud and disruptive. The teacher enters the role play area to find that the lights have been switched off. She said that she *'put them back on, gave the boys a warning and left the area'.* The lights were turned off again and the teacher noted her frustration in the defiance displayed by the children as they repeated this behaviour several times. Dudek's research (2000) found that the boundaries within how a setting operates are key to influencing the types of values and ethos that are sustained by practitioners. This can explain children's ownership and involvement within a setting and how the setting contributes to building relationships. He goes on to clarify the importance of allowing more relaxed systems to emerge within the environment but also emphasises that the early years educators must understand the culture of the setting they inhabit. Rogoff (1990) highlights the fact that children are very active in choosing their own activities and companions for play. If children refuse or are reluctant to take part in the activity then this is a likely sign of them feeling a lack

of ability to navigate within their own sociocultural setting. This often leads to the adult suggesting poor or disruptive behaviour is an issue. Question ten of the scoping survey asks the teachers to give an example of an instance or an issue that may arise when children use the role play or fantasy play areas. Out of the nine responses overwhelmingly six of the responses were linked to behaviour with one of them suggesting that there was a gender difference in the behaviour that took place with *'boys in particular'* displaying behaviour *'which is not suitable for the classroom.'* This question links to the previous point raised about intervention being necessary as the teacher states they would intervene when *'behaviour is disruptive to others and can be dangerous to play inside.'* A further suggestion is that children may be *'acting out inappropriate behaviour they may have witnessed outside school.'* The teacher in semi-structured interview one also acknowledges that it is the boys who seem to be more disruptive *'the boys that are playing whatever fantasy game it is like to whizz across the classroom to the story garden and I tend to catch them in the middle to stop them running.'* It appears that the teachers believe that behaviour management within the role play area is needed to stop the play spilling over into the other areas of the classroom.

A further thread that is drawn out of the data collection is that of professional learning. In interview one (school C) the teacher believed that as a newly qualified teacher she was *'pretty current with what I've had in Uni'* and in addition she stated she did a lot of reading and had ideas of how she wanted things to work. She also stated that she asked *'a lot of other teachers in the school, checking on their areas.'* The teacher acknowledges in interview two that no training she has undertaken has prepared her for facilitating role play *'Not the everyday, with role play, not looking at the theorists, you know.'* This is the first and only time that the teacher has mentioned some form of

pedagogical input. It appears that she recognises that this is a gap in her professional

learning and acknowledges that this understanding has come to light since discussing

the role play area and reflecting on the sessions. *'I'm more aware since watching the

clip and you've made me think about the areas more and where to go next.'* She

identifies how useful she found watching the one non-participant session and it would

perhaps have been expected that as a consequence of this that she would have used the

further evidence presented to her in the form of the recorded observations, but she didn't

choose to do this. The teacher appeared to be genuinely interested in improving the

experience of the children in the role play area but appears not to have the pedagogical

understanding to be able to do this effectively. As an NQT in her first teaching year this

seems strange as one would expect theoretical underpinning of early years to have been

a significant part of her training. The teacher appears to recognise her lack of

pedagogical understanding and wants to improve the experience of the children in this

area of her classroom. It does not become clear what is important to the LSA with

regards to her particular role in the role play area and there appears to be no

understanding of underpinning pedagogy or understanding what the intention of the play

is, rather that she is fulfilling an expectation and following what is expected of her in her

role. Similarly, the teacher appears to recognise that a particular role is expected of her,

but this appears to be built upon what she has informally picked up from others and does

not seem to be based on any pedagogical values. Neither early educator appears to have

the pedagogical understanding underpinning role play in the early years or the

confidence to facilitate it effectively. Holland (2011) suggests that her research

experience across a number of settings suggests that some practitioners and some

children need to be supported in developing necessary skills to be effective in

imaginative play.

Therefore, a lack of training becomes an instrumental factor in understanding how early educators interact with children in the role play area and how children respond. In school C the teacher has appeared to recognise her lack of training and inexperience of pedagogy in this area drawing instead on examples she has seen in practice in her setting or what she perceives are expectations. The process of reflection has made her question her practice *'I'm more aware since watching the video clips.'* She drew attention to needing to know the basics which she sees as important and illustrates the fact that teachers need to know things, for example, like how children develop their pencil grip, and how this should be *'the same for play.'* She also indicates that she has not *'looked at the theorists'* and from this I must assume that there is no pedagogical understanding around role play. Sylva et al (2010) discuss the notion of sustained shared thinking which occurs as skilled adults support children and support complex problem-solving, curiosity and complex thought. Again, examples of where this could have taken place but were missed and opportunities can be seen particularly in the transcript at the beginning of session 5 with the teacher role-modelling to the class. In terms of her professional learning and reflection the teacher (school C) saw the way forward as completing some observations of her own in other classrooms and said she would talk to the head teacher about the possibilities for this. She believed that she should have a strategy in place to be able to monitor the role play area, with this perhaps being an observational log. She observed that following the reflections and informal discussions with myself she feels more *'aware'* but it is important to reinforce the fact that my aim as a researcher was not to influence the practice but rather to explore it. Craft (2000) discusses the concept of 'possibility thinking' which allows the practitioner to be able to respond with an open mind but also to be able to think divergently about evidence from experience and reading resulting in formulating and conveying new insights which can inform professional learning.

The role play area is a complex phenomenon and constraints are clearly felt by early educators which may well be because of the constraints that they feel in their settings which are particularly highlighted in the focus group in terms of pressures from senior management.

6.2 Sub-question two

What does children's engagement in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play in the reception setting look like?

In terms of relationships with the early educators the children's engagement and role in the setting up of the role play area appears to be very minor and is not discussed very much at all in either the semi-structured interviews or in the field notes. Where it is discussed, it appears that it is mainly about resourcing or children offering suggestions for resources. In the school setting the children's role in the role play area appears to be minimal in terms of contributing to ideas for resourcing the role play area but is also seen by the early educators as one in which the children should conform to the way they have been directed to play. This is described through the role-modelling that the teacher emphasises as particularly important which appears to be mainly linked to shaping behaviour. There is consistently a lack of children's voice evidenced within this study and a lack of cultural understanding on the part of the early educators who are concerned with teaching children how to act appropriately in the setting they construct for them in the role play area which could be very different to the situation they find themselves in at home.

Rogers and Evans (2008) suggest that in Reception classes, teachers tended to organise the play environment and only intervene to control the play if it became too noisy and boisterous whilst they were focused on other group activities. This appears to override the notion that children can be themselves or pretend to be someone else in order for

play to become a vehicle for emotional expressiveness, if the play is too noisy or boisterous (Cassidy et. al 1992). Denham et. al (1990) suggest that opportunities for children to explore both their own feelings and those of others can be described as a socialisation of emotional understanding. Therefore, children begin to develop empathy towards each other within their play and need to have the opportunities to do that without being constrained. This was evidenced in school A and school C. Bauman and May (2001) suggest that children gain a sense of power by being allowed the autonomy to make play decisions and respond to their peers emotional needs. They go on to argue that a sense of power in their own play affords children a capacity to develop emotionally and socially. However, what has been drawn out in particular is the frustrations that appear to be present for the children. Examples of these are given in vignette one and two (appendix six and seven) Here it appears that the children are desperately trying to 'play' they appear to want to respond to the teacher direction and play accordingly but they are unable to and are not supported in their attempts. This is, in the main, due to the fact that there is no adult to support or scaffold them in practice. Vygotsky (1978) placed a strong emphasis on the social and cultural elements of play. He advocated that play served as the first form of language and communication and that during play children could learn to understand the nature of symbols and rules. Social interaction was of particular importance to him and through his notion of a zone of proximal development it was suggested that adults were able to support the learning of young children and enable them to complete more complex tasks which they eventually be able to do alone. Vygotsky states,

> *In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development.'* (1978:102)

Holland (2012:20) draws on empirical evidence through her observations of young boys to suggest that whilst they could be embroiled in the throes of 'quite aggressive war, weapon and superhero scenarios' they are still able to step out of the role for example, to comfort a child who is upset in the classroom (not linked to the role play). Here she suggests they are 'demonstrating an ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality' (2012:21). This could perhaps show a sense of maturity in the children's thinking or socialisation which is not necessarily recognised by early educators. Therefore, if the children comply then this is seen as a measurement of success and perhaps it is in terms of reception age children learning organisational strategies. However, it does not necessarily show that their role play activity is of quality or that their behaviour is indeed disruptive. Maybe instead it is just different to that expected by the early educators. An example of this is when the teacher was somewhat disturbed at how much one child was using a *'pretend gun.'* Here was the first hint of her being conscious of *'inappropriate behaviour'* in the role play area. She saw her role to be that of shaping appropriate behaviour and it was her decision what the prop became not allowing autonomy on the part of the child. Through the empirical evidence Holland has collected she notes that where a 'zero tolerance' (2012:28) approach has been relaxed then the practitioners have stood back allowing children to be far more effective at regulating the play themselves whilst avoiding injury and in sustaining the play. There also appears to be an overwhelming need for early educators to contain role play within the role play area and that if role play that spills out into other areas of the classroom it is considered disruptive and unacceptable. Russell (2010) suggests that one view may be that the adult perceives play behaviour as indicative of future adult behaviour and therefore that begins to explain the need for control. 'We may feel the need to correct or redirect what might appear to be aggressive or violent play.' (2010: 317) Another purpose she has

suggested is that playing out trauma or uncertainty could be a vehicle in which to understand and 'play out' any anxieties. Sturrock and Perry (2005) suggest that play is cyclical and involves behaviour that we see and what we cannot see, namely the processes in the mind of the child. An example of this could be seen in the non-participant observation when the children were discussing explosions and fire. My field notes recorded the response of the teacher to these conversations where there had been a local fire in a house (in the street next to the school) the previous evening. The real life scenario became part of the play for the children in the setting even though they did not discuss it with the teacher during that day. Therefore, this is a real example of how children are 'driven to express deeply symbolic material in their play.' (Russell 2010: 317) The children were fully engaged in the off-task play that they were engaged in, play that reflected a real life scenario that was current and exciting for them. There would be opportunities for the teacher to have engaged with the children if she had been aware of the play that had taken place in order to support and understand the reality of the children's real life experience.

One positive and amusing example of engagement was recalled by the teacher (school C) when she had observed one child telling another to be quick as his flight was leaving and he was going to be late. She was laughing as she recalled the episode and explained that the other child started running on the spot with both children laughing loudly. The teacher recalled asking the child whether he had packed and seemed to take a genuine pleasure in the episode. Her role in this showed that she was capable of engaging in the role play with the children without overthinking it and directing it. In this sense she role modelled whilst engaged in the role play with the children instead of seeing it as a separate activity. Rogoff (2003) believes that learning to fit approaches flexibly to circumstances is a key component

in cognitive development. This appears to be an example of this showing the engagement between the teacher and children in a much less formal way and not instructional. Kitson (2011:109) believes in the power of the adult playing with the child rather than standing back as on observer but notes that this seems to be a difficult task for the adults who appear to find it 'so hard to join in.'

Following observation three the teacher asked how the children had played in the role play area, suggesting that she had little idea of what had taken place in that session. I reported that there was extremely little if any 'travel agent play' that I had noted during the filming although there was lots of interaction in the role play area. She had noted that when she looked at in at one point that the children were all gathered around one table as a group although she chose not to interact with them. She asked me what they were talking about and we discussed that much of the conversation was about whose house they would go to for tea. They also spent a notable amount of time sprinkling the pretend money from the money tray over each other's heads. The majority of time however appeared to be focussed on the mobile phones. I mentioned that I had seen some of those children really engaged previously within other observations. The teacher wondered what the reason for lack of 'travel agent play' was today. This appeared to disappoint her and her impression of successful role play was clearly not realised. There appears a reluctance on the part of the teacher to engage or interact in the play unless it is through herself role modelling or in a monitoring of behaviour. This lack of interaction does not give the children an opportunity to respond to her within their play

At the beginning of the role modelling (session 5/ School C) where the teacher takes the children into the role play area, she immediately constructs an expectation of the behaviour she expects the children to conform to. The children engage in the activity.

> Teacher: *"Can you sit on your bottoms please? Not this minute. Eisteddwych. Please sit on the carpet. Oh!"* (Teacher lifts her arm in the air to attract attention of children.) *"What are you doing? Eisteddwych properly. Uh, girls. Did I say to come in and stand up and lean against the wall? No. So where did I tell you to go? C…, can you sit up properly please? S…, If your hand is in the air what does that mean? It means we don't speak."* (Teacher lowers her arm. Children are facing in all different directions, still shuffling and trying to fit into the space.) *"Right ok, so our travel agent has been refurbished. We've put some more things in it. E… and L… and C/A… and B… can you sit properly please? Otherwise you'll be going over there."*
>
> LSA: (Sitting out of sight of the camera but at the door of the role play area) *"Some will have to come out with me."*
>
> Teacher: *"They may have to, how sad."*

The teacher and LSA are immediately critical in tone towards the children and appear initially to be focussed on behaviour management only. It is interesting that this is the only interaction involving the LSA in the role play area throughout all the non-participant observations and it is a negative one. It is interesting to think about the message being given to the children in their role play area here. The eighteen children are squeezed into a small area that already has furniture within it and therefore it is difficult for the children to find a space in which to sit. It could be noted that this was more likely the reason for the disruption on the part of the children than the fact they just wanted to defy the teacher and 'misbehave.' It does not appear at this point that a positive message about the role play area being one in which autonomy and freedom is valued is being portrayed from the early educators to the children. It is also interesting that the teacher did not appear to realise that there were too many children in the role play area or if she did, she didn't adapt the activity to accommodate the large group in the small area. This could be attributed to the fact that she was reluctant to change her

practice as she knew the session was being recorded. It may also be considered be that the teacher was also not confident enough to change her practice from something she had planned for. Fisher and Wood (2012) present research carried out on practitioners' analyses of videotaped episodes of practice, collaborative discussions and documented pedagogical challenges. In the study, practitioners noted for themselves where they interfered too much and even distracted children directly from their thinking providing a professional development opportunity. The teachers noted for themselves that their role mirrored that of teacher behaviour when involved on a teacher-focussed task, therefore steering the conversation and frequently taking it over.

Edmiston (2008:297) discusses ethical identity development with one of his main arguments being that children's play is comparable to a 'dress rehearsal for life for the many ethical and moral decisions they will have to make.' Jones (2011: 64) raises a question in relation to the adult child power struggle, *'can children be trusted?'* This stems from adult views of children as not to be trusted in relation to their own lives and experiences and connects with a view that policy, practices and voices can come into collision with those of children. The perception appears to be that children's opinions are less trustworthy than adults. He goes further in suggesting that power relations can ensure that children are not paid attention but acknowledges that 'seeking views and giving children the power as competent individuals whose views are taken seriously and acted upon, or negotiated with, by adults is complex.' (2011:64) Prout (2005) offers the view that play may help children to be better children rather than help them to prepare to be adults. This resonates with what appears to be the intention for the early educators in this research, therefore that they wish them to mirror the behaviour of the adult in role play. The behaviour that was observed within the non-participant observations was not

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always that which was expected, however, even what was considered 'disruptive' behaviour was very minor.

In session seven of the non-participant observations there is an opportunity to see a scenario that occurs with the children who have been directed to the role play area and are met with a child that was not directed there. The child is managed by the four children in the area and repeatedly told she is *'not allowed here'* until she conforms to their and instruction and leaves the area. Following her departure the children spend just under two minutes counting themselves and pointing to each other as if to ensure they are following the rules of the role play area. The children are aware that six children are allowed in the role play area at any one time. They seem to be perplexed, as evidenced by their repeated counting of each other and confused expressions, as to why there are only four of them in the area when the rule is that there could be six of them. When another child joins the group of four it is interesting that there is no mention of whether he is able to join them and no repetition of the counting, possibly the children have already tired of adhering to the rule. This example shows that the children have taken notice of the teacher and are trying in their own way to follow her direction. This could illustrate one of two things. Firstly, how the power stays firmly within an adult led capacity or secondly how the children can use the power of the 'adult voice' to manipulate and control their peers. It is the force of the 'adult voice' that ensures other children conform when their peers adopt this 'voice' and assume its associated power.

Canning (2011:25) suggests that it is important for early educators to start from a 'can do' perspective when facilitating children's play. She recognises that when early educators know the children well that they need to be trust them to make positive play decisions otherwise

they are in danger of slipping into a 'restrictive attitude.' Along with this she identifies that early educators need the confidence and strategies to be able to support children in a positive environment. Moyles (2010:15) 'Children can only learn when they are allowed to make mistakes without feeling failures. They do not need pressure and stress – it is counterproductive in learning.'

Sutton-Smith (1997:125) argues that children seek to have their own separate play culture including a resistance to adult power and conventions as a *'hidden transcript of childhood.'* This resistance to adult power is captured in both school A and B where the play is engineered by the children who do not falter from the seriousness of the task in hand, therefore, to act out the classroom setting with themselves in role. Henricks (2011:212) also argues that in playfulness, self-interest (with elements of subterfuge from others) is to be expected, alongside a willingness of the players to exploit situations where possible. Moyles (2010:15) 'Children can only learn when they are allowed to make mistakes without feeling failures. They do not need pressure and stress – it is counterproductive in learning.'

Sheridan (1997) stresses that both shared and personal spaces are important for children's play. Space where children can play with others is important but there should also be opportunities for children to be able to access smaller, quieter spaces for their own solitary activity which would allow for opportunities for autonomy and independence. Whilst solitary activity is observed in the role play area through the non-participant observations on a number of occasions this appears to happen by chance and is not what the teacher has planned for in the role play area, nor a play behaviour that children adopt there. It was observed on several occasions that the children went to look for their own spaces. They did not seem to be concerned about the constraints of being in a specifically designated area and

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seemed confused when their 'real' play that took place outside of the role play area was blocked and they were re-directed. Kalliala (2009) identifies that the early years educator needs to be able to balance the power relationship between the adult world and the world of the child. This can be achieved by allowing children autonomy over their play situation.

In reality the data collection did not reflect many opportunities to allow children prospects for creativity and imagination within the 'real world' or 'fantasy' settings. The 'real world' settings were directional and the children were directed to complete 'tasks' within them. There was evidence of them trying to repeat the teacher modelling but this allowed very little opportunity for creativity or imagination. The only opportunities for creativity and imagination were where the children did not comply with the teacher direction. One example of this was when the children were sprinkling the money in the role play area and pretending it was rain. Resources appeared to hinder the children at times. In school C when the additional resources were added to enhance the role play area (a suitcase with props relating to a beach) the children spent time putting on the props, for example, flippers and goggles but did not engage in any play. One child sat on the floor and spent some minutes taking off his shoes to put on the flippers and once he had done so he then took them off an put his shoes back on.

6.3 Summary

The role play area is a complex phenomenon and constraints are clearly felt by early educators which may well be because of the constraints that they feel in their settings. This could stem from the lack of professional learning and development that has been available to them or the lack of quality of the training they may have undertaken in Wales. This may have potentially been denied an effective understanding and

underpinning of early years pedagogy alongside the added pressure from Welsh Government, school policy and from other professionals within the setting including the senior leadership team. Corte (2010:47) recognises that the traditional and dominant form of school learning has been 'teacher directed' where a teacher 'takes all the relevant decisions and the learner can and should follow him or her.' This traditional form of learning is mirrored by the early educators in this research showing the power struggle between them and the reception aged children. Rinaldi (2006:112) offers the idea that 'to have a different understanding of reality does not mean having different rights' but recognises that it often appears to be the case that a 'kind of hierarchy is imposed, which creates levels of understanding and then relates these to the recognition of rights.'

Professional learning and training of early educators is a key point to be drawn out of this research with regards to the literature in terms of the role of the early educators and in terms of the importance of reflection. Howard (2010:213) suggests the importance of re-establishing early years educators as play professionals whilst empowering them to be driven by a philosophy of play. Moyles et.al (2002:89) suggest that:

> *If we want professionals, then professional understanding itself needs to be nurtured, to be allowed time to develop and opportunity to be applied. Educational improvement depends upon practitioners feeling they want to make a difference: upon them feeling empowered and professional.*

Drawing on the EPPE research (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004) Siraj-Blatchford (2009:12) notes that a 'more conscious awareness of the pedagogic processes that are involved are likely to be extremely valuable in the development of professional early childhood practice.' The acknowledgment by the early years' professional that she doesn't know *'how role play should be done'* but also that she does it because she feels she *'has to'* do

it rather than understanding the value of play in the role play area is surprising. This mirrors the LSA semi-structured interview and shows that neither teacher or LSA were given any training or support in how to set up a role play area or indeed how to fulfil their roles within it. The fact that the teacher states *'I don't really know how role play should be done because I haven't done it before and I feel I have to do it'* could imply that she is uncomfortable in setting up this area of the classroom but knows there is an expectation by the school that she does so *'I set it up with no guidance really on what it should be used for.'* Siraj- Blatchford (2009:7) suggests that 'more often than not the adult is entirely unaware of the pedagogy that they are applying.'

Kallia (2011: 28) cautions about the importance of practitioners being skilled in knowing when to 'activate' and when they can enable children to initiate their own play. Therefore, this requires that the early educator evaluates the balance within the setting but also that the skill of 'seeing' is developed to enable understanding of when children do need support or when they should be left to work it out for themselves.

It must be considered that leadership within a school setting is key to allowing teachers and LSAs to have those learning opportunities in order to become the most effective facilitators of early role play. Roberts-Holmes (2012) notes in a research study carried out with primary head teachers that they stated the quality of well educated, professional early years educators was critical to the successful implementation of the EFYS, which was an ongoing area of concern for them. He went on to highlight recognition from primary head teachers of the EYFS as a complicated and demanding curriculum. King (2015) suggests that training and mentoring for early years leaders is needed in order to encourage and grow informed pedagogy and confidence in early years settings.

Wood (2013:12) suggests 'children have inner power and potential which can be realised and revealed through play' though this appears to be stilted by the early educators. Instead, the inner power and potential does not appear to be recognised or encouraged by the early educators but rather controlled and set within expected compliance boundaries. Children seek to challenge those boundaries actually do show inner power and potential along with resilience. The persistence that children show encourages us to think that this approach to role play is inadequate. Holland (2012:3) reiterates that thought:

> *Many elements of early childhood practice come to be seen as business as usual: we go on doing them but we don't remember, or perhaps we never knew in the first place, why?*

She also goes further in highlighting just how carefully early educators need to model the use of power with young children. She notes that as early educators do have power over young children then they must use that power wisely.

> *Using our physical power or moral authority to prevent children from hurting themselves or others must be viewed as an acceptable use of that power, but to use our power to colonize their fantasy worlds is surely heading down the road of control and compliance in an altogether different direction.* Holland (2012:100)

Role modelling appears to feature heavily in how the early educators perceive their role with the children implying they wouldn't be able to play effectively without that support or that something has been observed that they don't feel is appropriate and want to amend the behaviour. Wood (2013: 49) notes that 'if play is overly directed and controlled children may not experience the full potential of play.' Fagan (1976) posed the question that if the purpose of the role play was to learn specific behaviours then why not just learn them? Therefore, teach them directly. It is curious then why the early

educators seek to use play as a vehicle to teach behaviours when the very essence of play is to stimulate imagination and creativity.

The next and final chapter draws together the conclusion of this thesis with regards to the overarching research question and draws out some specific research headlines.

CHAPTER SEVEN   CONCLUSION

This conclusion draws together my practical experience gained through a pragmatic approach to the six phases undertaken within my theoretical framework and built on the work of Rogoff. My intention was to focus on framing and answering the overarching research question (Cohen, Manion and Morrisson:2011*): To what extent does 'real world' or 'fantasy' play allow children opportunities for creativity and imagination?*

Socio-cultural context has underpinned everything in this thesis. Children are steeped in cultural being and therefore it is appropriate to create socio-culture through play. However, the cultural experience of the early educator can be very different to that of the children in a setting. I therefore suggest that it is important to take account of the starting point of children within play experience and to recognise empathy as to how that activity fits with the practices and traditions of the community (Rogoff: 2003). There is a parallel with the differences between the cultures and exclusiveness of the adult and child themselves within an early years setting in addition to the complexities that are extended to include home cultures. Learning about and from other communities and cultures is a first step. 'If we can get beyond the idea that one way is necessarily best, we can consider the possibilities of other ways, seeking to understand how they work and respecting them in their time and place.' Rogoff (2003:17)

I also make a case for a need to enable the voice of the child in role play with a need for his/her cultural reference points to be visible in role play opportunities through facilitation rather than viewed through the lens of regulatory practice. Siraj- Blatchford (2009: 11) suggests *'that the adults that children grow up with, progressively introduce them to the cultural tools that they require to integrate fully as contributing members of*

the society around them.' There needs to be an articulation of all play activity that is shaped in the socio-cultural context of both early educator and child.

I have unpicked children's subversion to regulatory practice and how they appear to find a way to play 'despite' having their play directed or shut down in a variety of forms. The children show robustness and resilience in their determination whilst maintaining a regulation of compliance to expectation when necessary. This can often be described as poor behaviour and has been a thread that has run throughout the data collection. The very process of recognising that complex social dynamics exist in children's play may be uncomfortable. It can create an atmosphere of self-doubt when children show rebellion against adult imposed rules. Early educators can become agents of change if they step back from situations and ask themselves why these situations have occurred rather than repeatedly amending or directing behaviour. It is the questioning of situations as they arise which is of key importance. Brock (2010) explains that playing and responding playfully requires risk taking and that whilst children's risks extend to be primarily physical, the early educators take risks that require deep reflection and analysis on understanding of practices held.

Wood (2013:35) notes that adults have their own clear ideas about what 'appropriate play' is but do tend to struggle with what they see as their commitment to nurturing children's interests and any play themes that include war games or play fighting and acknowledging that rough and tumble and superhero play is often banned. Wood (2013) reiterates that inevitably gender issues come to the fore in this sort of play as they are typically, though not exclusively, dominated by boys and physical activity. It is here that children 'often feel a sense of agency, control and excitement as they imitate their superheroes, which may contrast with feelings of powerlessness in adult-controlled situations' (2013: 36). Perhaps it could also be suggested that the children are experiencing sheer boredom in the roles that they have

been given within the real world play that is expected of them and this is why they step out of role or indeed never step into role, instead choosing more exciting opportunities within their play.

Early educators are constrained by policy, school structures and management systems, cultural values and a detachment or understanding of pedagogy. Wood (2013: 99) suggests that in highly structured play for example in school C as in the observed play directed by the teacher and where resources and tools are specifically used to match a purpose, there is 'little space for the child's creative thought and self-initiated activity.' It raises the question of how children learn to self-regulate when they are so closely instructed and directed in play situations and also whether young children are developmentally ready for such formal routines. Nicholson (1971) emphasizes the value of offering children open ended and often natural play materials that allow them to be creative with items that are not restricted by a particular use.

The fact that schemes of work dictate the focus of the role play area also indicates that the teacher is directed by the school policy and therefore suggests that she is detached from the pedagogy and so is unable to be enabled to make informed decisions about the role play area. It also suggests that the input by the children is resource based only as the overall theme has been decided without their input.

Research headlines would suggest that clear definitions are needed in terms of the understanding of what constitutes creativity and imagination in role play. At present definitions remain elusive in policy documentation leading to mixed messages. There are implications for training in terms of raising professional awareness in the field.

Appleby (2011:133) highlights the danger in perceiving children's learning as commodities that can be 'planned, controlled and measured to such an extent, that the essence of what it means to be a player and learner is destroyed.' Edmiston (2008) argues for an equal focus between the early educator and child as a learner and constructor of knowledge along with growth, development and meaning-making in play experiences. Therefore, practitioners need to embrace the notion of trusting children in their own play to make their own decisions, to push both their own boundaries and those of the adults within their setting whilst extending the children's experiences. Early educators need to learn how to use their professional knowledge and intuition in a reflective way to question their practice. Contradictions between action and verbalisation can be realised through discussion and a reflective and reflexive approach. It appears that practice in the role play area is rarely challenged, this is an issue that needs to be addressed and verbalised. Data has shown a separateness from senior leadership and classroom practice, in order to move forward this needs to be addressed. I claim there is a need for attitudes to be challenged around early years professional learning and a need to move away from the 'early years canon' which purports an expectation that every reception class should have a role play area with no understanding of why it should be there or its purpose. Instead, senior managers, teachers and LSAs need to be reflective and engage with the debate surrounding play.

The notion of repositioning professional learning in the early years. *"would mean fresh and sometimes startling winds blowing through the classrooms of the nation."* (Greene, 1998:126). Teachers need to be promoters of possibilities. I introduce the belief that early educators are on a constant professional learning journey. At times on the professional learning journey they will be novices and at others they will be experts in a cyclical process which is revisited through discussion with colleagues, professional development opportunities and honest reflection. I suggest that each educator will return

to the idea of becoming a novice at different times in their professional lives and so the idea of the early years educator becoming an expert in their field is unhelpful. I would argue that their experience should be shared but in a way that allows practitioners to view their own practice through a different lens. As soon as we explore a new concept or research an area we have not researched before we cease to be the expert, indeed it is important to become the novice again. If the early educator recognises the potential of the idea of principled enquiry they will operate at and engage with a new level of enriched professional learning.

Moyles (2010) suggests that reflection is a key facet in early educators understanding their provision for quality play for children through analysis and evaluation. She notes the importance of the need for exploring research into play and learning and the importance of early educators challenging policy initiatives. This is key to unpicking the 'aspects causing confusion amongst practitioners.' (2010:4) Moyles (2010) believes that to enhance reflective play practices that it is necessary to critically reflect on, analyse and evaluate the policies and initiatives that govern how we make curriculum provision for young children. She also raises the question 'are we so focussed on 'delivering' what we think is required by those in authority that we fail to see the impact our pedagogy is having on the children. (2010:4) She (2010: 15) advocates the idea of early educators not appreciating the excellence or power of play believing that if one is to 'observe, analyse and reflect on children's play then you won't be able to deny it.' Thompson and Thompson (2008: 107) support this notion of critically reflective practice being key in 'moving away from uncritical, routinized or standardized forms of practice towards more informed, imaginative and value-driven approaches.' Brock (2010) accordingly believes that while critical reflection can develop knowledge and

understanding of play it also develops understanding of how theory and research relate to the provision of play.

> *It can refresh or change practice for practitioners aiming for higher quality provision of play that meets children's needs and interests, scaffolds their learning and promotes children's metacognition within their play experiences. (Brock, 2010:48)*

I make a strong case for critically reflective practice to become a key component of role play. Brookfield (1998:197) defines critically reflective practice as a 'process of inquiry involving practitioners in trying to discover, and research, the assumptions that frame how they work.' Brookfield (1995) suggests there are four critical lenses for looking at a situation. These are made up of looking at situations from four viewpoints, namely our own, our colleagues, our learners and from theoretical literature. He also believes that critical reflection should be considered to be a fundamental approach to teaching. He goes on to suggest that 'reviewing practice through these lenses makes us more aware of those submerged and unacknowledged power dynamics that infuse all practice settings.' (Brookfield, 1998: 197). An enabling environment must be culturally meaningful and a cultural process. The opportunity to use reflection to do explore this is seen as key for practitioners.

McGregor and Cartright (2011) highlight the importance of being a reflective practitioner and how reflecting to improve personal development as a teacher requires effort and sustained focussed thinking. Bolton (2010) argues that in order to have responsible and ethical practice then reflection and reflexivity are essential. However, there are arguments against this. The first (Copeland et al:1993) is identified as lack of time with the second argument being overstretched teachers trying to balance overloaded curriculum (Davis: 2003). Heel et.al (2006) note that reflexivity and reflection can in fact be seen as threats to position or status where practices are often

prescriptive with low level engagement scaffolded with political dimension. Instead then, reflective practice only occurs in learning organisations if it is truly to lead to change and development (Gould 2004). Gray (2007) advocates that it is when the role of coach, mentor and facilitator are seen as supportive mechanisms that this works most effectively. Schon (2005) describes two types of reflection, reflection in action and reflection upon action. He describes reflection in action as a hawk metaphor in which the mind is constantly watching, circling and advising on practice. Reflection upon action is the described as the consideration of events after they have taken place. There is great emphasis placed on resources by the early educators as being key to the success of the role play area but I would argue that the most important resource in the early years classroom is the adult. Early educators feature powerfully in children's play, sometimes through their lack of attention as much as by over directiveness. It is as important to consider what does not constitute play in the role play area as what does constitute play. The reflection on personal professional practice is key but reflection is not enough. I reason that reflexivity is vital for all early educators who wish to become critically reflective practitioners. This awareness will involve being aware of power relationships and seek to shift the balance of power in all situations

There are implications from this research for the future in terms of the early years' workforce. It is no longer enough to say that are major implications for professional development and training (Donaldson, 2015), those implications need to be unpicked at a micro level. Consideration needs to be made of how we frame professional learning opportunities. There is a challenge for early years settings in that they need to provide role play environments in which they need to foster the very nature of play. The child needs to be at the centre of the practice rather than letting policies and systems dictate

what happens in a setting. Children appear to be the experts in their own play. Adults need to trust them to explore rich experiences through freely chosen play experiences and act as a responsive facilitator when appropriate.

There is a need to develop confidence in the early educators about their purpose in the role play area and to move them away from a regulated regime. It is the way in which early years settings are implemented and interpreted by practitioners that determines the nature and value placed upon play. Hughes (2011:26) makes the claim that adults are 'hijacking play to fulfil their own agenda rather than placing the child at the centre of the process.' Instead of the question of which rules or boundaries need to be placed on play for children I would suggest that maybe there ought to be rules or boundaries that could be placed on early educators in relation to their interactions in role play. Those rules and boundaries could be constructed and agreed within professional dialogue between the practitioners themselves. In order for this to happen there needs to be a culture within schools that supports staff in the early years alongside research and professional learning opportunities. There needs to be a challenge of practice and assumptions alongside an exploration of authentic learning. Rogoff states (2003: 51)

> *Culture is not static; it is formed from the efforts of people working together, using and adapting material and symbolic tools provided by predecessors and in the process of creating new ones.*

This research has drawn out how early educators struggle with their own sense of identity. It is evident that they have motivation to be good educators but that motivation often appears to be misguided as they struggle with classroom and policy constraints. Therefore, they need support in how to manage their own learning and development and to move out of restrictive professional environments in order to shape responses to the challenges they face. All early educators and early years leaders need a sound

pedagogical understanding of role play but this is not enough on its own. There must be an awareness of the social-cultural context of the school, the children who attend and the realisation that the early educators that teach there may have a very different social-cultural context. The socio-political landscape is inherent in teaching and learning and whilst it must be considered it can also be challenged. The idea of a responsive facilitator is important as it suggests that the early educator does not always have to intervene in the play, instead the term 'responsive' suggests that the importance lies in knowing when to intervene and when to not. The opportunity for reflection and reflexivity cannot be overstated. These are crucial elements of professional learning and I believe provide a vehicle for early educators to analyse and question their practice honestly.

This research is relevant and has implications for teachers, LSAs, head teachers, higher education providers and the overall professional development of educators. Higher education providers need to embed a culture of research and reflection early on to avoid a restrictive professional environment. There needs to be appropriate professional development given to all those already within the early years setting, it is imperative that senior leadership teams and the head teacher recognise the importance of role play and the pedagogy behind it. There needs to be a clear communication strategy that requires a deep understanding of professional learning and reflection through awareness of dimensions of the responsive activator of role play. In terms of responding to the research question, data collection has shown that there were very few evidenced opportunities to allow for creativity and imagination in 'real world' or 'fantasy' play role play settings. Therefore, social interactions in play need space and children need to be offered the opportunity to have 'in-between spaces' where they can build on the socio-cultural context offered to them in their early years settings.

This study has broadened and enriched my professional understanding of carrying out research, analysing the data and had a significant impact on my academic and professional practice. A key area to emerge from this research is the significance of adult interaction and how a lack of appropriate adult interaction in children's play has, in the early years, been underpinned by a lack of pedagogical knowledge by educators. Having been an early educator, I can empathise with and understand the challenges that face practitioners on a daily basis. I have reflected on the early educator that I was then and the early educator that I would choose to be now. By adopting this social-cultural theoretical framework I have been able to unpick my own notions of how is play is approached in the Reception classroom. The doctoral journey has given me opportunities to develop my understanding of the role play area and those within it and it has helped to shape my professional self through a process of deep reflection and reflexivity of my own pre-conceived ideas and practice.

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APPENDIX ONE   WELSH GOVERNMENT CATEGORY CONSTRUCTIONS

Play/ Active Learning Overview for 3 to 7-year-olds (2008)

Document A	Glossary (*own term*)	Glossary *(within another accompany-ying definition)*	Used within case study example *(teacher obs.)*	Heading	Organisation of the learning environment	Generalised use of word	Related to theorist/ psychologist
imagination	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
imaginary	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
imaginative	0	0	2	0	0	5	0
imaginatively	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
creativity	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
creative	0	0	3	0	1	6	0
creatively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**1**	**1**	**5**	**2**	**0**	**15**	**0**

Data extracted from Document A

Learning and Teaching Pedagogy (2008)

Document B	Glossary (*own term*)	Glossary *(within another accompany-ying definition)*	Used within case study example *(teacher obs.)*	Heading	Organisation of the learning environment	Generalised use of word	Related to theorist/ psychologist
imagination	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
imaginary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
imaginative	0	0	0	0	1	3	2
imaginatively	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
creativity	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
creative	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
creatively	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**3**	**9**	**3**

Data extracted from Document B

Personal and Social Development, Well-Being and Cultural Diversity (2008)

Document C	Glossary (*own term*)	Glossary *(within another accompany-ying definition)*	Used within case study example *(teacher obs.)*	Heading	Organisation of the learning environment	Generalised use of word	Related to theorist/ psychologist
imagination	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
imaginary	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
imaginative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
imaginatively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
creativity	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
creative	0	0	0	1	2	3	0
creatively	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
TOTAL	**0**	**2**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**9**	**0**

Data extracted from Document C

Foundation Phase Framework for Children's Learning for 3-7-year-olds in Wales (2008)

Document D	Glossary (*own term*)	Glossary (*within another accompany-ying definition*)	Used within case study example *(teacher obs.)*	Heading	Organisation of the learning environment	Generalised use of word	Related to theorist/ psychologist
imagination	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
imaginary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
imaginative	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
imaginatively	0	0	0	0	2	3	0
creativity	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
creative	0	0	0	0	4	11	0
creatively	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
TOTAL	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**30**	**0**

Data extracted from Document D

Observing Children (2008)

Document E	Glossary (*own term*)	Glossary (*within another accompany-ying definition*)	Used within case study example *(teacher obs.)*	Heading	Organisation of the learning environment	Generalised use of word	Related to theorist/ psychologist
imagination	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
imaginary	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
imaginative	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
imaginatively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
creativity	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
creative	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
creatively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**6**	**0**

Data extracted from Document E

Foundation Phase Child Development Profile (2009)

Document F	Glossary (*own term*)	Glossary (*within another accompany-ying definition*)	Used within case study example *(teacher obs.)*	Heading	Organisation of the learning environment	Generalised use of word	Related to theorist/ psychologist
imagination	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
imaginary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
imaginative	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
imaginatively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
creativity	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
creative	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
creatively	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Data extracted from Document F

APPENDIX TWO: **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

What do you think is the purpose of role play?

How have you (the teacher/ LSA set it up?

Is it a 'real world role play area or a 'fantasy 'role play area?

How did you decide what to use in setting up the area?

Do you monitor and evaluate? If so, how?

Do the children play interactively in the role play area?
How long do they play?

Is there anything you have particularly noticed about the role play are? (Positives/ negatives)

What is most important to you about role play?

Do you think children can be reflective about their role play?

APPENDIX THREE   SCOPING SURVEY QUESTIONS

(*Sent out to reception teachers in one Local Authority in Wales)

Q.1
How long have you been teaching?
Ers pryd yr ydych wedi bod yn addysgu plant?

	Less than 5 years/ Llai na 5 mlynedd	5-10 years/ 5-10 mlynedd	11-15 years/ 11-15 mlynedd	16-20 years/ 16-20 mlynedd	Over 20 years/ Mwy na 20 mlynedd
Any age group/ Unrhyw oedran					
Foundation Phase/ Y Cyfnod Sylfaen					

Q.2
Have you had specific Early Years/ Foundation Phase training?
Ydych chi wedi derbyn unrhyw hyfforddiant penodol ar gyfer Y Blynyddoedd Cynnar/ Y Cyfnod Sylfaen?

	None Dim	In the last two years/ Un ystod y ddwy flynedd ddiwethaf	In the last 35 years/ Yn ystod y 3-5 mlynedd diwethaf	In the last 6-10 years/ Yn ystod y 6-10 mlynedd diwethaf	In the last 11-20 years/ Yn ystod y 11-20 mlynedd diwethaf
Higher Education/Addysg Uwch					
In-school training/ Hyfforddiant Mewn Swydd					
Local Authority training/ Hyfforddiant yr Awdurdod Addysg					
Conference/ Cynhadledd					

Other/ Arall				

Q.3

How important do you feel the following categories of play are?

Pa mor bwysig yr ydych yn ystried y mathau o chwarae a ganlyn?

	Extremely important/ Yn bwysig dros ben	Has some importance/ Eitha pwysig	Has little importance/ ychydig yn bwysig	Not important/ ddim yn bwysig
Structured 'real world' role play/ Chwarae rôl 'bywyd go iawn' strwythuredig				
Unstructured 'real world' role play/ Chwarae rôl 'bywyd go iawn' anstrwythuredig				
Structured 'imaginative/ fantasy' play/ Chwarae dychmygus/ ffantasi strwythuredig				
Unstructured 'imaginative/ fantasy' play/ Chwarae dychmygus/ ffantasi anstrwythuredig				

Q.4

Do you have any areas set up specifically in your setting for encouraging a) role play or b) fantasy play? Please give a brief description of any such areas and what you call these.

Yn eich darpariaeth oes ardaloedd wedi eu creu i annog a) chwarae rôl b) chwarae ffantasi? Rhowch ddisgrifiad cryno o'r rhain a'r hyn y'u gelwir.

Q.5

Who is involved in setting up role play or fantasy play areas in your setting? Please tick any that apply.

Pa unigolion sy'n gyfrifol am greu yr ardaloedd uchod yn eich darpariaeth? Ticiwch fel bo'n berthnasol.

Teacher Athro/Athrawes	
LSA/ TA Cynorthwyydd	
Child/ Children Plentyn/ Plant	

Q.6

How is the use of the role play or fantasy play area organised?

Sut y trefnir / amserir y cyfnodau yn yr ardal chwarae rôl/ ffantasi?

Free choice at any time/ Dewis rhydd ar unrhyw adeg	
Free choice at designated times/ Dewis rhydd yn ystod cyfnodau penodedig	
Children directed into groups/ Arweinir plant fesul grwpiau yno	
Timetabled/ Amserlennir nhw	

Q.7

What do you believe are the three strongest factors that influence children in their role play or fantasy play?

Beth ystyriwch yw'r tri pheth sy'n dylanwadu mwyaf ar blant yn ystod eu chwarae rôl/ chwarae ffantasÏol?

Q.8
What do you consider to be the role of the adult in children's role play or fantasy play? Please explain in as much detail as possible.

Beth ystyriwch yw rôl yr oedolyn yn chwarae rôl/ ffantasïol plant? Ceisiwch fanylu wrth egluro os gwelwch yn dda.

Q.9
How do you monitor the role play or fantasy play designated areas?

Sut byddwch yn monitro yr ardal chwarae rôl/ chwarae ffantasïol?

Q.10
Please give an example of an instance/ issue that may arise when children are using role play or fantasy areas that you feel would require adult intervention.

Rhowch enghraifft o ddigwyddiad yn yr ardaloedd uchod lle y teimlwch y byddai angen ymyrraeth oedolyn.

APPENDIX FOUR: COLOUR CODED BREAKDOWN OF EACH OBSERVATION SESSION AND THE CONTEXT OF EACH INTERACTION

Observation Session 1

- **3 seconds teacher interaction in this 10 min session (600 seconds).**

  Interaction is directional (6 – IA System).

Teacher gives directions (@ 6 mins 9 secs) – this happens from outside the role play area but her voice is loud to include the children playing inside the role play area – Teacher calls for "yellow group."

One child (from yellow group runs out of the role play area and to the teacher.)
  - **0 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (10 – IA System)**
  - **585 seconds is considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11- IA System)**
  - **0 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12- IA System)**
  - **12 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty) (13- IA System)**

Observation Session 2

- **33 seconds teacher interaction in 15 minute session (900 seconds).**

  Interaction is directional (18 seconds- 6 IA System) questioning (12 seconds - 4 IA System) and student response (3 seconds - 8 1A System).

Within first five minutes (@ 3 mins 45 secs) - the teacher gives a direction – "Pick up the chairs please."

One boy picks up one of two chairs that have fallen over. A second boy picks up the second chair that has fallen.

**(@ 10 mins 33 seconds) – the teacher is out of sight but can be heard asking – "Are you working? Booking a holiday? Where are you going?
France? Spain? Then the teacher leaves the area (12 seconds later).
Teacher does not wait for a response from the children.
(@14 mins 9 secs) Teacher calls class to attention through regular phrase "Class, class."**

Children respond with regular response "Yes, yes."

(@14 mins 15 secs) Teacher responds with directions for tidying up "I need you to tidy up – not a big tidy up, just pick the bits up off the floor and make it a bit tidy because it's going to be playtime. Whoever was in construction come and pick things up."
Children respond by reacting to the teacher instruction in different ways. At this point there are four boys in the role play area. One boy immediately gets up and leaves the-role play area. One boy picks up a pencil from the floor and puts it on the table. A second boy leaves the area. Two boys are left. One is spinning a globe on a table and looking at it intently. The boy who picked up the pencil leans on the same table but then quickly leaves the area. The fourth and final child follows after him. (This takes a total of 15 seconds.)

  - **0 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (10 – IA System)**

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- **804 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 – IA System)**
- **39 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **24 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty 13 - IA System)**

Observation Session 3

• **48 seconds teacher interaction in 15 minute session (900 seconds).**

Interaction is teacher directional (12 seconds 6 - IA System), student response (12 seconds 8 – IA System), teacher lectures (9 seconds 5 – IA System), teacher accepting of student feeling (9 seconds 1 - IA System), student initiated (6 seconds 9 - IA System).

(@3 mins 21 seconds) A child pushes a table up against the wall and speaks to the LSA – "Watch this Miss."

There is no response from the LSA who is looking in to the role play area from outside through a window space. Teacher lecturers (5 mins 48 secs) – "This is our travel agents – do you remember? You don't fight in travel agents."

No verbal response by any of the children.

Teacher interacts with a child in response to the child proffering his hand through the window space in the role play area (@ 11 mins 24 secs – for 18 secs) "Thank you. Oh dear what's in there?"

Child responds "It was in my nail, my nail did broke."

Teacher - Was it a splinter? Oh dear me – is it alright now?

Child - "Yes."
Teacher - Give me a thumbs up then. Cool." (@12 mins 18 secs)
Teacher – "One more minute and it's home time." (@12 mins 21 secs)

Child initiated response to other children (repeating what the teacher says in a slightly different way) "It's one more minute to home time."

Teacher thanks the child. "Thank you." Teacher – (@14 mins) "Ok, boys and girls, stop and listen. Mae hi'n amswer taclusio."

Five boys remain in the area. One boy continues typing on his keyboard. One moves money around on the table and within a sorting tray. Two boys discuss the fact that it is tidy up time then appear to become aware of the camera, start talking to it and jumping up and down. One of the two boys starts spinning around trying to attract the attention of the others. Three boys push some money off the table into a sorting tray. Three leave the role play area followed by remaining two.

- **6 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (no teacher present) (10 – IA System)**
- **819 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **0 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**

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- **27 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty (13 - IA System)**

Observation Session 4

- **• 39 seconds teacher interaction in 31 minute session (1860 seconds).**

  Interaction is teacher lectures (15 seconds – 5 IA System), teacher directs (9 seconds 6 – IA System), teacher criticizes (9 seconds 7 – IA System), student response (3 seconds – 8 IA System) silence or confusion (with teacher present) (3 seconds 10 - IA System).

  Teacher - "You can't do that in case you hurt someone ok? (@ 4 mins 41 sec) in response to a child throwing a large laminated spot (one of a few taken into the area by the children.)

  Child responds "x hurt him."

  Teacher holds up laminated spots - "With these… Please look after our travel agent. You're allowed to book holidays but don't throw things."
  Children wait for teacher to leave the doorway of the role play are and then continue throwing the large laminated spots.

  Teacher - "In five minutes it will be tidy up time which isn't very long, it's going to be tidy up time and then it will be playtime."

- **3 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (with teacher present) (10 – IA System)**
- **381 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **1425 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **15 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty (13 - IA System)**

Observation Sessions 5 / 5A / 5B

Teacher takes the whole class into the role play area following it having been closed for a week so educators could review and change props and display materials. The teacher sits on a chair and the children are seating themselves on the carpet area and at tables on chairs where there is space. The area is small (for the numbers) and the clip starts with some children not having yet sat on the carpet.

Session 5 does not follow the same pattern as the other six sessions analysed therefore two extra categories have been added to the analysis in an attempt to give a wider context. Session 5 is the analysis of the whole session. Session 5A details the analysis of the 879 second session with the teacher and children. Session 5B removes 879 seconds from session 5 as this was the time spent by the teacher consistently in the role play area with the *whole class* following a 'refurbishment'. This was not a regular activity for either the teacher or the children but instead one that was set up as a result of changes made to the area.

Session 5

- **1026 seconds teacher interaction in 53 minute session (3180 seconds).**

Interaction is teacher lectures (222 seconds 5 - IA System), teacher questions (189 seconds – 4 IA System), teacher directional (195 seconds 6 - IA System), student response 129 seconds – 8 IA System), teacher use of student ideas (84 seconds - 3 IA System), teacher criticizes student (78 seconds – 7 IA System), teacher accepts student feeling (57 seconds – 1 IA System), teacher praises student (15 seconds – 2 IA System), student-initiated response (12 seconds - 9 IA System).

- **9 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (with teacher present) (10 – IA System)**
- **1701 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **402 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **51 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty (13 - IA System)**

Session 5A

- **879 seconds teacher interaction in 14 minute 39 second session (879 seconds).**

Interaction is teacher lectures (222 seconds 5 - IA System), teacher questions (189 seconds – 4 IA System), student response (129 seconds – 8 IA System), teacher directional (123 seconds 6 - IA System), teacher use of student ideas (84 seconds - 3 IA System), teacher criticizes student (66 seconds – 7 IA System), teacher accepts student feeling (42 seconds – 1 IA System), teacher praises student (9 seconds – 2 IA System), student-initiated response (6 seconds - 9 IA System).

- **9 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (with teacher present) (10 – IA System)**
- **0 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **0 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **0 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty) (13 - IA System)**

Session 5B

- **147 seconds teacher interaction in 38 minute 21 second session (2301 seconds).**

Interaction is teacher directs (72 seconds 6 – IA System), teacher questions (27 seconds 4 - IA System), teacher accepts student feeling (15 seconds 1 – IA System), teacher criticizes student (12 seconds 7 - IA System), student response (9 seconds 8 – IA System), teacher praises student (6 seconds 2 - IA System), student-initiated response (6 seconds 9 – IA System).

- **0 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (10 – IA System)**
- **1701 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **402 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **51 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty) (13 - IA System)**

Observation Session 6

      9 seconds teacher interaction in 35 minute session (2100 seconds).

      Interaction is teacher directs (9 seconds 6 – IA System).

Teacher is outside of the role play area in the main classroom and gives directions to the children to tidy up. "Tidy up please because reception class are coming over for a look." (@34 mins 45 secs).

Two children respond by firstly leaving the area briefly then returning and attempt to put items in the suitcase before leaving the area again.

- **0 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (10 – IA System)**
- **1203 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **18 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **870 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child interaction (role play empty (13 - IA System)**

Observation Session 7
- **12 seconds teacher interaction in 35 minute session (3180 seconds).**

      Interaction is teacher directional (6 seconds 6- IA System), student response (3 seconds 8 – IA System) and student-initiated response (3 seconds 9 – IA System).

Teacher is at the edge of the role play area (@40 mins 57 secs) "Stop when you hear the fire alarm."

Child responds – "Why is it going on?"

Teacher has moved away.
Teacher states "Play properly." (@52 mins 39 secs)

Child responds by showing other children (@51mins 51 secs) – "Like this."

- **15 seconds are categorised by silence or confusion (no teacher presence) (10 – IA System)**
- **3129 seconds considered to be time where children have no teacher**
- **presence but engagement in their own activity (11 - IA System)**
- **15 seconds are considered to be disruptive behaviour (12 - IA System)**
- **9 seconds is considered to be time where there is no teacher or child**
- **interaction (role play empty (13 - IA System)**

APPENDIX FIVE: SESSION 6 CATEGORY ANALYSIS

3 sec				15 sec					30 sec					45 sec					60 sec	Minute
																				1
																				2
																				3
																				4
																				5
																				6
																				7
																				8
																				9
																				10
12	12	12	12	12	12															11
						13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	12
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	14
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	15
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	16
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	11	11	11	17
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	18
11	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	19
13	13	13	13	13	13	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	13	13	20
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	21
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	22
13	13	13	11	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	23
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	24
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	25
13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	26
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	27
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	28
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	29
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	30
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	31
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	32
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	33
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	34
11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	13	6	6	6	13	13	13	35

APPENDIX SIX: VIGNETTE ONE: TRAVEL AGENT PLAY

Two girls are each behind a table sitting on a chair each shouting loudly *"next please"* repeatedly. Two boys share Table A. One boy is sitting behind the table tapping the keys of the keyboard and one boy is kneeling next to him.

Girl One (to Girl Two) *"You have to come to me and then you have to go to C**** (pointing) and then you have to…"* Interrupted by Girl Two *"No!"* said very firmly. Discussion ensues about the order that Boy Two is to 'visit' each of the tables between the two girls which drifts off quickly. Boy Two shuffles on his knees to the front of the desk. Boy One repeats quietly four times *"C**** you can be the customer."* Boy Two does not respond. Boy One shuffles papers.

Girl One starts to shout *"next please"* very loudly, five times.
Boy Two shuffles away (still on his knees) and is called back by Boy One. Boy Two shuffles back to table A (still on his knees). Boy One turns a piece of paper towards him. Girl One continues with constant loud repetition of *"next please."*
Boy One continues to press keys on keyboard.

Girl Two, seated at table, C has postcards in her hand. Boy Two turns to listen to something she is saying. *"You can't go to Legoland but can go to Disneyland."* Boy Two continues to shuffle around on his knees (seemingly without a purpose).
Girl One moves from table B to the window ledge to pick up a mini suitcase and returns to her table.

Girl One shouts *"next please"* repeatedly.
Boy Three enters the area and walks up to the girl behind table C. She appears cross with him and storms out of the area. Boy Three also leaves the area.
Boy Two is still shuffling around on his knees. He goes back to Boy One and tries to engage him in quiet conversation.
Girl Two has continued playing with the mini suitcase but turns around to gaze/ focus on table 1 with the two boys behind her. Girl One and Boy One appear to both be quietly talking to themselves at a very low level. Boy Two leaves.

Girl One resumes shouting *"next please"* (somewhat desperately and very loudly).
Boy One shouts (somewhat more quietly than Girl Two *"next please"* and then *"I guess there's nobody wants to buy holidays today."* They both look very disappointed and somewhat downtrodden. A different boy (Four) enters and immediately Girl one shouts *"next please".* Boy four walks straight past her and goes to the table of Boy One. Boy One *"Ok, where do you want to go? Do you want to go there, there, there"* (he says this whilst looking and tapping the keyboard).

Girl One looks on forlornly from behind her table with her chin in her hand at the two boys behind her. Boy Four is standing and points to pictures on the wall in turn, then he returns to the table where Boy One is busily typing (fully engaged in his task). Girl One looks up at the pictures.

Boy Four takes a seat at table A and engages Boy One in a brief, quiet conversation. During this time Girl One is still seated at table B but she is talking to herself and pointing to a piece of paper. Boy Four stands up and walks around the back of Boy One and starts to talk about

going on holiday in a boat. He moves to the middle of the room and starts singing and making a "chugging" dance action. He then puts one hand on table A and one hand one table C and begins swinging between the two tables.

Girl One starts to shout *"next please"* loudly and repeatedly again. Boy One continues typing on his keyboard. Girl Two picks up mini suitcase again then drops it on the floor. Boy Four goes towards the suitcase and they both pick it up by the handle. Girl One points to the other side of the desk and says *"You have to come and work with me."* Boy Four ignores her and walks off still holding the suitcase. Girl Two follows him also still holding onto the suitcase handle. She shouts his name twice *"E****, E****."*

Boy Four breaks contact with Girl Two and retains the suitcase. He goes towards Boy One at table A. Girl One stands behind him, puts her hands on her hips and then turns around to look at table 3. She picks up the paper postcards whilst Boy One and Boy Four engage in conversation and open the mini suitcase. Boy One stands up and puts fingers in a shooting position and shouts *"bang, bang you're under arrest."* Boy One sits down. (Both Boy One and Boy Four look directly at the camera.) Boy Four grins.

Boy One says *"You're not allowed to go on holidays now."* Boy Four goes to the front of the table, holds out an arm and finger as a gun and shouts *"bang, bang, bang."* Boy One says *"You're definitely not going on holidays now."* Boy One then dramatically drops his head onto his arm on top of the keyboard. Then he lifts his head back up. Boy Four *"But I didn't actually mean…"* then leans in towards Boy One and they have a quiet discussion which cannot be heard.

Girl One still sits behind table B occasionally looking at the camera. Boy Four *"I'll get you boom, boom, boom."* (acts out action with his gun.) Boy One still behind table A slumps back in his car in reaction and lowers his head. Boy Four grins then stands up and starts to 'shoot' whilst jumping erratically and shouting *"boom, boom, boom."* Boy One says *"Are you going to shoot me…"* and Girl Two interrupts *"…and then take all the money?"* Boy Four continues 'shooting.' Boy One puts his head on top of his folded arms on the keyboard. Boy Four shoots at Girl Two with his hand poised as a gun *"boom, ha ha ha"* and then grabs the money tray. He takes the money tray carefully over to table A. As he reaches the table Girl Two squeals and he turns his head around to look at her.

Boy One begins to lift his head slowly. Boy Four then levels his arm (as if it is a gun) at Girl One and shouts *"boom"* pointing his fingers as if they were a gun.
He then turns to Boy One and shouts *"boom"* as Boy One raises his head with his fingers pointed like a gun. Boy One again rests his head on his arms on the keyboard, looking down. Girl One leaves the room.

Boy Four moves away from the table with the money tray and towards the table that Girl One is seated at. She stands and pretends to shoot at him. She says *"bang, bang, bang, bang"* quietly as she walks past him. Boy Four turns pretend shoots her in the face. He then randomly uses his arm to shoot around the room and goes back to pretend shoot across table A at Boy One in the face. Boy Four then lays across the table. Boy 1 says to him, *"Sorry I just need to do this."* Boy Four gently touches Boy One in the face with his finger he then quietly says *"bang."*

He gets up off the table. Boy Five enters. Boy Five goes to table A and lifts up the lid of the mini suitcase. He engages in quiet conversation with Boy One. Boy Four tries to draw the attention back to himself as he is ignored by Boy 1 who continues looking at the keyboard. *"Pretend I'm a robber and I've got robbery clothes on and I steal all the money."* Both Boy One and Boy Five continue to ignore Boy Four. Boy Four smiles at the camera. Then he starts to swing between the two tables. He then runs off shouting *"boom, boom, boom."* He immediately returns jumping around continuing shouting *"boom"* and pretending he is firing a gun.

Boy One continues to talk to himself completely engaged and absorbed in his play. Boy Four goes up to him and tries to pretend shoot him in the head. Boy One ignores him. Boy Five leaves his seat with a piece of paper to go and stand in front of Boy One at table A. Boy Four immediately rushes over to place himself between the two boys. Boy Five sits down at table A. Boy Four *"I'm going to ask C****** (who is Boy 1) *do you know what guns I've got? Um… I've got a, I've got a nerve gun, a shot gun and a nerve gun and a army gun."* Boy Five moves his seat so he is sitting further away from Boy Four but still on the same table. Boy Five still has his paper in his hand.

The teacher calls for yellow group and Boy Four leaves table A running out of the area. Almost immediately Boy One says to Boy Five *"Right then, where do you want to go, do you want to go here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here?"* (He is pointing to different keys on the keyboard every time he says *'here'*. Boy Five responds with *'there'* (pointing to a key on the keyboard). Girl Two leaves the room. Boy One *"Do you want to go…* (he lowers his voice so the brief conversation between Boy One & Boy Five cannot be heard.) They appear completely engaged in their discussion. Boy 1 is fully engaged in using the keyboard. Boy five watches carefully and they continue their very quiet conversation. Boy 5 touches the keyboard. They both start smiling. Boy One says *"You better go, it's going to go off without you."* Boy One laughs out loud. Boy Five grins broadly.

Boy One *"Ok the aeroplane just went off so you can't go there."* Boy Five points to the keyboard. *"I'll go there."* Boy One points to the keyboard and repeats *"and that one, and that one"* several times. Boy Five looks intently at his paper, looks up then gets up and leaves.

Boy One continues intently tapping the keys on the keyboard then looks up and says to himself *"Where did he go?"* with a confused expression on his face. He looks cross, fold his arms *"Oh whatever!"* Boy One starts to press the keys on the keyboard again. He starts very quietly talking to himself. He continues this for just over a minute. He is the only one left in the room. He then stands up and leaves the area.

APPENDIX SEVEN: VIGNETTE TWO: HARRY

Harry sits at a table in the role play area and stands out from the rest of the children as he is trying to focus on the writing books in front of him. He shakes his head and puts his head in his hands as he appears to be frustrated by the lack of a pen/ pencil to write with. He makes gentle attempts to encourage the other four children to engage with him *"I don't have a phone."* He is ignored by the other children, and leaves the room saying *"I'm telling about you."* He briefly returns just over a minute later (there is no adult presence with him so it is unclear whether he has 'told' on the children). He then leaves the role play area again.

Harry re-enters after just less than a minute with a pot of pencils which he goes to share with the remaining children at the other table. They don't appear to be interested in him and he just stands there, looking forlorn, holding the pot of pencils until one child (Child B) eventually takes a pencil from him. He then returns to his table to get a writing book for the child who has taken the pencil from him. The book is accepted but the boy is ignored.

A few minutes later the book is returned to Harry at the table by Child B and the boy attempts to instigate play with him saying "I need a phone." He is ignored by all the children. Harry then states *"I don't have any customers."*

There is a gap of ten seconds before Child B responds to him. *"Who wants to go on holidays? I don't have much customers either."* Harry states *"I need a phone."* He stands up from his seat*. "I want a customer."* The children (all boys) on the other table ignore him.

Harry looks resignedly at the pictures on the wall and returns to his writing book with his pencil poised as if he is preparing to write. He asks *"Who wants to…?"* (his voice fades off.) *"Guys who's going to be my…"* (said very quietly). Nine seconds later *"I need a customer."*

A few seconds later the teacher's voice can be heard loudly instructing children outside the role play area. The children glance in her direction and then start whispering. Harry responds with *"Can I have one now?"* (The assumption here is that he means a customer.) A few minutes later the boy leaves the room and does not return.

APPENDIX EIGHT: TEACHER MODELLING TRANSCRIPTION

Clip begins with the teacher sitting behind a desk with 18 children settling on the carpet between desks in the role play area.

Teacher: Oh. You can sit there, go on.

Girl A: (Standing, shouts) He says a scruffy dog.

Teacher: Can you sit on your bottoms please? Not this minute. Eisteddwych. Please sit on the carpet. Oh! (Teacher lifts her arm in the air to attract attention of children.) What are you doing? Eisteddwych properly. Uh, girls. Did I say to come in and stand up and lean against the wall? No. So where did I tell you to go? C…, can you sit up properly please? S…, If your hand is in the air what does that mean? It means we don't speak. (Teacher lowers her arm. Children are facing in all different directions, still shuffling and trying to fit into the space.) Right ok, so our travel agent has been refurbished. We've put some more things in it. E… and L… and C/A… and B… can you sit properly please? Otherwise you'll be going over there.

LSA: (Sitting out of sight of the camera but at the door of the role play area) Some will have to come out with me.

Teacher: They may have to, how sad.

(Teacher speaks quietly to LSA -muffled conversation/ not able to understand for 9 secs)

Teacher: So! We have been refurbished, that means it's been changed. We've got some new things in here. C/A can you please go and sit by Miss X. Off you go, go on.

(Girl moves through the children to go to the LSA until out of sight.)

Teacher: (Puts her fingers on her lips.) In you come please, you're not missing out. We've been refurbished so have a good look around. Please don't shout out but just see what you can see. Have a good look. Think of something you would like to tell me about that's caught your eye, that's made you have a good look at it. Ok? If You've thought of something and think mmmh! I might want to say about that, please put your hands on your nose. Oh! T… what have you seen? What's caught your eye? You don't have to stand up just tell me what it is. Can you describe it? Yes? What are they? Do you know what they are called?

T (Child): Books.

Teacher: They're books that have got, what's inside them, do you know?

G (Child to T…): Don't T.

Teacher: T... is trying to explain to me thank you. Can you sit back on your bottoms because I can't see T… Do you know what they're called? Do you know what they're for? Take one then, have a look inside and I'll come back to you. Take that off the table then put it on your lap and have a little look inside. Sit still please I… P… that's it have a little look and maybe I'll ask you in a minute. What's caught your eye C…

C (Child): The circle.

Teacher: The circle. Up there (teacher points to the wall) and what is it? Do you know? What is it then?

C (Child): It's a green circle.

Teacher: It is a green circle. It says underneath it, a word beginning with an a, a – p apple and what was that for, can you remember why we have got that big piece of paper with numbers on and things that we bought? Who went to market?

C (Child): Granny went to market.

Teacher: (Nods) Granny went to market on her…

C (Child): Magic carpet.

Teacher: (Nods) On her magic carpet. So all those things you could buy on your holiday. It is isn't it? There's lots you can buy.

S (Child): I can buy a headband. I can be a mermaid.

Teacher: Yes, you can be a mermaid.
What else has caught people's eyes here? Put your fingers on your nose. (Teacher puts her finger on her nose then puts it back down almost immediately.)
K (Child): K… What's caught your eye? What?
K (Child): The trees.
Teacher: The trees. (Plants had been put into the role play area.)Wow what could they be for?
K (Child): To make it nicer.
Teacher: It could be to make it nicer. To make it more pretty. But they are next to something. What are they next to? What is that big thing that R… is leaning against?
K (Child): A suitcase.
Teacher: Now I can see some things in that suitcase. Now don't pull them out but have a little look. What could that be O…?
O (Child): Water.
Teacher: It could be water, why do you say that?
O (Child): It looks like water.
Teacher: What makes it look like water? Is it the colour?
O (Child): Yes.
Teacher: What colour is it?
O (Child): Blue.
Teacher: Blue. Oh what else is sticking out that you can see?
O (Child): Orange.
Teacher: What could that be?
O (Child): It could be sand.
Teacher: Land or sand? L or s? Land or sand?
O (Child) Sand.
Teacher: Sand it could be sand. Ooh, so what does sand and water make?
O (Child) A beach.
 Teacher: A beach. So are these trees on the beach?
O (Child): No.
Teacher: They could be couldn't they? We'll have a look in a minute shall we? Close the suitcase. Right T… did you find out what that book was about?
T (Child) … It's got holes in it.
Teacher: It's got holes in it. Oooh. Has it got holidays? So it's a holiday brochure isn't it?
J (Child): Miss K…
Teacher: Yes.
J (Child): I went to the beach with my Daddy and it was full of rocks.
Teacher: Full of rocks? Oh!
J (Child): In the sea.
Teacher: Maybe we need rocks in our suitcase. To make it look like the beach you went to. On my table here, that's caught my eye are 2 yellow books. Have you got a book on your table I…?
I (Child): Yes they caught my eye.
Teacher: What does your say? Have you had a look?
I (Child): And mine.
Teacher: (To a child tapping her) I'm busy. Can you sit down please? Now why are children going on their knees? It says holidays, so maybe when you are the travel agent you can write some…
I (Child): Holidays.
Teacher: Holidays in it. Actually it doesn't say holidays it says ho-tel.
I (Child): Hotel.

Teacher: So it's a hotel. So you could write some hotels in it for your holidays and I've got two books here. (Holds up two yellow books.) This one says bookings, so instead of booking peoples holidays on sheets (teacher holds up A4 'holiday sheet'). Do you remember when you were circling who they were going to get there, what they were going to do and what the price was?

M (Child): An aeroplane or a bus or a boat or a train or a car.

Teacher: That's right. You could instead write them in our bookings book. You could make notes in there and I've got one more book here. Hands up if you know what it's for. L… what's it for?

L (Child): Um for, um for.

M (Child): Phoning people.

L (Child): Hotel.

Teacher: It could be but that was the book that I…'s got. Have a look what the pictures are. What the words say.

M (Child): It's a telephone.

Teacher: Yes it is a telephone. It is a telephone book. So maybe you want to put people's telephone numbers in the book, if you've, if they've phoned and said can I book a holiday please and you say hang on, shall we pretend? (Teacher puts phone to her ear.) Yes do you want to book a holiday, ok. What's your telephone number please? Hang on then, let me just get a pen and I can write that down. Ok so that's 124 yes 762 and what's the name? Mrs Davies. Ok Mrs Davies and where do you want to go? Spain. Oh how lovely. And have you got a price? How much money do you want to spend? Two hundred pounds no problems. I will have a look for a holiday and I will phone you straight back and your telephone number 124762. Okey doke I'll phone you back soon – bye. (Teacher puts down the phone on the table.) I need to find Mrs Davies a holiday. What can I use to find a holiday?

H (Child): That globe. I've got a little one I have.

Teacher: You could use a globe.

F (Child): You could see Santa.

Teacher: We've got to book Mrs Davies a holiday. What can we use that you've found T…? What are they called? Travel bro-ch-ures.

Children (chorus together): Travel brochures.

Teacher: I can look in a brochure to find her a holiday. What's this big thing over here? (Teacher taps the wall behind her.) A map. Could I look at a map to find a country for her?

Children (chorus together): Yes.

Teacher: I could. What about these along here? What are these?

M (Child): Um pictures.

Teacher: They are pictures of all places round the world.

H (Child): London.

Teacher: There is London. Which two are of London?

H (Child): Tower Bridge and the castle.

Teacher: This one here that looks like a castle.

H (Child): It's a queen's house.

Teacher: That's not quite the queens house. It's not Buckingham Palace, it's called The Houses of Parliament. It does look like a castle, you're right.

H (Child): Why is it called the Houses of Parliament?

Teacher: Why is it called the Houses of Parliament? Because that's where they go and make lots of decisions about our country. Lots of important decisions. They go there to Parliament and they discuss it but there's lots of places. There are the pyramids which are very hot in Egypt and Ooh! Do you want to go to Australia? And we've got the golden gate bridge. What kind of bridge is this, do you remember?

Children (chorus together): Suspension.

Teacher: Suspension bridge. And I look at this, the Tower of Pisa but it's also called the leaning Tower of Pisa. Have a look at it, it's leaning. It's in Italy where I went on honeymoon but I didn't see that. I really wanted to go there but I didn't see it. So maybe if I come in here to book a holiday I'll be asking you to please can you find me a holiday to Italy. I really want to go to Pisa. Ok so if I give you a ring or pop into the shop that's where I want to go.

H (Child) So why don't you go to the beach?

Teacher: I'd like to go to the beach but I'd prefer to go to Italy please. So if you come along here and choose a holiday, if you do that you can book Mrs X a holiday.

H (Child) I'm going to do that. I'm going to book Mrs X a hotel.

Teacher: Book a hotel? That would be brilliant but shall we go back because when she gets to her hotel, her hotel, she's going to need to unpack her suitcase isn't she? So shall we unpack our suitcase? Go on then R… lift the lid.

(Children begin to stand to see the contents of the suitcase located behind them at the back of the room.)

Teacher: You don't need to move boys and girls just turn your bodies around. Turn yourselves around and see what is inside because O… already told us two things he thinks is inside because they could be.

Y (Child): Books.

Teacher: Ok books. What's that you've got there? On that clip board.

Y (Child): Um, clips and a paper… and these are diving (picks up a diving mask and a snorkel.)

Teacher: Where would you uses these everybody?

M (Child): At the beach.

Teacher: Ooh! What's that J? (rubber ring)

M (Child): A life boat.

Y (Child): Oh I know that.

R (Child): I've got that. I've got that one. I've got that. I've got that one.

Teacher: What's that R…? What is that one for?

M (Child): A blanket.

Teacher: Could be a blanket.

M (Child): And a bag.

Teacher: Could it be anything else?

M (Child): There is a suitcase.

Teacher: O… take it out of your mouth please. Super duper. So we've got lots and lots of things in this suitcase. Is it for someone who is going to a hot country or someone who is going to a cold country?

Children (chorus): Hot.

Teacher: Why do you say hot?

O (Child): Because they've got some sun cream and sand.

Teacher: Excellent. Ok. Boys and girls could you… can you please just put the things out of your hands and can you turn this way quickly? (Children respond to request.)

Teacher: Ready? Show me your thumbs? Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx If you are happy with the refurbishment, eisteddwch (sit down) because you keep popping up like a little pirate in my face. If you are happy with the refurbishment of our travel agents show me with you thumbs. Xxxxxxxxxxxxx B…, L…, If you are happy. Ooh! C… why are you happy. What bits do you like the best?

C (Child): It looks nicer in here.

Teacher: It looks nicer in here. Does it make you want to use it? It's up to you. What would you do first?

C (Child:) I'd like to look at the brochures.

Teacher: You'd like to look at the brochures. Lovely. B… why are you happy? What would you like to do first in here?

B (Child): Um be a character.

Teacher: You want to be the travel agent or do you want to book a holiday?

B (Child): Book a holiday.

Teacher: Oh. Are you going to come and use a brochure to have a look. Super. Um U… what are you going to do first in here.

U (Child): Be the person.

Teacher: You want to be the travel agents and book the holiday? Oh, will you phone Mrs Davies back? Because I think she'll be a little bit cross if we don't phone her back and book her a holiday.

C (Child): Can?

Teacher: Can you sit down and I'll ask you? Yes what would you like to do next?

C (Child): Book a holiday.

Teacher: Book a holiday. How are you going to book a holiday? How are you going to book one? What will you use to find a holiday?

C (Child:) I use the books.

Teacher: You'd use the books? Would you use any of these? (Pointing to the pictures on the wall.) Because they've got words on them so you could copy the words down. Couldn't you? You could write Tower of Pisa or you could write Houses of Parliament. (Girl shows the teacher something she has in her hand.) I don't want it this minute. I'll have it later. Stick it on the table ok? Right.

H (Child): It's round that. (Pointing to a picture of the London Eye.)

Teacher: Yes it's round. It's the London Eye. Right, so, how many children can use our travel agents though?

Children (Chorus together): Six.

Teacher: Six yes. So I'll have to use six super duper children to come and use it first.

C (Child): I want to…

Teacher: Put your hands on your shoulders if you want to come in. Oh this is really, really difficult. I'm just going to count one, two, three, four, five, six ok and then the others can have a turn later after they're finished. You can swop over. Right let's have a look at whose been brilliant. You've been a really good boy, one (teacher points to six children one at a time) two, three, four, five and T… six. Everyone else *welsh Sefwych yn dawel?* Off you go and we can come in after. Don't forget to phone Mrs Davies back.

M (Child): After play is there PE?

Teacher: Yes I think so if Mrs L… isn't in the hall. Come on L… you weren't in my six. (Child passes teacher something.) Just put them I'm there so nobody gets hurt.

M (Child): Miss

Teacher: Yes. Oh if you're on the side with the two chairs it's where you come to book a holiday, you're the customer and the side where there's one chair and where the papers are, that's where you're the travel agent. (A child takes something to the teacher.) Go and put that back in the suitcase please. (Teacher leaves the area, six children remain.)

APPENDIX NINE: RESEARCH SCHEDULE

Phase One
September 2011- September 2012

Phase Two: School A
September 2012 - November 2012

Phase Three: School B
January 2013

Phase Four
February 2013

Phase Five
February 2013 – September 2013

Phase Six: School C

Date	Activity
4th -18th March 2013	*Ethical Approval sought from head teacher, teacher, LSA parents*
Wednesday March 6th 2013	*Interview one with teacher* *Interview one with LSA*
Thursday 7th March 2013	*Visit 1 by researcher: read a story to children (World Book Day)*
Monday 18th March 2013	*Visit 2 by researcher: children informed about research – ethical assent sought*
Monday 25th March 2013	*Visit 3 by researcher: set up video equipment/ talked to children informally in the classroom*
Thursday April 18th 2013	*Visit 4 by researcher: set up video equipment/ talked to children informally in the classroom*
Tuesday April 23rd 2013	*Visit 5 by researcher: set up video equipment/ talked to children informally in the classroom*
Tuesday May 14th 2013	*Visit 6 by researcher: set up video equipment/ talked to children informally in the classroom*

Tuesday June 4th 2013	*Visit 7 by researcher: set up video equipment/ talked to children informally in the classroom*		
Non-Participant Observations			
One: Tuesday 11th June 2013	**Two: Monday 17th June 2013**	**Three: Tuesday 25th June 2013**	**Four: Friday 28th June 2013**
Five: Thursday 4th July 2013	**Six: Monday 8th July 2013**	**Seven: Tuesday 16th July 2013**	
Tuesday, 25th September 2013	*Interview two with teacher*		