



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH,
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION**

Course Code: EBS 404SW

**Course Title: Contemporary Issues in Early
Childhood Education**

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Course Content

UNIT 1: Policy and research

UNIT 2: Practice

UNIT 3: Workforce

UNIT 2: Practice

- ❖ **Age-appropriate pedagogies and practices in ECE**
- ❖ Supporting children's cognitive, academic and socio-emotional development
- ❖ Assessment in ECE: Moving beyond test scores
- ❖ Safeguarding children in ECE: The social and legal context for protecting children

Sub-Unit 1: Age-appropriate pedagogies and practices in ECE

- ❖ Pedagogy can be described from different perspectives and has implications for teachers' role
- ❖ It is what the teacher needs to know to make valid, effective and defensible classroom decisions (Alexander, 2015)
- ❖ Others consider pedagogy as a relationship between teacher and learner (e.g. Harris et al., 2015; Bishop et al., 2014)
- ❖ Pedagogy is also seen as co-creation of classroom interactions (e.g. Bielaczyc et al., 2013)

Effective pedagogy

- ❖ Effective pedagogy is based on a number of variables derived from research theories and principles
- ❖ Glaser's (1986) choice theory identified children's need for survival, belonging, power, fun and freedom
- ❖ Other studies in the UK identified 10 principles of effective pedagogy (Refer to pg. 8 of the document)
- ❖ Three principles of effective pedagogy has endured over time
 - ❖ Learner-centred
 - ❖ Scaffolding of learning
 - ❖ Engaging children actively in learning

Characteristics of early learners

- ❖ The characteristics of early childhood children need to be considered when selecting appropriate pedagogy
- ❖ Theories from different disciplines have contributed to the characteristics of early learners
- ❖ Examples of these disciplines are psychology, sociology, science and education
- ❖ Children's learning occur in a range of socio-cultural environments shaped by culture, social, economic status, beliefs and behaviors of adults (including teachers and parents)

Characteristics of early learners

- ❖ Children are active and not passive learners
- ❖ Children learn by examining and exploring their environment
- ❖ Early learners use a scientific approach
- ❖ Children learn through probing questions that challenge their thinking
- ❖ Research has an important role in informing pedagogical principles and practice in ECE (refer to pgs. 10 – 20 of the document and briefly discuss these studies)
- ❖ Discuss the key messages of all the studies (refer to pg. 20)

Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies

- ❖ **Active** – requiring physical and embodied engagement across all areas of learning
- ❖ **Agentic** – ensuring that children have voice in their learning
- ❖ **Collaborative** – being social and co-constructed
- ❖ **Creative** - inviting children to consider “What if?” (i.e. investigation, inquiry and artistry to explore new possibilities and ways of thinking)
- ❖ **Explicit** – making conscious for both learner and educator the relationships between the learning purpose and processes employed and the skills and understandings these processes support
- ❖ **Language rich and dialogic** – ensuring that learning occurs in environments where rich language is modelled and employed by both children and educators.
- ❖ **Learner focused** – recognizing that all children learn in different ways and that learning is a highly individual process

Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies

- ❖ **Narrative** – thus acknowledging the important role that personal, written, oral and digital stories play in all our lives
- ❖ **Playful** – encouraging children to make connections through imagination and creativity to explore alternate worlds and ways of thinking
- ❖ **Responsive** – incorporating a willingness to be flexible, to ensure that learning is always child, context, content and discipline appropriate
- ❖ **Scaffolded** – including such actions as modelling, encouraging, questioning, adding challenges, and giving feedback, provide the support needed to extend children's existing capabilities

Pedagogy of Play

- ❖ Much of learning in early childhood is associated with play
- ❖ Play is considered an important vehicle for children's holistic development
- ❖ Knowledge of different types of play gives educators a foundation for proper teaching strategies
 - ❖ Dramatic or pretend play
 - ❖ Object play
 - ❖ Physical play
 - ❖ Games with rules

Play and Cognitive Development

- ❖ Sara Smilansky (1990) provides a model presenting five basic forms of play:
- ❖ **Functional play or exploratory play.** This type of play is a sensorimotor approach in which a child learns the nature of his or her surroundings
 - ❖ Examples include dumping, filling, stacking, water play, and outdoor play.
- ❖ **Constructive play** describes children combining pieces or entities, such as with blocks. The purpose of this type of play is to make something and/or work out a problem
- ❖ **Dramatic play entails pretending.** The child pretends to be someone else, for example the teacher or a fireman
- ❖ **Sociodramatic play** is a form of dramatic play with more than one player socially interacting around a theme and a time trajectory over which the play continues and evolves
- ❖ **Games with rules encompass cooperative play, often with winners and losers.** These games are distinguished by child-controlled rules and thus are different from the competitive games usually called “sports.”
 - ❖ Children begin the games with rules stage at about age 6

Play and Social Development

- ❖ **Solitary play**—Children play alone, usually with toys that are different from those of the children playing nearby
 - ❖ children engage in solitary play until about 2½ years of age
- ❖ **Parallel play**—Children from 2½ to 3½ years old continue to play independently, but now they are among their peers and use toys that are similar to those of the children around them
- ❖ **Associative play**— Begins at about 3½ years old
 - ❖ Children truly play with others. Children loan and borrow play materials among one another
- ❖ **Cooperative play**—It is the highest level of social play and takes place at about 4½ years of age
 - ❖ Children play in groups as they did in associative play, but now the children demonstrate division of labor, whether working on a group project or cooperating to attain a common goal

Play and Emotional Development

- ❖ Play helps children find new ways of dealing with their emotions and their reality. Children can master emotional issues such as:
 - ❖ anxiety
 - ❖ frustration
 - ❖ normal developmental conflicts
 - ❖ traumatic situations,
 - ❖ unfamiliar concepts and overwhelming experiences in their play.
- ❖ Another major emotional benefit of play is that it gives children numerous opportunities to feel good about themselves.

Play and Language Development

- ❖ When children are engaged in play, they use language to interact with their peers
- ❖ As they interact, they use different tones and sounds to regulate their speech, and develop new vocabulary
- ❖ Children are also able to improve their oral and written language skills

Play and Physical Development

- ❖ A major characteristic of play is being active through dancing, jumping, throwing, running, and generally moving around.
- ❖ And children often strengthen their gross motor development through the use of their large muscles in these activities (Gallahue, 1982).
- ❖ Other types of play activities, such as cutting, eating, writing, buttoning, painting, and dressing, provide for their fine motor development, or refinement of the skills that require the use of smaller muscles.
- ❖ Through play, children are naturally able to use and learn to refine their gross and fine motor skills and coordination.

Play and Creativity

- ❖ Children use their imagination to invent or produce something new.
- ❖ The early years are very important for the development of creativity
- ❖ young children have many opportunities to express and develop their creative talents during play
- ❖ For example, during free play, young children experiment with things and ideas and create new combinations that they have never experienced before.
- ❖ Children develop their creativity in play situations that require them to use their imagination (Singer, 1973).

Play and the Physical Environment

- Environment is defined as the physical environment, its surroundings, and a specific setting
- The physical environment will vary depending on the age and number of children in the classroom, as well as the goals of programs and specific activities in the classroom
- Both indoor and outdoor environments are important for learning through play

Importance of the Physical Environment

- ❖ A well-arranged environment should enhance children's development through learning and play
- ❖ It facilitates classroom management and supports the implementation of curricular goals and objectives
- ❖ The way the physical environment is designed and configured influences how children feel, act, and behave
- ❖ The physical environment allows growth and development through activities and materials in defined play areas
- ❖ Room arrangement for play activity plays an important role in children's social and language interactions
- ❖ Poorly designed classrooms can cause disruptions and negative social interactions among children and/or between children and the teacher

Aspects of the Learning Environment: Learning Centers

- ❖ Decisions about how the classroom or physical environment is arranged will depend on the **philosophy and goals of the teacher**
- ❖ Learning centers, also known as learning areas, are a system that is used to arrange a classroom or organize materials in a classroom
- ❖ It is a specific location where instructional materials are placed and organized in a classroom
- ❖ Examples of learning centers: art, library/listening/writing, dramatic, science centers

Aspects of the Learning Environment: Materials and equipment

- ❖ Play materials are extremely important for multiple developmental perspectives such as cognitive, social/emotional, physical, and language
- ❖ Teachers need to be cognizant of the age-appropriate play material/equipment and furniture for the classroom.
- ❖ Identify materials and equipment for the following learning centers:
 - ❖ Dramatic play center
 - ❖ Art center
 - ❖ Writing and listening center
 - ❖ Science center
 - ❖ Physical play center

Preparing the Physical Space for Play

- ❖ In structuring the physical environment for play, consider these questions:
 - ❖ How is the space arranged, both indoors and outdoors?
 - ❖ Are there clearly marked areas in which children may find materials?
 - ❖ Is there enough space between the areas to walk around?
- ❖ When setting up the classroom, teachers should consider the following suggestions:
 - ❖ Centers should have multiple uses
 - ❖ Have as much natural light in the classroom as possible.
 - ❖ Keep noisy and quiet areas separate

Ensuring a safe environment for learning through play

- ❖ Keeping the environment safe is very important for teachers of young children
- ❖ A safe environment encourages exploration and play behaviors in young children
- ❖ ***Fire Safety.*** Fire regulations require that fire extinguishers, as well as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, be present and in working condition in all classrooms
- ❖ ***Sanitation and Bathroom Facilities.*** Classroom toys and other equipment are required to be sanitized on a daily basis, as this will reduce germs from spreading around
- ❖ ***Lighting, Ventilation, and Temperature.*** Adequate lighting is of essence in a classroom
 - ❖ The most desirable light is natural light coming from windows and/or glass doors

What factors serve as a stronghold or barriers to the use of play in ECE in Ghana?

- ❖ Lack of understanding of the value of play as a foundation for academic concepts.
- ❖ Parental or caregiver misconceptions about play.
- ❖ Curriculum and early learning standards that do not address play.
- ❖ Lack of teacher professional development that focuses on learning through play
- ❖ Large class sizes that limit children's freedom to play.
- ❖ Lack of materials and equipment

THANK YOU