

**Reception Classes Practitioners' Understanding of the Relationship
between Social - Emotional Development and Indoors and Outdoors Play**

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September 2013

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Abstract

This study focuses on social and emotional development in an early years setting, especially investigating reception classes practitioners' understanding of the correlation between social and emotional development and indoor and outdoor play. A small scale qualitative case study was carried out in a pre-school setting with two reception classes. Three practitioners of the reception classes were interviewed and children's interactive play observed in indoors (construction play area and small world play areas) and outdoors (park area). It was found that all the practitioners agree that play is an effective way to support children's social and emotional development with many aspects such as self-esteem, learning dispositions, self-regulations, empathy. The practitioners thought that play pedagogy might be used effectively to provide aspects of children's of social and emotional development. The observations revealed that it seems that interaction with peers helps children to express their opinions, to share their experiences, to being empathetic, to solve problems in their play. However, there were some aspects which were found in the study that practitioners were not aware of; for example that to sustain children's collaborative play extra materials could be added and that children should be encouraged to talk about their real or first-hand experiences in their play. The staff also agreed that they are supported by the head teachers with regard to the implementation of the curriculum and policy updates. The conclusion of the research was that even though there is a general acceptance of the importance of social and emotional development and learning competences,

the interview and observation notes showed that the awareness of this area of development might not be widespread.



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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Rationale of the Study

Social and emotional development is a significant core element of early years. When children feel scared, anxious, unhappy, not confident, lack self-esteem or insecure, these feelings have a considerable influence on all other learning and development areas (Broadhead et al, 2010). It is clear that core elements of learning which have been stated by Pascal (2003) contribute to children's social and emotional development. These: attitudes and dispositions, social competence, self-identity, emotional well-being. Social and emotional development is necessary for children to overcome emotional and behavioural problems, to increase social competence and to make children effective learners in order to increase their academic achievements (Humphrey, 2013). The Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning Programme in England highlighted that "...better academic results for all pupils and schools; more effective learning... higher motivation; better behaviour; higher school attendance; more responsible pupils, who are better citizens and more able to contribute to society; lower levels of stress and anxiety; higher morale, performance and retention of staff; a more positive school ethos" (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007: 8-9).

Children's experiences in pre-schools have a remarkable impact on their self-development. The social and emotional development of young children depends on the school facilities and the environment it creates. Adults who

interact with children in schools have good opportunities to play a role in the children's social and emotional development. Promoting play provision is a responsibility of practitioners in preschools. Therefore, in my research, I intend to examine what practitioners understanding about the link between play and social emotional development in a pre-school setting and how they could provide children with the best opportunities to develop both socially and emotionally though play.

Supporting social and emotional development in early years is necessary in order for the children to become more socialized, learn to manage their feelings and emotions, make independent decisions and communicate with other people. The importance of self-esteem, learning dispositions, self-regulation, and empathy has been acknowledged in relation to social and emotional development. Therefore it is fundamental to develop these aspects in order to positively impact on children's social and academic life in the future. If children do not gain these skills in early years, then they might have trouble in to build it later in their life.

As an early years teacher, I am accustomed to preparing activities and for children in all developmental areas, however, I was not aware of the importance of social and emotional development and how it can have a strong impact on other developmental areas. This made me more motivated and more curious to investigate the concept of social and emotional learning and development. I decided to investigate it though play because of play being

seen as “children’s natural work”. I felt that it might be easy to promote children’s social and emotional development through play and I was able to observe children easily while they were playing.

1.2. Research Questions

The research was undertaken to investigate the understanding of reception class practitioners of the connection between social and emotional development and play and their role in encouraging this. The questions underpinning the study were

What are the reception class practitioners’ understanding of the relationship between play and social-emotional development?

What is the pedagogical role of reception class practitioners in children’s play for social and emotional development?

To what extent do the reception class children develop socially and emotionally through play?

1.3. Structure of the Research

The research consists of five chapters including the present.

The present chapter, Chapter 1, provides the rationale for the study. It offers a general background to the research and states the personal reasons why the researcher undertook this study. It includes the research questions underpinning the research and presents a summary of what to expect of the

dissertation. It includes the structure of the dissertation and provides some brief information about the chapters.

The second chapter is literature review, consisting of the theoretical framework and empirical evidence that offers a background from the relevant literatures. Theoretical understandings of social and emotional development are explored and self-esteem, learning dispositions, self-regulation, and empathy highlighted as aspects of social and emotional development. Practitioners' roles, play, play pedagogy, the importance of social and emotional development and its future effects are discussed in detail.

In the third chapter, explanations of the choice of methods employed in the research and the impact these decisions are likely to have on the results of the study are provided. Research design, sampling procedure, settings, the methods of data collection and analyses are also presented. Additionally, ethical considerations, anonymity and confidentiality, trustworthiness and validity and limitation of the study are discussed in-depth.

In the fourth chapter, findings of the research from all data collected are presented followed by the analyses of the data. The data from interviews with practitioners to understand their thoughts about play and social and emotional development and their roles in promoting it and the data gathered during classroom observations to find out whether play influences children's social and emotional development are analysed.

In the last chapter, a summary of the research findings is given, followed by a discussion of, the key findings within the theoretical framework. Finally some recommendations for future researchers are suggested.



CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review aims to provide a context for the research. In this chapter I will first explore the importance of social and emotional development, linking it with play in the early years. I will then discuss views and definitions of social emotional development and enhancement strategies and examine their impact from the evidence provided from recent research. Advantages and disadvantages will be addressed and their implications for teaching practices will be discussed. The importance of social and emotional development will also be addressed with regard to the development of learning dispositions, self-esteem, being sociable and confidence. To develop and support children's social and emotional development, practitioners have considerable roles. I will explore practitioners' understanding of the role of play in children's social and emotional development.

2.2. The importance of promoting social and emotional development

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework states that a child needs a positive self-concept and highlights the teacher's role in promoting its development. It states that "children must be provided with experiences and support which will help them to develop a positive sense of themselves and of others; respect for others; social skills; and a positive disposition to learn. Providers must ensure support for children's emotional well-being to help them to know themselves and what they can do" (DCSF, 2008a, 12).

Children have some skills to communicate their feelings, wishes and intentions as well as understanding the feelings and intentions communicated by others (Dunn et al, 1987; Dunn, 2000). Being able to understand others feelings and difficulties begins with children becoming aware of their own feelings or emotions when interacting with others (Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2010). Early social and emotional education supports children to develop the attitudes, behaviours and cognitions conducive to their well-being and competence in all developmental areas because of the close relationship among developmental areas (Elias et al, 1997). Therefore a quality process of personal, social and emotional development is important for young children in all aspect of their life. The DCSF (2008b, 5) stated that promoting social and emotional development in the early years help children to:

- Relate well to other children and adults
- Make friends and get on with others
- Feel secure and valued
- Explore and learn confidently and ultimately to
- Feel good about themselves

Social and emotional proficiencies have an important role in positive human development, effective interaction in the community and education (Weare, 2007). Through social interactions, children's sense of self- development begins to improve and they can make sense of being self. The prime interaction is established in a child's family environment and as they thrive and develop, they become more active with other children though play. Even

though Davenport and Bourgeois's research (2008: 2) showed that "preschool children displaying high levels of aggression repeatedly have been shown to be at significant risk for continued behaviour problems and other social and emotional challenges throughout their lifetime", these challenges can be overcome through play in the early years. Canning (2007) pointed out that play is an important context that helps to strengthen children's social and emotional development. When children are playing with peers, they learn social skills such as taking a role in the play, turn taking, sharing ideas and collaboration. Understanding peers' ideas and their emotions are proposed as an aspect of children's social development (Carpendale and Lewis, 2006). Cutting and Dunn (1999) highlighted that there is a positive correlation between empathising with others' emotions and social development.

Mid-State Central Early Childhood Direction Centre (2009) highlighted that in order to acquire the basic skills that children need such as cooperation, following instructions, demonstrating self-control, paying attention, they must become social and emotional competent.

2.3. Defining social and emotional development

Early years foundation stage outlined social emotional development in the early years as giving children a positive sense of themselves and others; helping them to build positive relationship with their social environment and develop respect for others; improve social skills and learn how to manage their feelings, emotions; to understand appropriate behaviours in the social

environment and to have a confidence about their own skills, abilities (EYFS, 2012). Social and emotional development provides children with a sense of themselves, learning in different ways, developing empathy for others, managing strong emotions, regulating their own behaviours, establishing and sustaining relationships, resolving conflicts, gaining confidence and reaching goals (Mid-State Central Early Childhood Direction Centre, 2009).

Social and emotional competence has been defined as understanding, managing, and expressing the social and emotional aspects of life in a way that enables the successful management of life tasks such as learning, building relationships, dealing with challenges and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development (Elias et al, 1997).

2.4. The importance of social and emotional development for the future

Over the past 20 years, studies have shown that the social and emotional skills of children are connected with their early academic level of achievement (Wentzel and Asher, 1995). It has been found that children who have trouble with paying attention, obeying rules, getting along with others and controlling the negative emotions of anger and distress have less success in school (Arnold, 1999; McClelland, 2000). For many children, academic success in their early years of schooling seems to be built on a firm foundation of children's social and emotional skills (Ladd et al, 1997; O'Neil et al., 1997). In light of this research evidence, it is obvious that social and emotional development gives children a firm foundation, not only for their academic

success but also positive perspective on life. Hence, it is important to support social and emotional development in early years.

2.4.1. Learning dispositions

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that social interaction and social learning are key elements for the learning disposition and improve cognitive development. He describes this as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) He defined this as the zone between progressive developments (actual level of development) and potential or possible level of development under adult supervision or in interaction with more skilled peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Namely, a pupil can execute a task under adult guidance or with peer collaboration that they would be unable to achieve on their own. Vygotsky's ideas revolved around the correlation between people and the social context in which they can become more active on sharing their experiences and ideas (Crawford, 1996). According to Vygotsky, people need to communicate and share their experiences with others. Thus, they become socialized in their society. Initially, children develop their social interaction through communication with others to attain higher skills. Also socialisation can provide learning in the early years. Holzman (2009) added to Vygotsky's view that when children are interacting with their social environment and in cooperation with their peers, learning disposition awakens. Vygotsky proclaimed, "learning which is oriented toward developmental levels that have already been reached is ineffective from the view point of the child's overall development. It does not

aim for a new stage of the developmental process but rather lags behind this process" (Vygotsky, 1978).

Social and emotional development is necessary for children's learning. Otherwise, children who have trouble concentrating, are unable to play and interact with other children, are unable to cope with social situations and unable to express feelings and emotions or to control negative emotions and encounter learning difficulty (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2004). When children are playing with peers, they can compose their play groups, share ideas and respect others' ideas, solve and discuss about a problem and find a solution and think critically with others (Australian Government Department of Education, 2009). Being playful is a kind of tool for children to make them more competent in social and emotional skills. Children may express their opinions, feelings and can come up with some solutions to conflicts they might face, while they are engaged in play. Claxton and Carr defined dispositions for learning as "being ready, willing and able to engage profitably learning" (2004, p. 87). In other words, there are some basic skills for development of learning such as confidence, curiosity, resilience, self-motivation, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication and cooperativeness that are key elements for the capacity to know how to learn (Goleman, 1995). Katz (1993) suggested that children generally have the disposition for asking questions about, exploring and examining their environments. Learning skills and dispositions are very important in the early years to prepare for the next step of their education. Shaping and forming

intellectual strengths such as memory, imagination, developing concepts is principal prerequisites for school learning (Rawson and Rose, 2006). Activities and learning practices that are situated in an early years setting can allow children to improve their ability to learn and they can make sense the world (Drake, 2001). Rawson and Rose discussed that teaching children does not provide them with learning dispositions; however, children's ability to learn might be encouraged by a well-developed environment and positive intervention from practitioners in the school. Vygotsky highlighted that when children are interacting with their social environment and in cooperation with their peers, learning disposition awakens (Holzman, 2009). Providing early experiences and guidance will strengthen children's dispositions for learning and being social (Dowling, 2010).

2.4.2. Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a considerable aspect of children's overall functioning and is a key element to support learning disposition (Pope et al, 1988). Roberts (2002) highlighted that self-esteem is seen as important to achieve balanced learning and development. Young children learn in different ways. These include listening, observing, exploring, touching, playing (which involves a variety of senses) and these are combined with ideas, feelings and relationship with others. It would seem that there is much common basis for the acquisition of self-esteem and learning (Curry and Johnson, 1990).

There have been many attempts to identify self-esteem (Lawrence, 2006). The development of self-esteem occurs from when the child becomes aware of self (Dowling, 2010). Self-esteem is an equating what person can do in the present as success and what the person hopes to accomplish as a goal. Therefore, in accordance with James' theory, self-esteem might be developed if an individual lowers their targets or avoids failure (Elmer, 2001). However, it is the difference between one's ambition and current self that is thought to motivate individuals to work harder in order to become better (Lawrence, 2006). This description of self-esteem puts the focus on how person feels about others and their abilities. Hence, self-esteem depends on internal self-assessment. Coopersmith (1967) expressed the idea of self-esteem based on self-evaluation by defining self-esteem as evaluative attitudes towards oneself. In this respect, self-esteem is seen as a socially shared self-assessment. Carr (2001) pointed out that a child with high self-esteem is ready, willing and able to respond to different environments in which they deal with problems. In the development of self-esteem in childhood, the environment is an important element. Miller and Moran (2012) described self-esteem as an evaluation of judgement about oneself; how the person feels about the mirror image of him/herself. In accordance with this, Pope, McHale and Craighead (1988) stated that "self-esteem is an evaluation of the information contained in the self-concept, and is derived from a child's feelings about all the things he is" (p. 2). Dowling (2010) has convincingly highlighted that the setting of the classroom and home has a considerable impact on children's self-esteem when they are learning in the relevant environment because of the size and type of

setting. The importance of settings and schools are getting increase that transaction of setting to provide children's need, rather than expecting every child to fit in to same provision (Dowling, 2010).

High self-esteem, in other words the positive self-concept, is defined as a secure sense of identity and skill to acknowledge and being value of one's self (Roberts, 2002). Having a positive self-esteem for one's self is dependent on having a clear understanding of who you are; this is hard for children. Bruce (2005) pointed out that often people from minorities are stereotype into an identity with which people are not happy or uncomfortable. Despite this negative aspect of self-esteem, high self-esteem is promoted by positive experiences, energy, optimism and confidence. Also there is a fruitful relationship between positive self-esteem and academic level (Roberts, 2002; Curry and Johnson, 1990; Pope, 1988). Even though it is not yet certain whether unhealthy self-esteem indeed is a cause of any disorder, the fact that it could be associated with critical issues in childhood may be reason enough to intervene (Pope et al, 1988). The importance of self-esteem is that it is significant for general psychological well-being, but there are those who assert that a healthy self-esteem is related to range of performance outcomes in education, communities and the workplace (Miller and Moran, 2012). A healthy self-esteem has been found to be very precious for children, since it acts as the foundation for children's sense of life experiences. "The social and emotional competence derived from this positive self-appraisal can be a force that helps the child avoids future serious problems" (Pope et al, 1988).

2.4.3. Empathy

Empathy has been identified as people's social receptor (Goleman, 1995). Empathy means that a person understands others and how they feel and can "put themselves in their shoes" (Dowling, 2010, p. 130). Dunn (1988) stated that sense of empathy develops in the early years in the close family context. Young children have opportunities to communicate with people who are in their environment such as parents, carers, peers and educators. When children have conflict with each other, they need to show they are empathetic in order to argue successfully (Csoti, 2009). Additionally, interaction provides young children the opportunity to share, explain and discuss feelings with others. "Through growing to understand about the feelings of the people they love, children can later extend these understandings to empathise with others with whom they are less familiar" (Dowling, 2010, p. 130). Being empathetic with someone is that children would have been expected to understand and respect others, place emphasis on their beliefs and thoughts, accept their life values and feel their feelings (Csoti, 2009). The significance of personal well-being is reflected by a group of primary teachers accordance with their daily tasks, they realized that the children who have healthy self-esteem and feeling naturally recognize others work and commendation them for it (Laevers, 1996; Fountain, 1990). Knowing ourselves is to be able to become aware of the different feelings that we have and that others' experiences is an important step (Dowling, 2010). Young children can feel empathy and can show it with their attitudes, reflections, behaviours and expressions (Denham, 1998). Elfer

(2007) pointed out that this emphatic attitude is dependent on children's early experiences in relation to a good attachment where children's own feelings have been recognised.

Empathy includes two principal characteristics empathy and sympathy (Johnasson, 2008). Feeling emphatic means that the being aware of an individual's own distress and being able to deal with it. In other words, empathy is "feeling *with* others", sympathy is "feeling *for* others" (Saarni, 1999, p. 162). When children display emphatic and sympathetic behaviour they exclusively show their sorrow for the other person who is in trouble and that makes children more effective in their relationships, their facial expression as behavioural indicator (Csoti, 2009; Denham, 1998). Behavioural indicators of empathy and sympathy increase with age across the preschool years (Denham, 1998).

2.4.4. Self-regulation

Self-regulation is an important aspect of social and emotional development. Children acquire ideas about politeness or expected social attitudes from their family members, other adults, peers, and educators. It is important not to assume that all children have the same social experience within families such as polite behaviour or even being aware of society regulation (Csoti, 2009). Self-regulation allows people to take into account personal differences that "...serve important organizing functions with respect to motor activity and emotion" (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1992, p. 7). Zimmerman (2005) defined self-

regulation as relating to self-generated feelings, ideas and actions that are planned and adapted to the acquisition of the personal aims. A high self-regulation helps to increase academic success. It has been observed that people who have good self-regulation are more successful (Pressley et al, 1987). It is therefore clear that the well-developed self-regulation is related with a wide spectrum of learning activities, also it provides the child with the skills to improve academic success (Hosang, 2006). It entails more specific understanding of activities and knowledge that are interwoven with other personality traits like self- control, organizing skill, being able to work methodically and systematically and decision making skills, without the influence of external factors (Flower and Hayes, 1980).

Zimmer, Bonner and Kovach (2003) highlighted that practitioners are usually aware of pupils having trouble with self-regulation, but they are not often able to develop the process of ability of self-regulation. Harris and Graham (1992) explained the importance of teachers' roles in children's development of self-regulation in that the teacher is seen as a model of self-regulation, strategic performance, able to deal with problems and find a solution.

2.5. Play pedagogy and provision

Play is a key element in early childhood pedagogy. According to Bruce (1999), in England; early years' pedagogy has been established on play. Play is a natural activity for children where they learn and concretise their thoughts. Hence, it is through play that diverse aspects of children's brains develop.

Pugh (1999) stated that the major part of children's learning takes place in the first five years. This is because this period has been accepted as a critical time for children's social and emotional development. Although pedagogy justifies play as the possible way to provide the occasions for children's social experience, the technique can lead to children forming limited relationships (Rogers, 2011). This disadvantage can be overcome using the pedagogy effectively in early education. The decision to provide an informative atmosphere in which play and investigation can take place is one of the pedagogical methods and that might be used by early years teachers (Anning, Cullen and Flear, 2006). High quality pre-school experiences help children's social and emotional development at entry to school and have a lasting impact. Thus, effective pedagogy covers interaction conventionally integrated with the period of teaching to sustain children's learning and social - emotional development (EPPE Project, 2003). Influential pedagogy in the early years must include instructive play to provide 'high quality' experience in early years (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva and Muttock, 2002). Play provision might be provided in two ways as indoors and outdoors.

2.5.1. Indoors

It is a common observation that children can exhibit a variety of play in the indoor environment such as socio-dramatic play, social play, role play, parallel play, symbolic play. Children can access many materials indoors. The materials, equipment and context for play impact on children's play options and attitudes in play (Frost et al, 1998). In the classroom area, there might be

many toys and toy availability has much more effect than space availability on children's behaviours in play (Smith, 2010). Physical environments support children understanding of the world, build or re-build children's knowledge, encourage shared activities, communication and co-operation (Papatheodorou, 2010).

Children's play is influenced by the materials and equipment provided for learning indoors (Frost, et al, 1998). Children engage in more constructive play, dramatic and functional play in indoors areas. It can be seen that children might be able to interact in each other when they are involved in such play, especially dramatic and socio-dramatic play. Wood (2013) defined six elements of dramatic and socio-dramatic play: "role play by imitation, make believe with objects, make believe with actions and situations, persistence in the role play, interaction and verbal communication" (p. 27). Although dramatic and socio-dramatic plays seem to be the same, they are distinguishable. While dramatic play includes pretending to be someone or something, role playing, using real experiences and materials, socio-dramatic play additionally includes interaction between at least two children and therefore the play develops and is sustained with different ideas from each participant (Smilansky, 1990). Through socio-dramatic play, children acquire some mastery levels of emotional development through real experiences (Else, 2009). Children can construct their own internal rules and reflect upon embedding these rules in their social world (Wood, 2013). Playing together allows children awareness of authority, sustaining relationships; dealing with

troubles, compromising, leading in group play, and following rules (Else, 2009). Children are normally less exuberant and need to keep in touch continuously with their peer in indoors. Indoor activities are less boisterous than outdoor activities since the space is under adults' control and under more rules (Stephenson, 2002). Hence, it is more possible way to play in a more social and cooperative way indoors than outdoors.

2.5.2. Outdoors

It is generally known that outdoor activities help to support children's physical development. However, the Statutory Framework, Practical Guidance for Early Years Foundation Stage (DfES, 2007) and Bailey et al (2007) pointed out that outdoor plays supports all aspect of development and learning, not just in physical development. It is important that acquisitions in levels of self-esteem and confidence and in developing positive sense of well-being can also be expected from outdoor play (Bailey et al, 2007). When children face physical challenges through the outdoor provision, they can build a sense of personal achievement and confidence as well as experiencing pride and pleasure in their physical accomplishment (Davies, 1996). Studies have shown that the interaction with nature is vital for psychological well-being, for the development of an awareness and understanding of the dependence of life in the natural environment (Dighe, 1993; Galvin, 1994; Greenman, 1988; Heffernan, 1994; Naylor, 1985; Talbot and Frost, 1989). In this line, outdoor provision gives children considerable opportunities to interact with the natural environment and elements of the nature (Davies, 1996). In an ideal outdoor

area some materials are provided for children's learning and development such as offering height with pallets, wooden boxes, and climbing frames which are helpful for children's social, creative or imaginative play (Else, 2009).

The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) (cited in Maynard et al, 2011, p. 282) stated that in pre-schools, there should be a considerable emphasis on the outdoors as a resource for children's learning, even though it is highlighted that children should be given opportunities for risk taking and being more confident investigators in both indoors and outdoors environment. Davies's empirical research (1995), which undertook to investigate preschool teachers' understanding and practice relating to the curriculum, and children's outdoors experiences, found that teachers had relatively limited perceptions of this important aspect of the curriculum that few of the teachers had grasped that outdoor play could be valuable in aiding social and emotional development and only half of the teachers half of teachers reported that children's confidence develops when they are climbing, moving or using materials, they are learning about their own skills and can achieve the goals they set for themselves without any worries and that outdoor play allow children to express themselves and cope with any problems that may arise. Furthermore, some teachers (18%) understood that outdoors was a place where children should do and enjoy themselves.

2.6. The role of play in social and emotional development

Children take part in social environments by interplaying and debating with others, building principal social skills (Corsaro and Schwarz, 1991). Also, children begin to understand how to behave in social situations by cooperating, sharing and following rules (State Central Early Childhood Direction Centre, 2009). For this reason, children's social and emotional developmental areas can develop through play. Early experiences of socialisation allow them awareness of the social world directly, sensibly, supportively and accessibly (Cook-Gumperz, 1991). These affirmative social experiences also have a role in emotional development which helps children to acquire the skills of coping with stress, improving self-control so that more social experiences establish a social and emotional model for children in the early years (Wilmshurst, 2008; Frydenberg et al, 2012). Even though play is not a solution for many conflicts all the time, it provides an opportunity to observe children's friendship relations, self-regard and educational attainments such as improving social development skills (Broadhead, 2009). Also Ditchburn (1988) pointed out that conflict resolution is an important skill that enables learning activities to proceed. Davis et al (2011) observed that children who have good social and emotional wellbeing were seen to be socially capable, have high self-esteem and self-confidence, able to learn, calm, and able to concentrate. Acquiring positive impacts of the socialization can be realized though play in the context of early years settings. Children gain a variety of learning skills such as problem solving, sharing ideas,

investigating, collaboration, self-confidence, creativity, imagining. These abilities acquired from the educational setting can then be transferred to their daily lives (Frydenberg et al, 2012).

Social and emotional competence, which can be defined as including emotional expression, rules of social and emotional behaviours such as sharing ideas, respecting and communicating with others, coping with problems and connectedness to society, can be achieved through play in early childhood education (Denham, 2006). Having mastered skills in social and emotional competence gives children the opportunity to deal with conflicts. On the other hand, according to Broadhead (2009), the lack of socialization can be a cause of conflict in educational settings. However, through well-designed play, affirmative outcomes can be reached; children can become more competent socially and emotionally. Play with peers can be used as a possible way of exploring the children's emotional reactions in some situations (Frydenberg et al, 2012). Studies on social skills based on play have shown that play helps to decrease children's anxiety (Barret, 1998). Generally, many parents would like to register their children in pre-school because they believe that pre-schools make children more social and help them establish friendships when they mix with peers (Dowling, 2010).

When young children start school and enter into another social environment, it may make them feel anxious or worried. Having a friend in the early years makes children happy and during this peer relationship children are able to cope with problems and learn well; friendlessness, on the other hand, can be a

cause of unhappiness for children (Dowling, 2010). Children who have inadequate and failing social skills may face social exclusion (Arslan et al, 2011). Young children can improve their social and emotional development with their friends together in play. Play integrates alternatives for entering into an activity, for social interaction, for use of language, for explaining emotions, for coping with and solving a problem (Brock et al, 2009). Additionally, Vygotsky pointed out that social interaction between people allows the development of mental activity and effects learning indirectly (Donaldson, 1978). Raver and Zigler study (1997) has shown that adjustment of children's social and emotional development is crucial for school readiness and academic success. All of these can stimulate emotional and social development with positive outcomes.

According to Piaget (cited in Siraj-Blatchford, 2006), mutual peer interactions supply the underpinnings for children to create their own views and shape their ideas (Anning, 2006). Therefore, collective play is very important for young children. However, peer interactions for long periods were found to have a negative effect on high quality experience and there were found to be some detrimental social interactions (Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004). In spite of that, Broadhead (2007) stated that relationships with peers stimulate higher cognitive and emotional functions in children's play; they improve their verbal skills and their abilities to deal with problems. Also, Vygotsky explained that children's social development is significant in that people who are in the child's social and play environments help children's learning in the

zone of proximal development which provides them with high quality experience (Brock et al, 2009).

Conversely, entering a new social environment is a big problem some children. Some children socialise easily whereas for others, gaining social skills is hard (Dowling, 2010). In order to help these children to be more social, they need to learn sharing, and how to explain their ideas thus helping them to behave more confidently (Thomas, 2008). In this situation, play can be used as an effective tool to make children more sociable. Attaining a range of social skills can reinforce children's emotional well-being. Young children need to express their opinions with use of body language or verbalisation, and therefore they want to connect with others to share their expressions and emotions (Trevarthen, 2010). There are some positive and negative feelings that children want to share in their play. Being playful is a kind of process for improving children's social and emotional well-being in early years education. The educational atmosphere is a considerable element in social and emotional development for young children.

2.7. Practitioners' roles in fostering social and emotional development

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has principles for personal, social and emotional development,

- that every child is unique and a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-reliant, positive relationships

- that children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with peers and adults, enabling environments
- that the environment has a role in supporting and extending children's learning and development, learning and development as the last principle
- that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates and areas of learning and development are equally important (EYFS, 2012).
- That in order to effectively put these EYFS principles into practice, practitioners have to understand and support children's social and emotional development.

The EYFS gives providers of early years education and care this statutory responsibility as regards PSED:

Children must be provided with experiences and support that will help them to develop a positive sense of themselves and of others; respect for others; social skills; and a positive disposition to learn. Providers must ensure support for children's emotional well-being to help them to know themselves and what they can do.

(Statutory Framework for the EYFS p. 12)

Social Emotional Aspect of Learning (SEAL) programmes are designed to assist practitioners in this process. SEAL activities are presented in a framework that serves to combine content encouragement emotional literacy within the existing courses of study at foundation stage and throughout key stages 1 and 2. SEAL aims to develop children's emotional intelligence and it increases their self-awareness, empathy, social competence (Tombs, 2006). SEAL states that it will have a crucial role on eight areas: academic achievement, self-esteem, personal responsibility, tolerance of difference,

workplace effectiveness, classroom/school behaviour, increased inclusion and improvement to mental health (DfES, 2005).

The social and emotional development of children might be supported by a variety of different ways, for example, “classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, a supportive school climate, and involvement in community service” (Elias et al, 1997, p 2). During the daily activities, practitioners may support children’s social and emotional competence through these methods.

The educational environment has an important role in reflecting children’s learning dispositions and improving their abilities. Eun (2010) convincingly argues that “children do not learn everything that they are taught in schools and not everything that is learned leads to development”. Thus, play can be an effective method in the learning process at preschools. Therefore, teachers could support children’s continuous play and encourage child-initiated play. The play, which is helpful for children’s learning socially, must allow children to sustain and develop their play more deeply and fruitfully and provide more alternatives for children’s social development (Broadhead, 2004). Webster-Stratton and Reid (2004) highlighted that teachers’ interaction with their students influences children’s social and emotional outcomes. Sometimes children need the help of practitioners when they face a conflict their play or at specific times such as when they are vulnerable through illness or turbulence in the family. Practitioners must be aware of these situations and respond to their individual needs and make them feel better (Dowling, 2010). In this case, teachers may provide them with play areas that encourage them to share their

feeling with others and make them more relaxed in the classroom environment.

In conclusion, children take the first steps of socialization within their families. When they grow up and enter into a social group, they meet many people and some of them could be friends for them. Generally, after the family environment, children's first social interactions take place in a school atmosphere. Schools are very important mediators for social and emotional development in early years education. Play has an incontestable role in young children's developmental areas. They can become more social, make many friends, share ideas, express their emotions, solve immediate problems, discuss and think critically through play. As Vygotsky explained, children's learning development can reach mastery level easily through socialization such as when they enter into a social group and are active in the group. This is because in ZPD, children's potential learning development can be supported by the people around them such as peers, parents, siblings or teacher to increase high level learning. Thus, social emotional development is an important key to healthy personal development and relationship with the environment (Arslan et al, 2011). Parents, and especially teachers, must provide high quality play provision or pedagogy to improve children's social and emotional development in early years education.

2.8. Conclusion

The skills of being sociable, improving the sense of self and understanding of others through play in early childhood can influence children's academic life positively. Weare (2007) demonstratively discusses that enhancing social and emotional development can help give rise to better learning and success. The aim of this research is to investigate empirically how children's social and emotional development is enhanced through play, how play can contribute children's social and emotional development during early years education and how the reception class practitioners' understand the role of play in reception class children' social and emotional development are in the early years.

CHAPTER 3- METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the design and methodology employed in this research. The context of the study and the participants involved are introduced. The data collection methods and analysis of data are discussed. The ethical issues considered and addressed during the research are stated. Furthermore, the process for establishing trustworthiness and validity, pilot study and the limitations of the study will be described.

3.2. Research Questions

The research explored reception class practitioners' understanding of the role of play in children's social and emotional development. The research questions are:

1. What are the reception class practitioners' understandings of the relationship between play and social-emotional development?
2. What is the pedagogical role of reception class practitioners' in children's play for social and emotional development?
3. To what extent do the reception class children learn social and emotional development through play?

3.3. Research Design

The study is a small scale qualitative research using the case study approach in a preschool setting. The single case study approach makes possible "a holistic

approach to studying a phenomenon in its natural setting” (Willis, 2008, 212). Case study is a purposeful research approach to collect in-depth data in a real life context (Robson, 2011). In this case, to gain understanding of the interaction between practitioners and children a small scale qualitative case study was used. Case studies fulfil ‘a detailed snapshot of a system in action’ (Edwards, 2001, 126). It was expected that the obvious limitations set by a single setting would enable it (Roberts-Holmes, 2011; Robson, 2011). Although this study may play a part in raising questions, the nature and intentions of the research are not to make comparisons or make any generalisations.

The reception class practitioners’ understandings of the role of play in children’s social and emotional development was central in particular for answering the research questions. An important benefit of a qualitative approach is that it is possible to focus on basic explanation what has been observed and found (Punch, 2005). As a result of this approach, I used semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

3.4. Sampling Procedure

A convenience sample, which is a kind of non-probability sample, has been used in this research. Non-probability samples are used mostly in small scale studies and are conducted with a particular group known to the researcher (Robson, 2011; Cohen et al, 2011). A convenience sample is defined by Robson (2011) as “involves choosing the nearest and most convenient persons

to act as respondents”. In accordance with this, I decided to select a school where one of my friends works as a teacher. Therefore, convenience sampling was employed for this study (Roberts- Holmes, 2011). Even though convenience sampling may include issues regarding bias and trustworthiness, it was regarded as suitable as the aim of the study was to acquire an understanding rather than generalisation of the issue (Robson, 2011).

All children except those who had declined to be a part of the research within the classroom were treated as participants. However, as the focus for the study is on the interaction of children at play corners in each other and therefore the observation was implemented in the class without any intervention, sampling does not take into account the number of children.

All staff in the two reception classes were selected to participate in the study, i.e. one teacher and one classroom assistant from the first observation class and the one teacher from the second class (making a total of three) were selected for the interviews. It was important that staff members chosen had regularly spent time and were responsible for the care and education of all of the children in the two reception classes. Therefore only key workers were selected to participate in the study.

In view of the fact that this research was targeted at understanding and obtaining a large amount of important qualitative data, the study concentrated on the practitioners from the three practitioners were from two reception classes and the children in the two reception classes’. This is an illustration of

purposive sampling of the participants (Robson, 2011). The in-depth information about the participants used is included in the following section.

3.4.1. The Setting

The school was a local authority school in East London and had a children's centre in which I was particularly interested. The school has 772 pupils on roll of which 22% are eligible for pupil premium grant; 94% are from an ethnic minority – predominantly Pakistani, Black African and from Any Other White Background (Eastern European); 74% are speakers of English as an additional language and 18% are on the special needs register. Attendance is at the nationally expected level of 96% overall. Urdu is the most prevalent language in the school. Pupils come from very deprived backgrounds, the majority falling in the 20-40% band of the deprivation index. The school has 4 forms of entry in Years R and 1 and currently 3 forms of entry in Years 2-6; the school is growing into a full 4 form entry school.

I was interested in two full-day reception classes. I planned to make 10 trips to the setting for collection of data and in total. I carried out 3 observations per day and this comprised of one observation of class A and one observation of class B, both conducted in the indoor setting. The last observation was conducted in the outdoors when classes A and B were both having outdoor play. Observations on classes A and B were carried out twice in separate sessions.

3.4.1.1. The Participants

The participants were three practitioners from the pre-schools and three of those practitioners' pupils were observed in each of the two classrooms which have on average 30 pupils in each class. The children those who played in the small world play area (corner) from one class and the construction play area (corner) from the other class were observed in classroom areas respectively. Outdoors observations were also carried out. However, the school has a big garden and it was separated into two sections. One section included two miniature houses and cycles, the second section was like a children's park area and included slide, climbing frames etc. Even though two classes went to play outside at the same time, children who played in these areas were observed.

3.5. Methods of Data Collection

The data for the study was acquired from semi-structured interviews and the Social Play Continuum (SPC) Observation Scale (Appendix 8). The methods chosen were very carefully selected in order to best answer the particular research question. Though an understanding of practitioners' perceptions and roles of interaction between social-emotional development and play could be obtained from semi-structured interviews alone, it was important to obtain data about how play can influence the children's social and emotional development and this could be gathered from the application of the SPC as

well as semi-structured interviews. Table A below shows the schedule followed in collecting data.

Weeks	Research Procedure
1-2	-Obtained access to the school -met with head teacher to give more detailed information about the study, -dropped off the consents forms for head teacher, parents and practitioners.
3-5	Indoors and outdoors observations
6	Interviews with the practitioners
7-8	Analyses of data

Table A: The Research Schedule

3.5.1. Observations

Observations of children were undertaken 10 times in each setting. The observations in the study were aimed at understanding and providing evidence of how play can influence the children's social and emotional development. The SPC which was improved by Pat Broadhead in 2004 was used while observing children's play in the classroom and during outdoor activities. During the observation, language, action and mutual interaction were recorded on paper through the behaviour categories in four areas (Broadhead, 2009). These categories are associative domain, social domain, highly social domain

and cooperative domain. This aims to obtain information about children's attitudes and comments regarding their social and emotional development in their play.

Observations focused on the small world play area, construction play area in the indoors and outdoors play areas consistently. During the observations, language, action and reciprocity were recorded through behaviour categories such as associative, social, highly social and cooperative domain in the SPC. More detailed observation notes were taken on the second page of the SPC and additional note papers. The numbers of the first page of observation scales show which action was recorded and observed with number 1 being the first action in children's play. These numbers explain how children played in play period across four domains. The numbers of each domain and each play provision were calculated and presented in the tables in the following chapter. It was difficult to observe the children's every action in the play groups, but it was important that to record only particular details of the event believed to be appropriate in addressing the research questions and that supported interview's questions. Moreover, taking notes from the observations as they occur provides both better accuracy and greater completeness (Robson, 2011). The SPC is a scale designed to be used to observe play and how children make use of the play areas. The following sub-headings will explain the sections, abbreviations and functions of the SPC.

3.5.1.1. The headings of the SPC

3.5.1.1.1. Side 1

Side 1 of the SPC sheets include general information about the observation process, i.e. observation start time, observation finish time, children entering play, children leaving play and area of provision. This information is necessary in order to be able to comment, to be systematic when required that proving equal times and looking at the observation records. Side 1 of the SPC gives some abbreviations such as L (language), RL (reciprocal language), A (action observed), RA (reciprocal action), L/A (language and action combined), RL/RA (reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined). The observer used B (boy) and G (girl) to describe the children, if the children were not known by the observer. B and G were used to show how many children and of which gender entered or left play. The observer had to attend to four specific things during the observation:

- a. Distinguishing between language and action
- b. Noting where language and action begin and how these actions combined
- c. Recognizing where language and actions become reciprocal
- d. Recognizing high levels of complex actions when reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined.

Four domains are given on side 1 of the SPC associative domain, social domain, highly social domain and cooperative domain. These are described below. Associative Domain: Parallel play periods and action-based play can

be seen in this domain. Looking, imitating might be relatively observed. Object play has a considerable value as it has been for the developing children; the offering of an object shows the first noticeable attempt at reciprocity. However, the offering of an object might be neglected or it might be used in parallel play period and followed by dispute. Self-talking might be seen in this domain as thinking aloud. The next attitude in this domain is comment on action directed at peer; peer does not respond. This is slightly different from self-talking in that when a child has tried to communicate directly with a peer, or made a comment that invites peer play, “even if the voice lifts a little to carry further, it invites reciprocity” (Broadhead, 2004, 44). Object offering and directed at peer; peer does not respond attitudes are essential for intercommunication.

Social Domain: children’s facial expressions are important in this domain such as smiling, laughter, eye contact. In this domain reciprocity starts with eye contact, playing vocally and noisy, object taken, altercations, compromises object offered, consent sought. More complex language might be used like giving instructions, asking questions, responding or not responding. These attitudes have a tendency to be relatively isolated and dialogues sporadic. It might be difficult to identify any significant differences between a child seeking approval and child commenting on their own play. It is a matter of explication. “As observational skills develop with time and practice, the capacity to make distinctions also develop” (Broadhead, 2004, 45).

Highly Social Domain: the offering and accepting of objects might be seen frequently. In this domain, play and flow of the sustaining social connections integrate and become more apparent. Comment on own action, describe intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange and developing sporadic dialogues in role play seem usual. Eye contact, laughter attitudes still remain significant in this domain but children are taking the signals for reciprocity to sustain the social interaction in each other. There is more extended interplay to provide and to improve their play themes. The observer must be careful about that sometimes children build on a theme before their play in carpet session and they are continuous the theme in the play corner. This is a limitation which will be discussed in the limitation sub-title in this chapter. There might be another attitude in this domain, which is that new ideas or resources have some impact on the developing theme. Children could start to play cooperatively within their own experiences and opinions from the carpet session.

Cooperative domain: in this domain the main aim is that offering and accepting objects sustains and extends play theme. The objects are optional to extend play and the important thing is that problem solving and goals are integrated in the play. Sustained dialogues which are related with the activity and clear themes emerge can be seen in this domain. However, this is rare. The children become embedded and fully focussed on the play explaining and discussing what they are doing in order to achieve their goal. This domain is more integrated with reciprocity in language and actions such as explanations,

description, new ideas and resources to extend play, displaying a shared understanding of goals, offering and accepting verbal and physical help or both, identifying and solving problem, sustained dramatic scenarios with link in play theme. The role play starts to take on clear dramatic scenarios and children remain in character for longer periods. However, this dramatic play might be seen as parallel play during the observation period. This could be another limitation of the implementation of the scale which will be discussed in the limitation sub-title on this chapter.

3.5.1.1.2. Side 2

Side 2 of the SPC has been designed to support reflection about the observations. Many observations have been carried out to develop the continuum; side 2 of the SPC identifies the characteristic of the play in each of the domains. There is a line under each category which shows level of the reciprocity and momentum in activities. This might help observers to recall and recognize the children's play during the observations. Side 2 also allows the observer to record adult intervention in the domain's activities. At the bottom of side 2 is a space for additional notes to help in making decisions about children what kind of play has been observed. These notes can be used for clarification when the researcher is making post-observation reflections.

The observational method was appropriate to understand how children are playing socially and emotionally as there is often a gap between what people say and do in reality. The observations provided data that could contrast or

complement the data obtained from the interview process. Therefore the observations were powerful and useful in removing social desirability and bias (Robson, 2011). An important deficiency of the observation as a method is that researcher bias can affect the findings (Oiger, 1998). Other disadvantage is that researcher can concentrate on certain events whilst ignoring others (Robson, 2011). An effort was made to focus on all areas and activities of the reception classes. The researcher tried to ensure that she did not interact with the children, except that some children asked how their work is looking or complained about what their friends were doing in conflicts during the observations periods.

3.5.2. Interviews

It was planned to carry out semi-structured face to face interviews with practitioners in order to examine teachers' views on the social and emotional development of children in their play. However, all of the participating practitioners wanted to answer questions via email because they were extremely busy with the evaluation of pupils and classroom activities. One participant said that she felt a bit shy about having her voice recorded. Therefore, in the last week of classroom observations, I sent the three practitioners the semi-structured interviews through email and they replied to me within the following two weeks. An interview can be useful in order to get more information from the interviewee (Biklen, 1992). The interviews were structured to gain an understanding of the social and emotional developments of reception classes' children.

The reception classes' practitioners were asked their demographic information, understanding of social-emotional development and play, and the roles of practitioners in children's play to promote social and emotional competences, the place of social-emotional development in the curriculum. Therefore, the interview process was useful for addressing the three research questions in this research. The interview transcripts and analyses for each participant are included in the findings chapter.

Prior to the study each practitioners of participants received a consent letter which detailed the content of the study and nature of their involvement in both the interview process and indoors and outdoors observations. The consent letter included a form to be completed, agreeing to participate in the study. Before sending an email to the participants, a conversation was held with each staff member to explain to them in detail the nature of the research, to assure them that their data would remain anonymous, to answer any queries they had and finally to reconfirm their willingness to participate.

Electronic recording was used because the interviewees were too busy to take time off for the interview and one of them said she would feel uncomfortable to have her voice recorded. Recording electronically made my work easier because I did not have to transcribe tapes. They were informed that they could skip questions they felt uncomfortable with and ask that certain statements they had made be excluded from the study. I ensured them that the interviews would remain confidential, be stored securely and that I would be the only

person with access to them. All participants agreed to complete the interview schedule by email. The e-mail interviews facilitated the interviewees in that they could have time to think about the interview questions before replying (Robson, 2011). The interviewees were happy about that. One of them said that she was more will to answer by email as it allowed her to explain herself more freely (Robson, 2011). Non-judgmental questions and responses to answers were given throughout the interviews' questions. This was important in developing conformity and trust with the participants and for them to feel valued. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the practitioners. It enables the interviewers to follow up interviewees' answers and can be adapted easily if the interviewer wishes to keep in different line of enquiry (Robson, 2011). Open-ended questions were used as they allow a more varied and comprehensive answers and give the interviewee the opportunity to reply to the questions as they wish (Cannold, 2001). It was important that the reception class practitioners had the freedom and opportunity to answer the questions from their own perspectives.

3.5.3. Pilot Study

Robson (1993) highlighted how the first stage of any research should be a pilot study as it facilitates, modifies and perfects the methods used to gather data. In the current study, the semi-structured interview questions were first piloted on three MA colleagues, selected based on convenience, in order to gain insights with regard to length of the interview and whether it was

necessary to revise the questions. Some changes were made on questions. Two questions were revised and rewritten, one question removed, two questions added. The order of the questions was influenced by the pilot study in order to make the questions clearer.

3.6. Data Analysis

The transcription and inclusion of data from observations and the semi-structured interviews were analysed in detail. Gibbons (2006) highlighted that only data suited to the researcher's aim should be included and in accordance with this, only key events that are both important to indicate purpose of the research and established a connection with the theoretical concepts discussed in the literature review were considered.

The raw data from the observations and interviews were first organised in a standard A4 size format. Emails from the practitioners were printed out and field notes collected in written form. Firstly, key categories and links were identified (Denscombe, 2005). Categories that fitted with both the theoretical frame and the data collected were drawn up. This allowed the essential structure of the categories which were 'grounded' conceptually and empirically (Dey, 1993, 96).

Secondly, the observations were analysed and the percentage values of the SPC for each domain and each setting were calculated through the Microsoft Excel 2010 programme. Then the values were arranged in a table and two pie charts and commented on in accordance with Broadhead's explanations given

in her book. Additionally, the notes from two days' observation were chosen randomly. I have explained in-depth why I have sorted by children's behaviours in their play as first action, second action or later actions.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Upon receiving approval for the research from the Institute of Education Ethics Committee (Appendix 1), a meeting was arranged with the head teacher of the school to discuss the nature of study and to obtain permission for access to the reception classes for the period of the study. During this first visit, the researcher met the head teacher, discussed the study and submitted the consent form for head teacher (Appendix 2). On the same visit the researcher was able to meet with the reception class teachers and the deputy head teacher, where they expressed their concerns and gave advice on how the research could be carried out with minimum disruption. A briefing was also given on what to do in an emergency situation in the school.

It is necessary to obtain consent and co-operation from the participants before beginning the research (Cohen et al, 2000). Therefore, information leaflets and consent form for practitioners (Appendix 4) and parents (Appendix 3) were dropped at the school to be distributed and collected in before the first week of the research. The participants had freedom to decide whether to take part in the study and were given time and to comprehend the information given them (Cohen et al, 2000). The information leaflets and consent forms gave detailed information such as purpose of the study, the data collection methods to be

used, the rights of participants and details of how confidentiality would be ensured for the data at all times. The staff who decided to take part in the research project was asked to return the signed form before the interview process. On the first day of the data collection, 17 out of 60 parents' consent forms and three staff consent forms were collected.

Parents' and children's consent forms were also distributed. Parents were informed about participation of their children in the study and asked to read with their children to aid their understanding and obtain their consent. Consent forms for children (Appendix 6) were obtained on the first day of study. Before distributing the consent forms, the children were told about the research in a simplified manner to ensure their understanding of the project and confirm their agreements. The children were given child-friendly A4 size sheets of paper on which one smiley face and one sad face (Appendix 7) was drawn. It was explained to them that they should colour in the smiley face if they were happy to take part in the research and colour in the sad face if they did not want to take part. All the children the smiley face and therefore all children were willing for the study.

3.7.1. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Check

It was prerequisite for the researcher to complete a CRB check in order to ensure protection for the children and that the researcher would be able to work with young children in the UK. The form was processed through the relevant department of the IOE.

3.7.2. Anonymity and Confidentially

Anonymity is a basic necessity while reporting research findings in order to ensure that participants' identities are kept securely and confidentially (Cohen et al, 2011). Throughout this study, the real name of the school, children and practitioners were not used in an attempt to ensure their confidentiality. This is an initial measure in making certain that reported details are details non-observable to individuals (Cohen et al, 2011; Denscombe, 2005). All data during observation and post-observation reflection phase were stored in a locked filing cabinet that could only be accessed by the researcher. Electronic documents were password protected. These measures were taken to prevent any leaks which had the potential to put the participants' privacy at risk.

3.8. Trustworthiness and Validity

Even though this research, as previously stated, does not intend to make generalisation of the findings, it was still essential that an effort was made to characterise the true characteristic of the case and hence establish trustworthiness and validity in the findings. "Validity in qualitative research is a matter of being able to offer as sound a representation of the field of the study as the research allow" (Edwards, 2001, 124).

Two different methods of data collection, interviews and observations, were carried out in this research, which allowed for methodological triangulation (Edwards, 2001; Robson 2011; Cohen et al, 2011). In using different methods to gather data as regards the same topic, the researcher can view the topic from

different aspects. This allows a more holistic interpretation of case (Denscombe, 2005). Triangulation permits also a cross-check of data from multiple sources to discover consistency in data (O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003). It was important in this research that both interviews and observations were used to understand the reception class practitioners' opinions and roles in relation to play and children's social and emotional development. For instance, due to the time scale of the study it would not have been possible to fully comprehend simply through observation both how the staff enhance social and emotional development and why they choose approaches they do. This is due to the fact that the interviews work also to support this information and to achieve practitioners' general perceptions of the connection between social and emotional development and play and praise and what beliefs and understandings dictate their general practice.

During the direct observations it is vital to recognize that the presence of the researcher may influence the behaviours of participants, which is known as the observer effect (Denscombe, 2005). There are two ways to reduce observer effects during the observation such as "minimal interaction" with the group and "habituation" of the group to the observer's presence (Robson, 2011, 331). Knowing that they are being observed, participants might become shy and behave differently than normal. Therefore, it was important to spend some time with the participants prior to the observations and not to join in the children's play. Two visits were arranged a few weeks before the research began so do that during this "getting-to-know phase", the children and the

teachers had an opportunity to get used to my presence (Gilham, 2000). There were many adults around in the school to help children such as observer, programmer, math teacher, music teacher, cleaners. Therefore it was not hard for the children to get used to my presence in the classroom. Also, practitioners believed that the children were used to having other adults come to the reception classes.

The Social Play Continuum was developed and used by Broadhead in 2004 through national curricula and observation of children's interactions with peers. It has been designed, tested and redefined over many years of observations in nursery, reception and Year 1 settings, teachers' evaluations have been used to provide well-developed content and layout of the SPC to reach its' last version (Broadhead, 2004).

Subjective commentary of the findings is a threat to trustworthiness and validity in this research. For example, it is possible that various researchers could comment on the results in different ways. Considering this, it was essential to make clear and detailed field notes and that the interviews were recorded as an electronic source to avoid mistakes and deficit in the data (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, throughout the analysis of the findings the researcher purposed to justify how she commented on the data based on existing theory. In addition, the triangulation of data and the regard to the importance of the practitioners' perspectives supports to decreases this bias (Hughes, 2001).

3.9. Limitations of the research

This study was limited with only one observer. In accordance with Broadhead's implementation of the SPC, it should be done with two observers and after the observations are completed the findings should be discussed by both observers. Children's plays or actions might be interpreted in different way by the observers. This was an important limitation of this research. It was hard to identify children's attitudes whilst they were playing. "Demonstrating good inter-observer agreement defends against this and indeed goes some way towards showing validity" (Robson, 2011). For example, an attitude on the social domain such comment own action/described intent directed at peer commented as parallel play period or self-talking. To overcome this, it was decided to focus on children's play and their conversations for no more than 15 minutes and to observe many times to provide validity (Cohen et al, 2011). The other constraint was related with children's play themes; children might have effected or chosen theme before I arrived in the observation area (Broadhead, 2004). For instance, when a group of children were playing, some of children have not idea about the play theme and I think they felt a bit stranger and left from the play. That situation made my observation a bit tricky. In such cases, I concentrated only on children who were already playing in the play area.

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the research aims of the study and explained the methodology used during the research. This research is a small scale study within a pre-school setting. The qualitative approach was used in both practitioners' interview and classroom observations and was employed to address the research questions and trustworthiness and reliability of the investigation. The chapter also set out the important ethical issues and limitations of the research.

CHAPTER 4- FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter states the findings gathered using the methods discussed in the previous chapter and analyses them in relation to literature. The data has been collected using two different methods. The first was through the Social Play Continuum and these results are shown in ten tables; the values are shown with the numbers. The second was through semi-structured interviews designed to reveal reception classes practitioners' perspectives, understanding and roles in the social and emotional developments of reception classes' children.

4.2. Observation Results

4.2.1. Social Play Continuum Results

The results have been evaluated separately for each day and therefore, there are a table and two pie charts to show findings. Observations have been categorised in each domain of the Social Play Continuum (SPC). Each action of the children either alone or together has been described as an "observation". These observations include asking questions to another peer, helping, giving instructions, introducing their work etc. The first observation started with number 1 for the first action, the second observation labelled number 2 and so on. Each observation has been categorized in the SPC though associative domains: social domain, highly social domain and cooperative domain (see the Appendix 8).

	Total (including rough percentage of whole)			
Observation Times	Associative Domain (AD)	Social Domain (SD)	Highly Social Domain (HSD)	Cooperative Domain (CD)
1 st Day	5.2%	33.7%	48.7%	12.4%
2 nd Day	2.6%	28.7%	48.7%	20%
3 rd Day	8.3%	35.2%	36.2%	20.3%
4 th Day	2.9%	29.5%	40%	27.6%
5 th Day	4.4%	32.2%	42.2%	21.2%
6 th Day	5.5%	29.7%	43.5%	21.3%
7 th Day	4.8%	27.2%	41.8%	26.2%
8 th Day	6.3%	35.2%	41.4%	17.1%
9 th Day	4.3%	25.4%	40.2%	30.1%
10 th Day	7.9%	39.2%	37.2%	15.7%
The average proportion of all domains	5.92%	29.4%	42.69%	21.89%

Table 1: Observations' results

Ten days observations' results which were collected during indoor and outdoor play are presented in Table 1 through associative, social, highly social and cooperative domains. According to the average rough percentages of all

domains, while the rate of observation in associative domain has lowest values (5.92%), the notable rates were observed in the highly social domain (42.69%) and the social domain (29.4%).

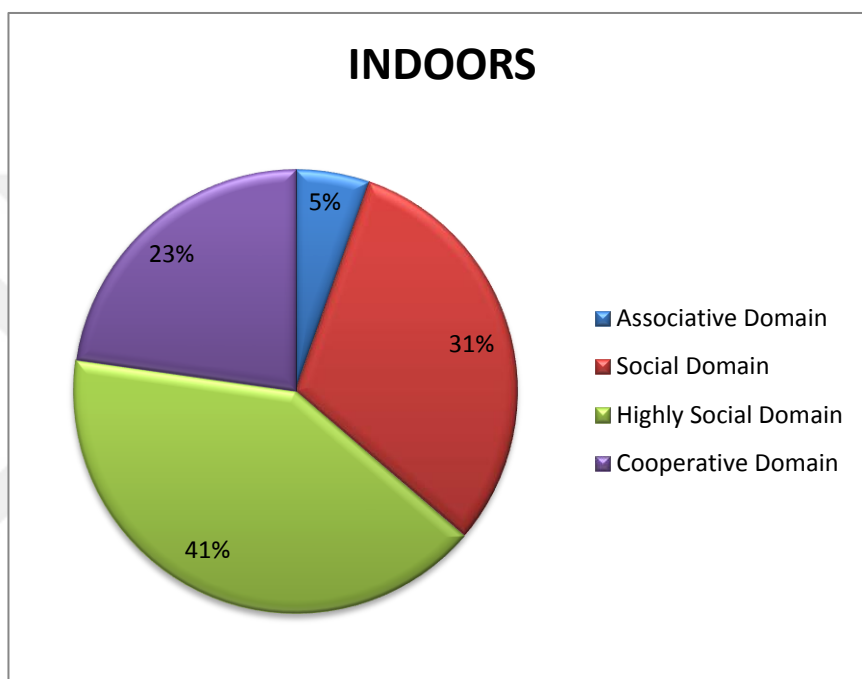


Figure 1: Indoors Observations' Results

The pie chart on the above shows the proportions of indoors' observations results: 5% associative domain, 31% social domain, 23% cooperative domain and 41% highly social domain. The percentages are encoded as "slices" of a pie, with the area corresponding to the percentage.

Children's activities in the construction play area in the first classroom and children's plays in the small world area in the second classroom were observed as indoor activities in this research. Some play dialogues were recorded and will be discussed in-depth in the post-observation section.

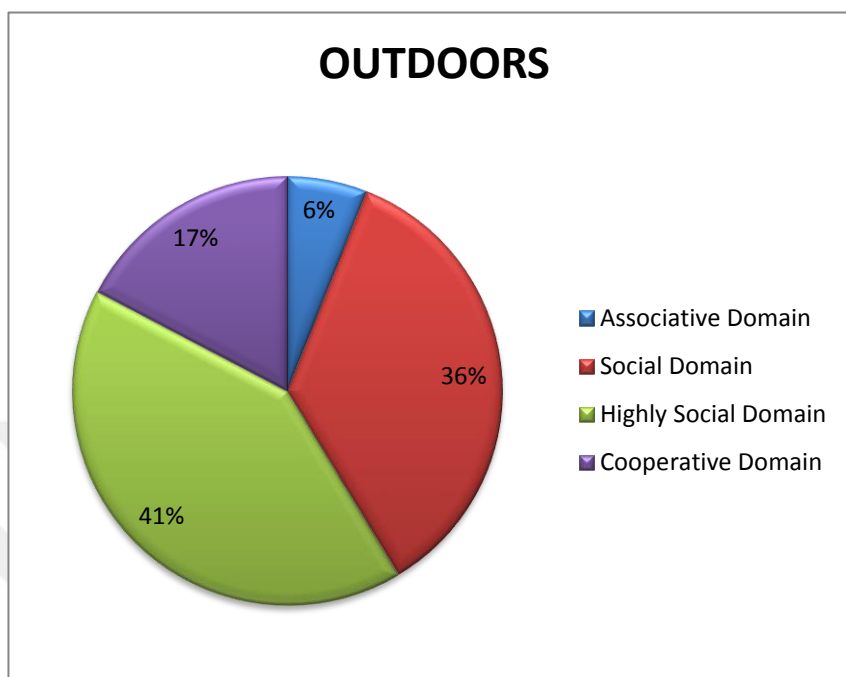


Figure 2: Outdoors Observations' Results

The second pie chart indicates the rates of outdoor observations results: 6% associative domain, 36% social domain, 17% cooperative domain and 41% highly social domain.

Children were observed when playing in the play area in the garden during the outdoor activities. Additionally, the observations were made once in the park area. For outdoor areas, some of the observations of outdoor play were relatively brief (because children changed their play area and the two reception classes were playing together, in the boisterous area) but there will be other opportunities to return to observations of these areas during the time it was in focus.

4.2.2. Post-observation Notes

In this section, I will provide an in-depth discussion of two of the ten observation sessions that I made. During indoor play observations, I took two sets of notes. In outdoor play observation sessions; I took one set of notes. There were two classes that I observed. However, in outdoor play sessions, the two classes were outdoors at the same time and therefore, the one set of notes that I took was based on both classes together. In total, I took six observation notes in two days that I will discuss. The criteria used to put the children's actions in order by numbering them will be explained. Children's dialogues and actions are shown and the notes were recorded during the observation times in indoors and outdoors.

Table 2: 7th day observation sheet (Class A, indoors)

SIDE 1: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – A TOOL FOR PLAY OBSERVATION, PUPIL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF AREAS OF PROVISION

744
16.05.2013

Observation start time: 9:15
Area of provision: Construction
Observation finish time: 9:25

Children entering play: 4496 13
Children leaving play: 6 B

L = Language
RL = Reciprocal language
A = Action observed
RA = Reciprocal Action
L/A = Language and Action Combined
RL/RA = Reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined

ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN	SOCIAL DOMAIN	HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN	COOPERATIVE DOMAIN
A: looks towards peers A: Watches play A: Imitates play A: Object offered, not accepted AL: Object taken, alteration A: Parallel play period L: Self-talk AL: Comment on action directed at peer; peer does not respond	A: Smiling A: Laughter L: Play noises, play voice 1/1 RA: Eye contact made 10 A: Object taken, no alteration 11 RA: Object offered and received L/A: Consent sought and object accessed. L: Approval sought, not given RL: Approval sought and given 15 L: Instruction given, no response 14 L/RA: Instruction given, positive response L: Question asked, no response RL: Question asked, response 125 L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks 9 RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response	RA: Offering/accepting of objects evident RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident 2-19 RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange 20, 21 RL: Sporadic dialogue develops role play themes 3, 12 RA/L: Eye contact/laughter, (play noise) combined as behavioural cluster 14, 22 RA/RL: Brief reciprocal sequences, e.g. giving/following instructions, seeking/giving approval 6, 16 offering/accepting objects asking/answering questions RL/RA: New ideas or resources have impact on developing theme	RA: Offering/accepting objects sustains/extends play theme 17 RL: Sustained dialogue is activity related and clear theme(s) emerge 8 RL: Explanations/descriptions utilised 7 RL/RA: New idea/resource extends play and is sustained RL/RA: Children display a shared understanding of goals RL: Offering and accepting verbal help 12 RA: Offering and accepting physical help 13 RL/RA: Verbal and physical help combined RL/RA: Problem identified and solved 17, 18 RL/RA: Dramatic scenarios enacted linked to play theme(s)

Emergent play themes noted:

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Handwritten notes on the right side of the table:

- 1 minute comment 8 6.00 collected 13.00
- then made their own plans and drew
- correction 2 not 13.00. 13.00. 13.00
- change this down with 13.00. 13.00. 13.00

This page was completed in the construction play area in the A class. Six boys started to play together and a few minutes later two of them left. This observation process took 15 minutes in the classroom.

Numbers from 1 to 6 language and language reciprocity were observed in the social domain and the highly social domain. In the early part of the observations, the children were interacting but infrequently. Each child seemed that they were playing together with some dialogues such as “*star wars characters are coming here, let’s make their army strong*” and they made some extra robots which were intended to help the star wars characters in the fighting (in children’s play) from the toy blocks. Numbers from 7 to 9, one of boys described what he made and how it works to his friends with this dialogue “*it stops the enemy from the other parts and this is why I made its arm longer*”. Referring to his explanation another boy sustained the dialogue with this “*let’s make him a chair to sit whenever he wants to relax*”. Actions number 10 and 11 were observed when children were making robots. During the 12th and 13th actions, children needed physical and verbal assistance from each other such as “*could you please pass me the green part of it*” and “*do you think how I will lock the toy to there* (showing the problem to his friend)”. Actions number 14 to 19, the child who needed help in solving the problem sought approval and the child followed the instructions which his friend gave him at the same time as they talked about something in their group, but I could not catch the dialogue because of too noisy. Numbers 20-23 are all in the highly social domain of double actions with reciprocal action and reciprocal

language. During these actions they made a war with their robots. One dialogue on action 21 is that *“yours arms are too long and you overcame it!”* Numbers 24 and 25 are in the social domain with language and reciprocal language such as instruction given, positive response and question asked, response. These interactions were observed when children were making war with this dialogues *“don’t push mine, I can’t fight you. Why are you so quick?”* and *“alright! Yours is a bit small, therefore I will be slowed down! Let’s start to fight again!”* The last dialogue shows that the problem of child who had the small robot was solved, therefore number 26 represents problem identified and solved.

6 observations in the social domain, 13 observations in the highly social domain and 8 observations in the cooperative domain (in total 26 observations) were noted on this observation paper. It seems that the construction play area has the potential to support children’s collaborative play and there is another reason that the dialogue may have been sustained, which is that the children may have been reflecting on their own experiences of cartoon characters.

Table 3: 7th day observation sheet (Class B, indoors)

SIDE 1: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – A TOOL FOR PLAY OBSERVATION, PUPIL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF AREAS OF PROVISION

7th
16.05.1013

Observation start time: 9:40
Area of provision: Small world area
Observation finish time: 9:56

Children entering play: George
Children leaving play: C

L = Language
RL = Reciprocal language
A = Action observed
RA = Reciprocal Action
L/A = Language and Action Combined
RL/RA = Reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined

ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN	SOCIAL DOMAIN	HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN	COOPERATIVE DOMAIN
A: looks towards peers A: Watches play A: Imitates play A: Object offered, not accepted A/L: Object taken, alteration A: Parallel play period 5 L: Self-talk A/L: Comment on action directed at peer: peer does not respond	A: Smiling A: Laughter L: Play noises, play voice 2 RA: Eye contact made 1 A: Object taken, no altercation RA: Object offered and received L/A: Consent sought and object accessed. L: Approval sought, not given RL: Approval sought and given 3 L: Instruction given, no response L/RA: Instruction given, positive response L: Question asked, no response RL: Question asked, response 1 L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks 1 RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response	RA: Offering/accepting of objects evident RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident 13 RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange 11 RL: Sporadic dialogue develops role play themes 12 RA/L: Eye contact/laughter (play noise) combined as behavioural cluster 14 RA/RL: Brief reciprocal sequences, e.g. giving/following instructions seeking/giving approval offering/accepting objects asking/answering questions 6, 10, 15 RL/RA: New ideas or resources have impact on developing theme	RA: Offering/accepting objects sustains/extends play theme 14 RL: Sustained dialogue is activity related and clear theme(s) emerge RL: Explanations/descriptions utilised 7 RL/RA: New idea/resource extends play and is sustained 2 RL/RA: Children display a shared understanding of goals 8, 25 RL: Offering and accepting verbal help RA: Offering and accepting physical help RL/RA: Verbal and physical help combined 9 RL/RA: Problem identified and solved 27 RL/RA: Dramatic scenarios enacted linked to play theme(s)

Emergent play themes noted: 1

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The observation sheet was applied in the small world area in the B Class. One girl and four boys played together and one of the boys left early. The process took 16 minutes.

At the beginning of the observations, the first three (numbers 1, 2, and 3) actions were that the children started to interact with eye contact and then played noisily, after that reciprocal language was observed with approval sought to get a part of toy from one of boys. Action 4 was eye contact when they laughed together and had a chat about the materials. However I could not catch the dialogues exactly because of noise in the class. Action 5 was when the children played on by own without dialogue for a few minutes. Therefore, this action has been represented in the associative domain with parallel play period. Action 6 represented that one of boys offered to build a house for animals with this dialogue *“hey let’s make a small garden and a house for some of animals and keep them in there”*. On that day, there were many model animals as well as models of mountains, chalets, lowland area, trees, and a cover in the small world area of provision. The girl in the group covered the table with the fabric and explained that *“now it is the time for all the animals to sleep!”* is action number 7. In actions 8, 9 and 10, other children approved this idea and helped their friend to cover the fabric on the play corner. Numbers 11 – 16 are in the highly social domain with reciprocal actions. During this action, one of children lifted the fabric to make daylight and put it down to make night time and others joined him, they laughed all together and played noisily. One of boys said that *“the animals are sleeping now, please be*

quiet!” and other made eye contact and agreed with his friend. After a few minutes another boy laughed and said *“let’s let them out for a walk around the lowlands and mountains.”* However one of the boys took the horse and asked the girl *“would you like to hold on to it to protect it from the lion?”* and the boy took lion after that came after the horse. There were more sporadic dialogues to role play such as *“would you like to be the lion in the forest, and catch me, I am a deer!”* but this dialogue was not extended by the children. These actions are represented as number 17 and 18. The girl made the horse run away from the lion and laughed; the other children joined them around the table. These actions of the two children who were playing together and when the others joined with them were numbered 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23. They also chatted with each other, but I could not catch their dialogue. Action 23 represented that one of boys said to another boy *“do you think these animals in real life can run away so fast or faster?”* The other boy replied that *“I think they can”*. Numbers 24- 27 are all in the cooperative domain and they represented very interactive actions. During these actions, one boy dropped the animal toy which he kept it to make it run away the other boy did same. The boy explained why he did that *“it felt too tired and hungry, why did you take it down?”* he said *“to dance”* they laughed together and therefore the last group of actions were considered to be in cooperative domains within rich reciprocal actions and dialogues. The final observation (28) is in the highly social domain and children continued to play noisily.

As a consequence, this observation paper has 1 observation in the associative domain, 6 observations in the social domain, 13 observations in the highly social domain and 8 observations in the cooperative domain. In total, there are 28 observations in the small world area in the Class B. From this observation, it might be deduced that the materials which were added by practitioners may help to children's social play.



The observation recorded two classes together in the park area and took 10 minutes. Three girls and one boy played together. Children's play in the outdoor areas was boisterous and included more physical activities like running, jumping and skipping.

On this day, a high numbers of actions in the highly social domain were observed. That may have been due to building materials which the practitioners put in the garden. Children played with them socially in regard to following instructions, giving approval and some children described their own actions and demonstrated them to their friends. The first two actions are in the social domain; children made noises while they played and asked each other questions. For example, a girl asked *"do you know how we can build a strong wall?"* the other girl replied *"my father is an engineer, if he was here, we would learn how to build it"*. This dialogue shows reciprocal language between children. Actions numbered 3-5 are all in the highly social domain within reciprocal actions and language. One girl said *"I wanna make a big house to sit inside and make a big garden to grow flowers"* Another replied *"don't do that there'll be some insects in your garden and bite you"* they laughed all together. While the children made a long wall, they asked each other for help and maintained the dialogues.. One of girls said *"too long wall, we need a high wall instead of a long one so that thieves don't come up inside the house"* the other girl said *"let's make it higher"* the boy said *"no! I wanna drive a car on the wall!"* the girl explained *"we are building a house not a street! Drive your car at the outside of wall"* and they laughed. Therefore,

actions number 6- 13 were entered as cooperative domain actions. The girl solved the boy's problem and showed him somewhere to drive his car parallel with the wall. Actions 14 to 17 are all in the highly social domain. When girls were building the wall they talked to each other loudly and laughed. A boy said to the girls *"I am carrying sand in my car to use in building"* The last action, number 18, was that they played noisily and loudly.

On this day, 4 actions observed were in the social domain, 6 actions in the highly social domain and 8 actions in the cooperative domain making a total of 18 observations recorded. It could be seen that the extra materials provided by the practitioners influenced children's play and during this play there was an incidence of collaborative problem solving for a peer, extending the play and bringing a real life example to the play i.e. the child making reference to her father being an engineer.

Table 5: 9th day observation sheet (Class A- indoors)

9th
23.05.2013

SIDE 1: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – A TOOL FOR PLAY OBSERVATION, PIPIL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF AREAS OF PROVISION

Observation start time: 9:20
Area of provision: *Construction*
Observation finish time: 9:30

Children entering play: *BBB*
Children leaving play: *BB*

L = Language RL = Reciprocal language		A = Action observed RA = Reciprocal Action		L/A = Language and Action Combined RL/RA = Reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined			
ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN		SOCIAL DOMAIN		HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN		COOPERATIVE DOMAIN	
A: looks towards peers	A: Smiling	A: Smiling	RA: Offering/accepting of objects evident	RA: Offering/accepting of objects sustains/extends play theme	RA: Offering/accepting of objects sustains/extends play theme	RL: Sustained dialogue is activity related and clear theme(s) emerge	RL: Explanations/descriptions utilised
A: Watches play	A: Laughter	A: Laughter	RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident	RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident	RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident	RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange	RL/RA: New idea/resource extends play and is sustained
A: Imitates play	L: Play noises, play voice	L: Play noises, play voice	RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange	RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange	RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange	RL: Sporadic dialogue develops role play themes	RL/RA: Children display a shared understanding of goals
A: Object offered, not accepted	RA: Eye contact made	RA: Eye contact made	RA: Object offered and received	RA: Object offered and received	RA: Object offered and received	RA: Eye contact/laughter (play noise) combined as behavioural cluster	RL: Offering and accepting verbal help
AML: Object taken, alteration	A: Object taken, no alteration	A: Object taken, no alteration	L/A: Consent sought and object accessed	L/A: Consent sought and object accessed	L/A: Consent sought and object accessed	RA/RL: Brief reciprocal sequences, e.g. giving/following instructions seeking/giving approval offering/accepting objects asking/answering questions	RA: Offering and accepting physical help
A: Parallel play period	RA: Approval sought, not given	RA: Approval sought, not given	L: Approval sought and given	L: Approval sought and given	L: Approval sought and given	RL/RA: Verbal and physical help combined	RL/RA: Problem identified and solved
L: Self-talk	L: Instruction given, no response	L: Instruction given, no response	L: Question asked, no response	L: Question asked, no response	L: Question asked, no response	RL/RA: Dramatic scenarios enacted linked to play theme(s)	
AML: Comment on action directed at peer; peer does not respond	L: Question asked, response	L: Question asked, response	L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks	L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks	L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks		
	RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response	RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response					

Emergent play themes noted:

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This observation page was entered in the construction play area in the Class A. It took 12 minutes and six boys, one girl joined the play, but two of the boys left.

At first, the children played on their own without any dialogue around the table, therefore this action has been numbered 1 as a parallel play period. Children made eye contact and then smiled after one girl asked a boy in the play group *“what are you doing?”* nobody answered her. These actions entered as numbers from 2 to 4 were all recorded in the social domain. The first boy in the play group said to his friend *“I’ m making a big house for the rabbit, (turned to the boy who was next to him) keep it going and combine with mine as the garden of the house”* the boy agreed with his friend and approved. It should be mentioned here that there was a rabbit in the classroom for reception class’ science activities. While they talked with each other; the play area was quite noisy with all voices raised at some point, therefore, I could not catch up the dialogues. These actions were recorded as number 5 to 7 in the highly social domain. The boy was preparing a roof for his big house and explained that *“it’s waterproof and gonna be helpful in rainy days”*. This is at number 8 on the paper in the cooperative domain within reciprocal language. The boy and the girl made eye contact, commented on their own actions and chatted about whether the rabbit would like their home. This part of observation was recorded as numbers from 9 to 16 in the highly social domain. The girl wanted the yellow part of the toy block to make a tree in the garden of the house. However the boy said that *“the tree would be green not*

yellow.” The girl replied *“but I am doing a lemon tree, could you please pass me it?”* the boy accepted the request and passed it to her. For this part was numbered from 17 to 19 in the cooperative domain on the sheet. Numbers from 20 to 24 were entered in the highly social domain because the children talked about the rabbit’s life at home, what it eats, how it sleeps when they were assembling the toys. After this conversation the girl asked the second boy *“we need to make a heating system inside of the home because of the cold weather”*. This action is recorded as number 24 on the sheet because it was believed to be evidence to extend the play with a new idea. Numbers 26 – 30 were recorded in the social domain on the paper. During these actions, the children played very noisily, voices raised. The second boy added a part outside of the home and described it as a heater. The last action recorded as 31, after having finished house and garden, the children went to the rabbit hutch and asked the rabbit whether it liked it or not. The children kept the dialogues going after my record until carpet time. I have realized that I forgot to use number 25 in my observation, my omission during my observation.

As a consequence of these observation notes, 1 action was recorded in the associative domain, 8 in the social domain, 16 in the highly social domain and 5 in the cooperative domain. In total, 30 observations were entered in this play area. It should be noted that on this day, there was a rabbit in the class and the practitioners arranged the carpet activities towards the rabbit. Children and practitioners investigated the rabbit’s life how it eats, hears, and feels and so on. This point might be the cause of highly social domain play of children.

Table 6: 9th Day Observation sheet (Class B- indoors)

23.05.10

SIDE 1: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – A TOOL FOR PLAY OBSERVATION, PUPIL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF AREAS OF PROVISION

Observation start time: 9.45
Area of provision: South West 11
Observation finish time: 10.30

Children entering play: 11.08.06
Children leaving play: 6.6

L = Language
RL = Reciprocal language
A = Action observed
RA = Reciprocal Action

L/A = Language and Action Combined
RL/RA = Reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined

ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN	SOCIAL DOMAIN	HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN	COOPERATIVE DOMAIN
A: looks towards peers A: Watches play A: Imitates play A: Object offered, not accepted A/L: Object taken, alteration A: Parallel play period L: Self-talk A/L: Comment on action directed at peer; peer does not respond	A: Smiling A: Laughter L: Play noises, play voice RA: Eye contact made A: Object taken, no alteration RA: Object offered and received L/A: Consent sought and object accessed. L: Approval sought, not given RL: Approval sought and given L: Instruction given, no response L/RA: Instruction given, positive response L: Question asked, no response RL: Question asked, response L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response	RA: Offering/accepting of objects evident RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange RL: Sporadic dialogue develops role play themes RA/L: Eye contact/laughter, (play noise) combined as behavioural cluster RA/RL: Brief reciprocal sequences, e.g. giving/following instructions seeking/giving approval offering/accepting objects asking/answering questions RL/RA: New ideas or resources have impact on developing theme	RA: Offering/accepting objects sustains/extends play theme RL: Sustained dialogue is activity related and clear theme(s) emerge RL: Explanations/descriptions utilised RL/RA: New idea/resource extends play and is sustained RL/RA: Children display a shared understanding of goals RL: Offering and accepting verbal help RA: Offering and accepting physical help RL/RA: Verbal and physical help combined RL/RA: Problem identified and solved RL/RA: Dramatic scenarios enacted linked to play theme(s)

Emergent play themes noted:

The observation was recorded in the B classroom and took 15 minutes in the small world area. Four boys and a girl played together, the girl and a boy left early.

On that day, there were both wild life materials (mountain, chalet, lowland, trees, and animals models) and traffic materials (petrol station, vehicles, car park area models). A group of children combined all the materials together in their play. It was observed that children were very creative and pretend to play in dramatic roles, had many different ideas, they shared their opinions with others members of play group and the game was sustained by some of the children. For instance, a child had an idea about having a green area amongst the traffic and put some tree models on the road. Another child did same in the petrol station and vehicle park area. That might have been helpful in increasing the cooperative domain observations in this area.

The first action was parallel play period, because children were playing around the same table and there were no interaction. However, the first boy asked the second boy *“shall we start to play car parking, I will be owner”* but the second boy did not reply and kept playing with his car on the table. These actions were recorded as numbers 2 and 3 in the social domain. After this unilateral action they again turned back to their own play as parallel play period (number 4). The third boy asked the second boy whether he could come along the road on the right hand side with his car to clean the street; the second boy agreed and drove his car on the right route. This is at number 5 on the sheet. Number 6 was entered while the third boy was explaining that he

cleaned the street. Numbers from 7 to 9 are all in the cooperative domain. The third boy, after cleaning, erected a few trees in the car park's garden to make a park for children whose parents come to the car park area. He explained and sustained the play through this idea, because, the other two boys did the same on the sides of streets and in petrol station's garden. Numbers from 10 to 17 are all in the highly social domain. Children played with talking non-related dialogues such as *"yesterday I went to a petrol station with my mum, there was a carwash, very big and red, mum went into the car wash with the car"* and *"I often seen a car wash in petrol stations. There is one here as well"* (showed the car wash on the petrol station model). Simultaneously, the third boy cleaned his car in the car cleaning device while imitating the sound of the car wash *"fssss.cuhff..."* the second boy instructed the third boy that he needs move the brushes up and down the car to clean it. The first boy, who was the petrol station owner in the play, wanted money for cleaning the car, but the third boy went against that *"it must be free; I bought some petrol from here!"*. All of boys talked very noisily in this part of observation; therefore I could not catch the dialogues. Actions numbered 18 to 24 were recorded in the social domain. The second boy wanted the first boy's lorry and he gave it to him. The first boy played with another car and went to the car park area to park the car after leaving the petrol station. The third boy asked *"can you count how many cars are on the second floor in the car park area?"* the other boys counted together and mentioned the colours of the cars and other vehicles. At the same time, the third boy took some animal models and put them on the street. Others joined him and they banged into the models with their car,

playing noisily, and laughing. They chatted with each other about whether the animals died or not. These interactions in the play were recorded as numbers 25, 26 and 27 in the highly social domain. Numbers 28 and 29 are in the cooperative domain because children sustained the play by using the animal models in the traffic area and developed the play further by imitating the lion, deer and horse on the street as they played. These model animals were put in the petrol station and car park area. The model animals were played with boisterously.

Two observations are recorded in the associative domain, 10 observations in the social domain, 12 observations in the highly social domain and 5 observations in the cooperative domain. the total number of observations is 29. As in the other observations, children used their first hand experiences in their play to make it collaborative, shared ideas and saying what they know about car washes.

Table 7: 9th day observation (Class A-B, outdoors)

SIDE 1: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – A TOOL FOR PLAY OBSERVATION, PUPIL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF AREAS OF PROVISION

Observation start time: 10:05
 Area of provision: 0-10 years, 1-2 yr
 Observation finish time: 10:10

Children entering play: 6A, 10, 6A, 6B
 Children leaving play: 6B

L = Language
RL = Reciprocal language
A = Action observed
RA = Reciprocal Action
L/A = Language and Action Combined
RL/RA = Reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined

ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN	SOCIAL DOMAIN	HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN	COOPERATIVE DOMAIN
A: looks towards peers A: Watches play A: Imitates play A: Object offered, not accepted A/L: Object taken, altercation A: Parallel play period L: Self-talk A/L: Comment on action directed at peer; peer does not respond	A: Smiling A: Laughter L: Play noises, play voice RA: Eye contact made A: Object taken, no altercation RA: Object offered and received L/A: Consent sought and object accessed. L: Approval sought, not given RL: Approval sought and given L: Instruction given, no response L/RA: Instruction given, positive response L: Question asked, no response RL: Question asked, response L/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response	RA: Offering/accepting of objects evident RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange RL: Sporadic dialogue develops role play themes RA/L: Eye contact/laughter, (play noise) combined as behavioural cluster RA/RL: Brief reciprocal sequences, e.g. giving/following instructions seeking/giving approval offering/accepting objects asking/answering questions RL/RA: New ideas or resources have impact on developing theme	RA: Offering/accepting objects sustains/extends play theme RL: Sustained dialogue is activity related and clear theme(s) emerge RL: Explanations/descriptions utilised RL/RA: New idea/resource extends play and is sustained RL/RA: Children display a shared understanding of goals RL: Offering and accepting verbal help RA: Offering and accepting physical help RL/RA: Verbal and physical help combined RL/RA: Problem identified and solved RL/RA: Dramatic scenarios enacted linked to play theme(s)

Emergent play themes noted: none physical activities have been observed
 running, jumping, crawling, laughing, shouting, calling loudly.

The observations were recorded in the outdoor play area outside both classes and took 9 minutes. There were six boys, one of whom left early.

On that day, the teacher put there some plastic materials such as plastic high steels, hula hoops and balance boards. The first observed action is a parallel play period in the associative domain. Children were playing in the same area, but there was no interaction. One of them asked that *“hey! Would you like to run in the high plastic steels?”* The other child did not answer him. This action is shown as number 2. Thereupon the first child explained how they could run with the material and the second boy imitated him with the high steels. Therefore these actions were entered as numbers 3 in the cooperative domain and 4 in the highly social domain. Numbers 5-10 in the highly social domain represent that other boys joined the running with high plastic steels competition, played noisily and laughed. One said *“I will come in first, you will give me a prize”* then all of the boys wanted to come in first so they ran faster. After the race was won, they played with the colourful plastic circles to turn them on their waists. One of them said *“you look like a dancer!”* Action numbers from 11 to 14 shows that children formed a group to play with the hula hoops and the balance boards; they smiled, laughed and played very noisily. Also other children who were not members of this group joined in and the children’s voices were raised at the same time. Therefore, the dialogues could not be recorded. Just one of them wanted help about the balance board from other boy. This action was marked as number 15. The children continued playing very loudly and boisterously until they went to the other part of garden. Hence, numbers 16 and 17 indicate these actions.

There is 1 observation is in the associative domain, 5 in the social domain, 9 in the highly social domain and 2 in the cooperative domain. In total, 17 observations were recorded over a period of 9 minutes.

The above observations showed that in their interactions with peers the children appeared to be accepting and sensitive to other children's needs and feelings. Children played actively in rich environment play area supported by extra materials placed there by the practitioner. The quality of the play area and relationship with peers meant that children's social interactions and emotional expression were successful.

4.3. The Results of Reception Class Practitioners' Semi-Structured Interviews

The following were the themes gathered from the reception class practitioners' semi-structured interviews and some related key words were deduced from the answers in the category column. The practitioners referred to the importance of social and emotional development in their answers which have been categorized in the table as answers and descriptions column.

- a. Reception class practitioners' understanding of social and emotional development and play.
- b. Reception class practitioners' roles in social and emotional development through play
- c. Reception class practitioners' opinions about social and emotional development in the curriculum and supporting the head teachers.

Themes	Category	Answers, descriptions
	Demographic information	The age-range was 26 to 29
a	Definition of social and emotional development. The key word: empathy,	References made to describe that it is a key aspect in life to interact with others and understand their feelings, thoughts.
	The importance of social and emotional development. The key words: self-esteem, Learning dispositions.	References to the importance of social emotional development for children. learning abilities and self-confidence could be provided through social interaction
	Supporting social and emotional development The key word: self-regulation	References showed that talking and turn taking activities, games, play based learning, modelling and not interfering in the children's disagreement or arguments.
b	Practitioners' thought about the relation between play and social and emotional development The key word: Play pedagogy	References indicated that there is a certain relation between play and social emotional development such as learning to manage feelings and interaction with others. Without play children could have difficulty in learning. Children can express their ideas and feelings via play quite easily. Physical play promotes children taking responsibility, and turn taking.
	Practitioners' roles in indoor and outdoor play The key word: awareness of practitioners	References made clear that the role of teachers in the educational settings is supporting and extending play, planning the sessions and activities in relation to children's needs and abilities, interacting with children where necessary, guiding, reading stories, planning physical play outdoors, continuous role play,

		free choice activities might be provided by the practitioners.
	Practitioners' perspectives on how social and emotional development could be improved The key word: using interactive activities	References revealed that play has a crucial role in children's social and emotional development such as understanding and learning about problems, rules to live together; making friends, turn taking, explaining their own opinions. Turn taking activities, talking about problems, allowing children to solve their problems by themselves, modelling, showing them how to deal with issues and problems, building a trusting relationship with children.
c	Early social and emotional competencies and the place of social and emotional development in the curriculum and head teachers support The key words: the benefits of social and emotional development in the future	References made it clear that early social and emotional competence is important to provide school readiness, positive learning disposition, socializing. Therefore, social and emotional competence might help children to deal with problems in their futures. Social and emotional development is seen as being supported by the curriculum and head teachers and that the policy changes are being implemented in the school through EYFS. The head teacher was found to be very supportive in this regard.

Table 8: The themed results of the semi-structured interviews

Table 8 categorizes the findings in order to clarify them. The categories and themes within the answers were drawn up. The transcripts of the interviews were then inspected to identify occurrences of each category. Three themes relevant to the research questions were deduced from the literature review.

There were twelve questions about the understanding of children's social and emotional development for reception class practitioners. There were three reception class practitioners aged between 26 and 29 years and with between 2 and 9 years of experience.

The following the questions and answers are discussed below:

How do you define social and emotional development?

The first practitioner said that it is an element that holds importance and a core aspect in life to help a child's learning and development. The second practitioner explained that it is how people interact successfully with others. The third practitioner expressed that it is the way is in which children interact with those around them and understand their own thoughts and feelings and learn how to manage their social and interpersonal skills.

Do you think that social and emotional development is important for young children in the early years education? Why do you think that?

The practitioners expressed that it is very important as it will help a child to relate to peers and adults around them and to make relationships. It makes a child feel secure and able to explore learning with confidence. The

practitioners expressed that without a doubt practitioners can improve the well-being of young children. It is really significant, because without social development children unable to progress with their more formal learning. Children learn best from each other and this can happen through social interaction. Interaction with those people familiar to them and those with whom they are not so familiar are important for later in life and in developing well rounded individuals.

How should social and emotional development be supported in pre-schools?

Do you have specific method to improve it?

The first practitioner did not reply to this question, but the second practitioner explained that social and emotional development takes place through lots of talking activities, games, turn taking activities and play-based learning within the setting. The third practitioner added that social and emotional development should be supported in pre-schools by practitioners setting up activities that promote interaction between children, such as activities that require more than one person, for example, games, building something together. Practitioners should also model the social and emotional skills at all times both with other adults and other children.

“I always ensure that I take my time with children when occasions occur such as arguments between children or when children are interacting I take a step back and try not to intervene. This works in carpet sessions too where I use the children to help explain the

lesson. I also make sure that when children have arguments or disagreements, I only step in if needed.”

Do you think that there is a connection between play and children’s social and emotional development? Why or why not?

The first practitioner did not answer this question. The second practitioner said briefly that play is very important, not only in supporting social and emotional development but also all developmental areas. Play is necessary and without it children would find it difficult to progress and make their needs and feelings known.

The third practitioner clarified in-depth that there is a relation between play and social and emotional development as children learn to manage their feelings through interactions with others. Children can explore their own feelings or ideas through role-play, such as acting out themes they don’t quite understand or managing relationships.

What is the practitioners’ role in the classroom environment and outdoor in the social and emotional development of children?

The practitioners expressed that it was necessary to plan lessons and activities according to a child’s needs and abilities using all available resources and researches to maintain this; to support and extend the play; the practitioner’s role is to support children’s development in this area through both interactions and guidance. Interacting with children can help them to understand issues or to work through their feelings but sometimes interacting with the children is

not the best option. Sometimes it is better to stand back and let them ‘get on with it’.

To what extent and how do you think that children develop socially and emotionally through play?

The first practitioner expressed her opinion:

“I am a firm believer that a child learns through play. It is something that interests them. This is why, again, we plan through their needs and abilities so we can create activities that are fulfilling yet they can gain knowledge from. If it’s a sporting activity, for example, football or balancing, then it links a child with skills for life such as turn taking, rules and method. They make friends and understand the concept of sharing and playing nicely.”

The second practitioner answered that it is an expressive outlet for them. The third practitioner explained that children use play a great deal in their development, specifically for their social and emotional development. As before, they use it to explore themes they are not able to understand or problems or themes in their life.

What do you think are the most important experiences for children’s social and emotional development in the classroom and outdoors?

The practitioners expressed their ideas, thus:

In the classroom, they said that the trust of an adult and their teaching styles and being taught life skills through role play and stories being read to children were very important. Children love stories, especially when they are being read to them. This teaches them about understanding and focusing and broadening their language skills. Outdoors, again, through physical play children learn how to be responsible and turn taking etc.; making friends and developing secure relationships with people in their early years setting. Allowing children to solve their own problems is very important. Intervening when problems arise takes the responsibility away from the children and impairs their learning. Also, modelling with other adults is important, as children can often see you as a role model and it's important to continue this modelling through showing them how to deal with issues and problems.

What kinds of activities could be provided to further promote social and emotional development? Can you tell me what you have done to enable social emotional development?

The first practitioner replied that continuous role-play and free choice activities, also interactive resources were important.

“I try and adhere to our planning and do share and implement ideas based on children's need as each child has a different personality. I shall also say I have built a trusting relationship with all the children by being myself and getting to know them.”

The second practitioner answered that turn taking games, circle time, show and tell, sharing special books were important. The third practitioner said that Social Emotional Aspect of Learning (SEAL) lessons, or circle time sessions are good to explore issues within the group and get the children to look at issues together. She said that role play is also good when modelled to children as they are able to use their own experiences to create stories.

Do you think that early social emotional competencies could help deal with problems in the future? (Is the school readiness affecting the amount of time you can spend on social and emotional development?)

The first practitioner replied that she is not sure exactly. The second practitioner answered that early social emotional competencies might help to cope with a problem in the children's future, but she was not sure whether the school readiness policy affects the amount of time spent on social and emotional development. The third responded told that:

“Social development is incredibly important for promoting school readiness. As children move into year 1, the focus on Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) changes to a more academic perspective and it is important to ensure that children are prepared for this change. Also, by giving children a positive learning disposition, a want or desire to learn this will stay on into later education and hopefully keep them ready for learning. Getting children

ready for year 1 does take away some of the time that could be spent socializing the children but the real push for other areas of learning happens in the last term and so children have had a year or so in reception and their time in nursery.”

Is there enough emphasis on social emotional development in the curriculum?

The first and second respondents felt that there was enough emphasis on social and emotional development in the EYFS. The third replied that there had been a change in government policy with the shift focusing on the 3 prime areas, PSED, Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) and Physical Development (PD). This has had a knock on effect in that it has been recognized that PSED is an important area and this is reflected in teaching in both Nursery and Reception.

“With the way the English education system is based, I think whilst more time spent on PSE would be brilliant, there are other priorities and it makes it difficult when other areas also need teaching, such as PSRN or UW.”

You know that, generally, schools are turning towards cognitive development, physical or literacy development. Do you think your head teacher supports social emotional development?

The first and second practitioners replied positively adding that their head teachers are very supportive to all staff, as each member of staff and every child matters. The head teachers support the children’s learning and

practitioners' professional development by continuous research and keeping up to date with legislations.

The third respondent expressed that

“Yes, in our school I believe that trust is placed in the EYFS to implement any changes or work in any policy that happens and through this trust we are able to make the changes necessary”.

4.4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to state the main findings from the Social Play Continuum Observation Sheets, semi-structured interviews with practitioners and to evaluate them. The tables indicated both deduced from the data and from the literature. A discussion summarizing the main findings in relation to the research questions followed the findings and analysis. The next chapter provides discussion and conclusion to the study and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

The final chapter provides a summary and discussion of the research findings. The chapter focuses on the main themes obtained from the data analysis, indicating how these findings connect with the research questions for this study and the relevant literature review. Finally areas for further development and future studies are explained as a result of the understandings obtained from the research.

5.2. Summary and Discussion of the Research Findings

The research findings show the practitioners' understanding of the relationship between play and social-emotional development of reception class children. All the research questions have been explored and the three themes developed. The categorized themes: 1- reception class practitioners' understanding of social and emotional development and play, 2- reception class practitioners' roles in social and emotional development and play, 3- reception class practitioners' opinions about social and emotional development in the curriculum and the support of head teachers. The focus of study was the social and emotional development of young children. The literature review put forward that there is significant awareness, within practitioners and education professionals in particular, of the importance of this aspect of human development. Moreover, there is a persuasive acknowledgement in the literature review that play can support children's social and emotional aspects

in the early years and that the fostering of social and emotional development is essential for children's academic and social skills. The research questions in the research were related to reception classes' practitioners' understanding of social and emotional development and their roles.

5.2.1. Outdoor and Indoor Play

As a result of the observations on indoor and outdoor play, the proportion of cooperative domain in indoor play (23%) is higher than outdoor play (17%), however the rate of social domain of outdoor (36%) is higher than indoor (31%). The ratios of highly social domain in both areas are same (41%) and the percentages of associative domain are almost same in indoors (5%) and outdoors (6%). When children are indoors it would be expected that they sit and be quiet, however the outdoor environments allow children to run and make noise (Rivkin, 1998). In outdoor play, children feel free to go over the limits of who they are and what they can do without fear of getting into trouble for being too boisterous, noisy or dirty (Bilton, 2010; Ouvry, 2003). Therefore given these different experiences, and the considerable potential for most outdoor environments to promote children's freedom of expression, outdoor activities have also been associated with more co-operative play and with improved social and emotional development (Ouvry, 2003; Tovey, 2007; Walter 2007). However, from the observations in this study which took place over ten days in both indoor and outdoor environments it was found that highly social domain and social domain areas had higher values when children were playing in the construction play area, small world play area and outdoors.

It leads to the conclusion that when children are playing in these provisions they can become more interactive during the play, can explain their emotions, reflections or ideas through play and whether the play takes place in the indoor or outdoor play areas does not seem to be an important factor in making children play collaboratively. It could be said that collaboration in children's play is more relevant in relation to children's real experiences and using and sharing them with peers in their play. The observations that children generally start their play with associative behaviours such as looking towards peers, watching peers' play or observing actions and non-reciprocal interaction. This is a process that precedes children's entry to a play with peers.

5.2.2. Reception class practitioners' understanding of social and emotional development and play

In this research, that play is a key element for children to express and understand their emotions, ideas and become more interact with peers was agreed by the practitioners. Empathy was found to be the first key point. Children can understand in each other, and find solutions for their problems by using their own real experiences. Research has shown that in order for empathy and pro-social behaviour to be improved, social interactions through play has a considerable role (Saarni, 1999; Lewis and Saarni, 1985; Hoffman, 2000). The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project (2003) showed that anti-social attitudes can be decreased by high quality pre-school experiences. The influence of early years' experience is very important because, by starting early at pre-schools, children can be protected against

some risks such as appearing anti-social or displaying anxious behaviours. Children in preschools meet every day and they play, eat together, and share many experiences, good or bad (Johnasson, 2008). Ladd, Herald and Andrews (2006) asserted that although young children's social lives have mainly consisted of relationships with parents and siblings, peer interaction is increasingly seen as playing an important role in the socialization of children during the early years period (Spodek and Saracho, 2006). These interactions in schools build a scaffold for children to develop their empathic attitudes. Exploring situations that will require or improve empathy with good models have been emphasised as crucial to the social and emotional development of children (Feshbach and Cohen, 1988; Hoffmann, 1978). In light of this, being empathic is necessary to understand others' problems and feelings and it develops children's relationships.

Learning dispositions was found to be the second key point that emerged from the interviews. The best way of reinforcing children's learning dispositions is through play with peers. It is known that children learn easily when they are active, having fun and that could be possible through play with peers (Dowling, 2010). There is an important correlation between play, socialization and self-identity (Broadhead, 2004). A child's learning disposition is very important because it is continuous and complicated. It can be supported through play in the early years in order to allow children to become more competent. Social and emotional development promotes children's academic success and when children feel anxious and stressed there is a lack of focus on learning (Elias et

al, 1997). A noteworthy point is that having a role in a group is necessary for social learning (Dowling, 2010). Cooperative play is a key tool in developing social and emotional well-being and learning (Broadhead, 2004). This supports Vygotsky's view that "in their play, children project themselves into the adult activities of their culture and rehearse their future roles and values. Thus, play is an advance of development for in this manner, children begin to acquire motivation, skills and attitudes necessary for their social participation "(Vygotsky, 1978: 179). Play can support children's self-esteem which was found to be another key point that came to light from the present study and was thought to be developed through social interactions as well. Providing children with opportunities through play activities in social settings increases children's self-esteem and learning dispositions (Lillemyr et al, 2011). References which were referred by practitioners in this research showed that self-regulation is an important aspect of social and emotional development in play like talking, turn taking, modelling and play based learning, following instructions. It seems that the skill of self-regulation is an aspect of basic learning both specific and general. Children who have high self-regulation exhibit good levels of self-direction, self-control, self-motivation that would be opposition when lack of self-regulation (Hosang, 2006). Pintrich highlighted the importance of self-regulation in the learning process "attempt to monitor, regulate and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment" (2000, 453). Therefore, social and emotional development, personality and self-regulation are interwoven (Robson, 2010). According to

Vygotsky (1986) language, especially dialogues, are key psychological tools for the development of young children's self-regulation and it is important for children to both improve and explain their thoughts. For this reason, it is important that the practitioner helps children to gain the skills of self-regulation through play.

5.2.3. Reception class practitioners' roles in social and emotional development and play

The data from the interviews revealed that the practitioners agreed that there is a certain link between play and social emotional development like learning to manage feelings and interaction with others. Children might have trouble in learning without play; they can express their ideas and feelings through play quite easily. The natural learning methods of young children are appreciated such as learning through play, activity, socialisation and investigating the world (Whitebread and Bingham, 2011). Furthermore, play is essential in children's lives because they can make meaning of the world through it. Activities and learning practices that are situated in an early years education setting can allow children to improve their ability to learn and they can make sense of the world (Drake, 2001). Play gives children an opportunity to gain more complex experiences, to become thoughtful and master skills; so it makes sense for children (Duncan and Lockwood, 2008). It has been emphasised that play gives children opportunities to improve their sustained social and imaginative interactions (Rogers, 2010). Hence, practitioners might

understand why play is important for children's social and emotional development. The practitioners in the present study understood the role of teachers in the educational settings to be to extend and support play, to organize the sessions and activities in relation to children's needs and abilities. They should interact with peers where necessary in guiding, reading stories, planning physical play outdoors, encouraging continuous role play and promoting free choice activities. The practitioners in the present research indicated that play is essential for children's social and emotional development such as understanding and learning about problems, rules to live together; making friends, turn taking, explaining their own opinions. They also agreed that allowing children to solve their problems by themselves, modelling, showing them how to deal with issues and problems, and building a trusting relationship with children was very important. The data from the interviews made clear that practitioners in the study need to use interactive activities to make children more social or to encourage children play collaboratively.

Elias et al (1997) stated that "much of educators' observations on children's emotional awareness and regulation depends on the skills of memory and language and how emotion, events and their labels become integrated, coordinated and recalled, the ability of children to learn, access, and apply their learning is interwoven with their emotional skills" (pp. 27). Practitioners might predetermine play content by having some kind of expectations and arranging how children can use their play opportunities to acquire educational goals (Broadhead, 2004). Therefore, practitioners might add extra materials

into the play area of provision to sustain play and to make the play more purposeful. However, no practitioner in this research mentioned enhancing the play environment with extra materials to extend children's social play. Provision of extra play materials by the teacher can promote high quality experiences for children in the early years educational context. According to Vygotsky (1997), creating a social environment in the class is the key role of the teacher in the learning continuum of pupils. Practitioners should provide a play environment where children can improve their social development and share their ideas with others in educational settings.

Play pedagogy has been found to be an important aspect of early years to promote children's social and emotional competences. As could be seen from the post observations notes, children used their real life experiences in their play. For example, one of children related his experience with his mum when they were going petrol station and told his play group how the car wash brushes went up and down. Rogers and Lapping (2012) highlighted that "... 'play' as an opening up of the field of potential relations beyond the naturalised framings of the 'adult' social world" (p. 244). It is suggested that early years educators should apply a play pedagogy that enables children to learn (McInnes et al, 2011). It is recommended that educators should ensure well-developed and well-planned experiences based on children's spontaneity (Rogers and Lapping, 2012). It is clear, therefore, that practitioners have an important role to extend and make children's play more purposeful.

5.2.4. Reception class practitioners' opinions about social and emotional development in the curriculum and supporting the head teachers

The interview data in this study made it clear that early social and emotional competence is important to provide school readiness, positive learning disposition, socializing. Therefore, social and emotional competence might help children to deal with problems in their future lives. Social and emotional development is seen as being supported by the curriculum and head teachers and policy changes are being implemented in the school through EYFS. The head teacher was considered to be very supportive in this regard. Previous research on social and emotional development strongly emphasised the importance of peer collaboration in development and it is in these relationship that children learn about their childhood culture, society contexts and emotional competences (Goelman and Pivik, 2012). Hence, supporting children's social and emotional developments is important in the curriculum and policy and head teachers might take the initiative and encourage practitioners to prepare activities for children to develop and support their social and emotional learning.

Supporting of social and emotional competence in early years helps children to manage their emotions and behaviour and make strong relationships with others. Especially for children who are troubled with many stressful problems, such support may serve an important protective function for academic achievements in their school life (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2004). Raver and Zigler's research (1997) indicated that children's emotional and social

ability has an important impact on their school readiness. Children who have trouble in paying attention, following instructions, making relationship with others and being able to control negative emotions have less success in their school life (Ladd, Kochenderfer and Coleman, 1997). All of aspects of social and emotional competences are interwoven and they are connected in each other.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Researches

The present study investigated the understandings and roles of reception classes' practitioners in understanding the connection between social and emotional development and play. Further research could examine whether children's aspect of social and emotional development such as learning dispositions, self-esteem, empathy or self-confidence might develop through social play in-depth and the curriculum might be developed through the research findings. Additionally, research which examines parents' perspectives on play approaches may contribute to developing children's social and emotional development, learning and interests.

Further studies in respect of the use of play pedagogy by pre-school practitioners aiming to raise social and emotional development of children might be investigated from the curriculum perspective. Investigating differences in understanding in relation to practitioners' gender and background would add another element to the purpose of further studies,

focusing on the quality development of social and emotional development in early years.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter provided discussion and a short of summary of the research. The themes generated were included both from the data in this study and the relevant literature. The study was aimed at understanding social and emotional development of young children from practitioners' perspectives in an early years setting. The reception class practitioners recognized these key aspects of play and social and emotional development: learning dispositions, self-esteem, self-regulation and empathy. Play with peers was found to be an effective method for children's social and emotional development both indoors and outdoors within the social and highly social domains.

I believe that the social and emotional development of young children is a fundamental basis for their future and therefore it must be supported by the practitioner through adding extra materials, keeping the conversation about children's real life experiences in the play and using interactive activities.

Total: 20918 words.

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APPENDIX 1

APPLICATION FORM (09-04-22)**Outline of proposed research by an EYPE MA student
to be submitted for approval by the EYPE Ethics
Committee**

NOTE: All applications for dissertations to be submitted 2nd September 2013

*MUST be submitted either Monday 28th January or Monday 25th February
2013.*

Before completing this form you will need to discuss your proposal with your supervisor/s and ensure that all necessary consent letters, Information leaflets and research instruments are attached.

1. Your name: Sevim Karaoglu

Supervisor's name: Dr. Guy Roberts-Holmes

2. How may you be contacted?

Mobile number: 07751173043

E-mail: sevimkaraoglu@gmail.com – skaraoglu@ioe.ac.uk

3. Title of MA course:

MA in Early Years Education

4. Provisional title of project:

Reception practitioners' understandings of the role of play in children's social and emotional development

5. Outline of project:

- a) What are the aims of your project and/or your research questions?

What are the reception practitioners' understandings of the relationship between play and social and emotional development?

What is the pedagogical role of practitioners' in children's play for social and emotional development?

To what extent do reception class children learn social and emotional development through play?

- b) What is the design of your project?

The design of the study is small-scale qualitative research using the case study approach in a setting.

- c) What data collection methods will be employed?

(If questionnaires/structured or unstructured interviews/visual methods are to be used, a copy of each **must** be attached).

1. Interview

Semi-structured face to face interviews with practitioners will be carried out to examine teachers' views on social and emotional development of children in their play. An interview can be useful in order to get more information from the interviewee (Biklen, 1992). Therefore I am going to use semi-structured face to face interview in my study. Also, the practitioners will be asked for demographic information (age, experience time, gender) before beginning the interviews.

2. Observation

The Social Play Continuum observation scale (SPC) will be used while observing children's play in the classroom and during outdoor activities. During the observation, language, action and mutual interaction are recorded on a paper through the behaviour categories in four areas (Broadhead, 2009). These categories are associative domain, social domain, highly social domain and cooperative domain. This aims to obtain children's attitudes and comments regarding their social and emotional development in their play.

- d) Who are the participants?

The participants will be three teachers from one pre-schools and three

of those teachers' pupils will be observed in each of the two schools. 2 classes will be observed in each setting and classes include, on average, 15 students.

e) How will they be recruited?

I am going to use a kind of non-probability samples which is named as convenience sample in my study. Non-probability samples are used mostly in small-scale researches and conduct in a particular group which is known by the researcher (Robson, 2011; Cohen et al, 2011). Convenience sample is defined by Robson (2011) that "involves choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as respondents". In this line, I have decided to select a school where one of my friends is working as a teacher.

The Head teacher of the school, teachers, parents and children will be provided with information leaflets and consent forms which they will be asked to sign and return to the researcher to confirm that they are willing to participate in the study.

f) If participants are under the responsibility of others (such as parents or teachers) how do you intend to obtain permission for the participants to take part in the study? (Make sure you have attached any letter, details of permission procedures and/or information leaflets.)

Information leaflets and consent forms will be sent to the teachers and to the children's parent or guardian asking if they will give permission for their children to take part in the study.

g) How will you obtain the consent of participants? We recommend that opt-in rather than opt-out procedures should be used wherever possible. (Make sure you have attached any consent form or slip).

Practitioners and parents will be able to opt-in to the research by signing an informed consent form agreeing to take part in the study. It will carefully be explained that it is their choice to take part in the research and they can withdraw whenever they wish without any consequence.

h) What will you tell your participants you are doing?
Practitioners and children's parents or guardians will be informed through information sheets that I am carrying out a small research study on

understanding the social and emotional development of children in their play as part of the requirements of the Master's degree in Early Years Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. I will tell the participants that data will be presented, analysed and discussed within my dissertation.

i) Is there any possibility that participants might experience discomfort or embarrassment during your study?

☒ No ☐ Yes*

* What steps will you take to explain and minimise this?

(However if I face this situation, which cannot be ruled out, I will tell the participant that they can withdraw from participation in the study at any time)

j) How will it be made clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any time?

Before starting the research, participants will have been given time to read the information sheets provided and this will explain that it is their right to give up or have a break at any time. I will repeat this to the children being observed.

k) Will you provide participants with information about the findings of your study? [This could be a brief summary of your findings in general; it is not the same as individual debriefing.]

☐ No* ☒ Yes**

If No, why not?

If Yes, what form will this take?

Before beginning the research, participants will be told that a copy of the dissertation will be available at the Institute of Education library and they can request for a copy to be sent to them via e-mail. Any participants who would like a summary of key findings can also have this emailed to them.

l) How will information obtained from or about participants be protected?

Please read the Main Principles of the Data Protection Act -

[http://www.ico.gov.uk/what we cover/data protection/the basics.aspx](http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/data_protection/the_basics.aspx)

All participants will be asked for written consent for me to keep personal details on my computer. Participants will be assured that the information will be password protected and any personal details will not be passed on to third party and it will only be used by me for the purposes outlined in the information leaflet. All information regarding participants will be anonymized during the study.

m) What steps will you take to ensure the secure storage of personal data?

All information of the participants will be kept in a safe place only known to myself. Nobody will know the password to my computer. All personal data will be destroyed once the dissertation has been completed.

6. Outline any other information you feel relevant to this submission
(using a separate sheet if necessary)

No extra information at this time.

Notes and references:

British Educational Research Association
(www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php).

Biklen, B (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education an Introduction to Theory and Methods*. USA: Allyn and Bacon.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Marrison K. (2011). *Research Method in Education*. Oxon: Routledge.

Robson, C (2011). *Real World Research*. United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

Broadhead, P (2009). Conflict resolution and children's behaviour: observing and understanding social and cooperative play in early years educational settings, *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 29:2, 105- 118

Criminal Records Bureau Check

If you are planning to carry out any research which will bring you into face-to-face contact with children or young people, you will need to have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check before you start. If you do not already hold a current CRB check, you will need to obtain one. The relevant forms can be obtained from the ITE section of Registry, to whom they should be returned with the fee; obtaining a CRB check will take about a month. If you are an overseas student, the procedure is different; full details can be found in the helpful booklet available from the ITE section of Registry; you will need a 'Certificate of Good Behaviour' which can be obtained from your embassy or other appropriate organisation.

**Now sign the declaration overleaf –
and then send the form to your supervisor to sign also.**

**Please note –
your application will not be processed if the form is not signed by your
supervisor**

Declaration to be signed by student

I confirm that the information given above is correct and I endorse the following statement:

"I confirm that I have attended the ethics session on an appropriate course, and that I will seek further advice and support if and when unanticipated dilemmas arise. I have also read and understand the following set of guidelines: BPS / BERA / BSA" You must circle or underline as appropriate to indicate which you have read.

Signature(s) Date

☐ Please tick if you have sent the form to your supervisor by email and therefore cannot sign

Decision on behalf of ECPE Ethics Committee

- ☐ Approved
- ☐ Approved subject to the following additional measures*
- ☐ Not approved for the reasons given below*

Signatures of Tutors

.....

Date

* **Additional measures/comments** (attach extra sheet if necessary)

APPENDIX 2

Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

Consent Form for Head Teachers

Dear Ms / Mr.....

Thank you very much for your interest in my study. Following on from our email, I would like to ask for your permission to carry out a small research study in your school.

I am currently a student at the Institute of Education, University of London reading for a Master's degree in Early Years Education. As a part of the degree requirements, I have to undertake a small piece of empirical research which will be written up as a dissertation. I have chosen as my topic "Understanding children's social and emotional development in their play".

In order to do this, I need to observe reception class children's play and would also like to carry out some semi-structured interviews with six or seven teachers and record these on audio tape for later analysis. The data collection should take approximately two weeks in March. I would like to emphasize that the observation will not interfere with or be disruptive to the children's play in anyway.

I would greatly appreciate if you could let me know, as soon as possible, if you and the practitioners agree to this. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Thank you for considering my request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sevim KARAOGLU

skaraoglu@ioe.ac.uk

07751173043

APPENDIX 3

Information Leaflet for Parents



Leading education
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“Understanding children’s social and emotional development in their play”

Dear Parent,

My name is Sevim Karaoglu and I am a post graduate student reading a Master degree in Early Years Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. As a part of the degree requirements I need to carry out a small research project which will be written up as a dissertation. Your child will be invited to be part of this study. Before giving permission for your child to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and please spend some time with your child talking about what it involves. Should you and your child decide that you would like to be part of the study, please complete the attached consent form and return it to the school? If either you or your child decides either before or during the study that you no longer want to take part, you can drop out at any point.

Study Aims

The purpose of the study is to find out about how reception practitioners understand children’s social and emotional development through their play. The study will involve talking to teachers and observing children playing in their class environments.

Who will be taking part in the study?

A small group of up to 20 children who are all in reception class and three practitioners in the pre-school have been invited to take part.

What will be happen during the study?

1. Observation of children's play

In small groups children will be observed in the classroom and at outdoor. There will not any disruption or interference in their play. I will write down notes about the children's play.

2. Semi-structured interview with practitioners

Practitioners will take part in short interviews where they will be asked to reflect upon their ideas of social and emotional development through children's play.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All tape recordings of teachers and observation sheets and notes will be locked away in a safe place or stored on a password protected computer. I will not include your child's name, any details that could identify a child or the name of the school in my final report. That way, the participants and their views will be kept completely anonymous. All data collected will be destroyed when I have finished writing up my study.

Does my child have to take part?

There is no obligation for your child to take part. Even if they choose to take part at the start, they can withdraw from the study at any time. If you agree to your child taking part in the group observation, please complete and return the consent form which is added at the end of the information leaflet through your child. If at any point

they do not wish to continue participating in the study, they are free to withdraw their consent with absolutely no consequence.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

The study will be written up as part of the Master's degree in Early Years Education. The study will be written up and bound as a dissertation which will be reviewed by my tutor and other staff at the Institute of Education, University of London. A summary of findings will be available for the school and participations who interest in the study.

Thank you for taking time to consider the study. Please feel free to contact me on the following email address should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Sevim KARAOGLU

skaraoglu@ioe.ac.uk

07751173043

Parent Consent Form

Please read the following carefully and initial the box by the side of each statement to show that you consent	Consent
a. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study.	
b. I understand that my child will be given an opportunity to withdraw at any point during the study.	
c. I understand that responses will be anonymised so that no names are included in the study.	
d. I agree to my child being observed during their play in the class.	

Please sign this form below and return to the class teacher as soon as possible.

Name.....Date.....

Signature.....

APPENDIX 4

Practitioner Information Leaflet



“Understanding children’s social and emotional development in their play”

You are being invited to take part in a study that explores practitioners’ views of the social and emotional development of children through play. Before you agree to take part, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Should you decide that you would like to be part of the study, please complete and return the enclosed consent form. You can drop out of the study at any point if you so wish. Please feel free to contact me should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Study Aims

The purpose of the study is to explore children’s emotional and social development through play. This will involve finding out about what practitioners understand by children’s social and emotional development in their play and what how they think they can influence this development.

Who will be taking part in the study?

A small group of up to 20 reception class children and three practitioners in the pre-school who have been invited to take part.

What will be happening during the study?

3. Semi-structured interview with practitioners

Practitioners will take part in interviews during which they will be asked to reflect upon their ideas about children's social and emotional development through play. They will also be asked about how they see their role in facilitating this. The interviews will be recorded by audio tape with the practitioners' permission.

4. Observation of children's play

In small groups children will be observed in the classroom and at the outdoor and there will not be any disruption or interference in their play. The children's play behaviours will be recorded through handwritten notes.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

All recordings and notes will be locked away in a safe place or stored on a password protected computer. I will not include your name, any defining details or the name of the school in my final report. That way, the participants and their views will be kept completely anonymous. All data collected will be destroyed when I have finished writing up my study.

What will happen to the findings of the study?

The study will be written up as a dissertation as part of the requirements of the Master's degree in Early Years Education and a copy will be held at the Institute of Education, University of London. A summary of findings will be available to the schools if requested.

Thank you for taking time to consider the study. Please feel free to contact me on the following email address should you have any concerns, questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Sevim KARAOGLU

skaraoglu@ioe.ac.uk - 07751173043

Practitioner Consent Form

Please read the following carefully and initial the box by the side of each statement to show that you consent	
a. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study and had opportunity to ask the researcher any questions I might have.	
b. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to withdraw at any point during the study.	
c. I understand that responses will be anonymised so that no names included in the study.	
d. I agree to my interview with the researcher being recorded	
e. I agree to take part in the project	

Name.....Date.....

..

Signature.....

.....

This form will be collected by the researcher before conduct the interview.

APPENDIX 5



Interview Schedule

All interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis after the interview.

Before the interview

- Introduce myself
- Remind the interviewees of the purpose of the research.
- Convey that there is no right or wrong answer; I am just interested in their opinions.
- Outline the interview:
 - anticipated duration is 20 minutes
 - the interview will be recorded but only I will listen to it.
 - re-iterate confidentiality and anonymity
 - confirm that the participant can stop the interview at any time or withdraw entirely.

The interview Questions

The interview will be based around the interviewee's answers. They will be asked to expand on their answers and give more detailed comments where they necessary.

1- Demographic Information

- Age
- Gender
- Years of experience

- 2- How do you define social and emotional development?
- 3- Do you think that social and emotional development is important for young children in the early years education? Why do you think that?
- 4- How should social and emotional development be supported in pre-schools? Do you have specific method to improve it?

*If practitioners say yes, what are the specific methods you used in the early years settings and have you found it useful?

*If practitioners say no, do you think should be there specific methods to develop social and emotional development?
- 5- Do you think that there is a connection between play and children's social and emotional development and play? Why or why not?
- 6- What is the practitioners' role in the classroom environment and outdoor in the social and emotional development of children?
- 7- To what extent and how do you think that children develop socially and emotionally through play?
- 8- What do you think are the most important experiences for children's social and emotional development in the classroom and outdoor?
- 9- What kinds of activities could be provided to further promote social and emotional development?

After the interview

- Thank the interviewees for taking part in the interview.
- Re-iterate that they may withdraw their information at any time.
- Remind the interviewees that if they want to know what I found out, then I will send them a summary of the key findings if they wish.

APPENDIX 6



Consent Form for Children

- Before start to ask whether they want to take part in the observation, I will introduce myself and my study:

- I am Sevim, a research student at the University of London. Today, I am going to have a seat in the classroom and outdoor to observe you and I will take notes on my paper, when you are playing with your friends. This is my homework which was given me by my teacher at the university. So, I need your lovely help, would you like to allow me have a seat in the class and watch you? There will not be any disruption or interference. If you allow me for the observation, could you please paint the smile face? If you feel uncomfortable with this situation, you can paint the sad face and I will not watch you in the class. If you have any question you can ask me (I will wait a few minutes for questions. If they ask me, I will reply them. And then I will dispatch the consent form to each child. Following this, I will check the consent forms. After collect and check the consent form, I will thank them and have a seat in the class to start my observation. Before leave the class after observation I will thank them again and say bye)

APPENDIX 7



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Would you like to allow me have a seat in the class and outdoors, when you are playing with your friends?

Yes

No



APPENDIX 8

SIDE 1: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – A TOOL FOR PLAY OBSERVATION, PUPIL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF AREAS OF PROVISION

Observation start time: Area of provision: Observation finish time:				Children entering play: Children leaving play:			
<i>L = Language</i> <i>RL = Reciprocal language</i>	<i>A = Action observed</i> <i>RA = Reciprocal Action</i>	<i>L/A = Language and Action Combined</i> <i>R/RA = Reciprocal language and reciprocal action combined</i>					
ASSOCIATIVE DOMAIN	SOCIAL DOMAIN	HIGHLY SOCIAL DOMAIN	COOPERATIVE DOMAIN				
A: looks towards peers A: Watches play A: Imitates play A: Object offered, not accepted A/I: Object taken, altercation A: Parallel play period I: Self-talk A/I: Comment on action directed at peer; peer does not respond	A: Smiling A: I laughter I: Play noises, play voice RA: Eye contact made A: Object taken, no altercation RA: Object offered and received L/A: Consent sought and object accessed I: Approval sought, not given RL: Approval sought and given I: Instruction given, no response I/RA: Instruction given, positive response I: Question asked, no response RL: Question asked, response I/RA: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, peer looks RL: Comment on own action/described intent directed at peer, verbal response	RA: Offering/accepting of objects evident RL: Dialogue a mix of activity related and non-related but a theme is evident RL: Comment on own action/described intent with acknowledgement leading to extended exchange RL: Spontadic dialogue develops role play themes RA/I: Eye contact/laughter (play noise) combined as behavioural cluster RA/RL: Brief reciprocal sequences, e.g. giving/following instructions seeking/giving approval offering/accepting objects asking/answering questions RL/RA: New ideas or resources have impact on developing theme	RA: Offering/accepting objects sustains/extends play theme RL: Sustained dialogue is activity related and clear theme(s) emerge RL: Explanations/descriptions utilised RL/RA: New idea/resource extends play and is sustained RI/RA: Children display a shared understanding of goals RL: Offering and accepting verbal help RA: Offering and accepting physical help RI/RA: Verbal and physical help combined RL/RA: Problem identified and solved RL/RA: Dramatic scenarios enacted linked to play theme(s)				
Emergent play themes noted:							

SIDE 2: THE SOCIAL PLAY CONTINUUM – REFLECTING ON AND CATEGORISING OBSERVED PLAY

Increasing levels of reciprocity and momentum →

Characteristics of associative play	Characteristics of social play	Characteristics of highly social play	Characteristics of cooperative play
Self talk does not elicit a response No/very little dialogue No/very little eye contact Seemingly little regard for proximity of peers Limited periods of peer interaction Overtures ignored	May involve much movement indoors or outdoors Children leave and join the play at frequent intervals Associative players often nearby Little development of play ideas, often repetitive Little shared understanding of goal achievement Dialogue does not always relate to activity Play punctuated by periods of associative play Altercations evident when play returns to associative Adult intervention may often be sought	May involve movement or one location Group relatively stable with some entering or leaving Suggestions emerge which begin to extend ongoing play New objects/resources brought to play but may not become integral to play Sporadic evidence of shared understandings of goal orientation Role play may be evident with some combined dramatic intent Interruptions/altercations may be evident when play returns to social Adult intervention seldom sought	Players remain predominantly in one location Shared understanding of goal orientation Players remain until goals achieved, new goals identified A highly imaginative use of ideas and resources as play themes are taken on board and explored Players seek additional resources to extend their play themes Role play has clear dramatic aspects A relative absence of play noises Absorption in task with extended levels of concentration Altercations are resolved in play as problem-solving activity Play achieves a finished product (where design is involved) Adult intervention not sought until completion

Comments and records (e.g. information about individual children, ideas for developing area of provision in focus and associated resources, location, extensions, adult intervention, class/group discussions).

Identify play domain (including 'moving towards'):

Associative	Social	Highly Social	Co-operative
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