

# Childrens engagement in physical activities essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

This is not practicable in my home centre. The service, which is a fully licensed creche to a health club and gym, operates on a sessional basis. There are 2 sessions per day, one starting at 9am and one starting at 10.45am. The service does not have an outside area. We are offering JuniorGym sessions which are held in the gym's class fitness room. Each session the child I am observing is attending is of 1, 5 hours duration. The routine in the 9am-sessions contains free play in various play areas, followed by mat time with Karakia for the following morning tea and a short story time to bridge the time to pick up.

The 10.45am sessions the child is attending are Junior Gym sessions, containing free play in creche room, followed by 30min guided physical activities in the class fitness room before Karakia and Kai time, after which the parents pick the children up. Our service does not have an outside area.

III. The Child and their context The Child I have chosen for this study is Max. He will be 3 years old this winter. His birthday is the 19th August 2006. Max has been attending our service since he has been six weeks old. At current time this boy is attending our service for 4 days a week.

He is attending 2 sessions starting at 9am and 2 sessions starting at 10.45am. Max is the oldest son to father Roger, a medical accountant and mother Donna a “ stay at home mum”. There is also a 7month old sister in the family, who is also attending our service. Both parents identify their own and their children's ethnicity as New Zealand Maori, affiliated with the Kahungunu tribe of Mahia and the Te whanau-a-apanui of Te Koha. Te Reo Maori is the mothers first language and is used equally alongside English at home.

The family lives in their owned 3 bedroom house. They are all very active and love the outdoors. The father is a passionate rugby league player. Max shares the interest for sports and active play with his parents. He loves our Junior Gym sessions. The consent form from the parent and the Associate teacher are attached as Apendices K and L. IV. Observations a)Time Sample 1 (Appendix A) This time sample (Appendix A) reflects the child's activities and interactions with other children (Podmore, 2006) and notes in which ways Max interacts with the other children.

Please refer to Appendix D for this second duration record, I have chosen to note the activities into a prepared table , while jotting down my observations, as this time I had a better understanding of this observation tool. e)Narrative 1 Please refer to Appendix E f)Narrative 2 Please refer to Appendix F g)Anecdotal Account 1 Please refer to Appendix G h)Anecdotal Account 2 Please refer to Appendix H i)Anecdotal Account 3 Please refer to Appendix I j)Anecdotal Account J Please refer to Appendix J V. Discussion in relation to Theoretical perspectives

All the observations carried out about Max show clearly that he shows the most interest and therefore learns best (Penrose, 2000) when he can express himself in physical activity. The first theoretical perspective to explain the data in my observations is the Socio-cultural theory. In narrative 1 (Appendix E) is it demonstrated how the child's community background starts an interest in an investigation. The child's intellectual horizon is broadened by participating in an activity relating to a current happening within their community.

This is active participation as emphasised by Barbara Rogoff (Rogoff, 1990) Narrative 1 (Appendix E) shows an example of effective learning within the “zone of proximal development” as explain by Vygotsky (1978). The child is encouraged by the teacher to try and persue an activity he is not quite yet ready to take on by himself. This scaffolding involves encouragement and assistance in the form of advice and suggestions to aid a child in mastering a new concept. Scaffolding is the final piece of Vygotsky’s cognitive development theory.

By using hints and pointers from teachers, parents, and peers who have already grasped the desired concept, children are able to form their own path toward a solution and by doing this eventually to self-regulate, or think and solve problems without the help of others (Slavin, 2003). The next theoretical perspective under which the observations can be analysed is the ecological perspective. Even though it can be linked to all my observations, anecdotal account 1 (Apendix G) written by Max’s mum is a good example how a child’s immediate environment influences the learning experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory is that development is influenced by experiences arising from broader social and cultural systems as well as a child’s immediate surroundings. Ecological Systems Theory, also called “Development in Context” or “Human Ecology” theory, specifies four types of nested environmental systems, with bi-directional influences within and between the systems. (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The narrative (Appendix G) demonstrates how Max is influenced by his immediate family, which is described as microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This important relationship with the parents or whanau is manifested by the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). Even though Bronfenbrenner describes a holistic approach to learning and playing (Arthur et. al, 2005) he still sees the individual as the core of various layers of influences. Max makes sense of the world and his place in society by noticing and responding to his natural environment in a common, everyday setting. (Podmore, 2006) Therefore, it would be logical to talk about things with Max from his own viewpoints as he will feel their experiences are the only experiences.

Each child sees and understands their environment in a distinctive way. (Arthur et. al, 2005). The Narrative 2 (Appendix F) can make the third theoretical perspective evident. This is the Maori perspective. The Family/Te Whanau as centre of various physical and spiritual dimensions is the vital centre (Pere, 1994). The indigenous theorists stress the interdimensional relations of these impacts (Pere, 1994). Te Wheke, or The Octopus model of health, as developed and presented by Rose Pere (1994), has become a central part of educating about Maori perspectives.

It has been used particularly in the arenas of health and mental health, education and social services training. The model is seen to be applicable across a range of contexts and is perceived as being a holistic model of health and well-being that is amenable to in depth examination and development. Te Wheke, the model, presents the octopus as a symbol representing the whanau, hapu or iwi. Each of the eight tentacles of the octopus represents a dimension of selfhood, and the numerous suckers on each tentacle represent the many aspects within each dimension.

The tentacles of the octopus are overlapping and intertwined to symbolise the interconnected and inseparable nature of the dimensions. The dimensions of the octopus, represented by the tentacles as identified by Pere are: wairua, mana ake, mauri, whanaungatanga, tinana, hinengaro, whatumanawa, ha a koro ma a kuia ma. The model proposes that sustenance is required for each tentacle/dimension if the organism is to attain waiora or total well-being. Pere (1994) defines healthy Maori selfhood in terms of waiora or total well-being. Traditionally, waiora refers to the seed of life.

It is a concept which incorporates the foundations of life and existence and the total well-being and development of people. Pere presents te wheke (the octopus) as a symbol representing the whanau (family unit) and, by extension, the hapu (sub-tribe) and/or the iwi (tribe or people). The model illustrates a Maori view that sees healthy individual selfhood as intertwined with and inseparable from the health of the whanau; the health of the whanau as inseparable from that of the hapu, and the health and well-being of hapu as indivisible from that of iwi.

Thus, the model is applicable to individuals and to small and large groups. Pere's model, along with other models of healthy Maori selfhood (Durie, 1994), provides a framework within which dimensions may be explored and understood in a number of ways. Applied to Max this helps me understand how important not only his family relations, but the relationship to his extended whanau is. The concept of Whanaungatanga as described by Pere (1994) and also Durie (1994) reflects in Max's confidence and his always present sense of belonging to his whanau.

And I believe in Max's case you can even see all his energy and his great joy on life in general. When Max had the strained ankle he was much more affected than other children would be. Not only because it took away his ability to take part in his favourite activity, after investigating the Maori perspective theories, it becomes obvious, that his holistic wellbeing was affected. Discussion and Recommendation Max is a child that can learn best when physically active. He needs to be able to move and physically explore his environment. This is the way he best understands and explains his environment.

He has very good physical skills. He has good motor skills, like throwing, catching, balancing, And fine motor skills, as demonstrated in Appendix E. He is very aware of his abilities and uses his body with confidence. Max is very open to new experiences; he has the ability to understand a new concept by a not only observing, but physically exploring. Before this series of observation Max was often described by teachers as a very unsettled child with short attention span. But now that we have seen, how Max makes sense of things, we will be able to provide him with more learning opportunities that attract his interest.

Max's way of physically exploring and his need for this are explained by Rose Pere's (1994) view on the importance of physical well-being with other aspects of children's development. The New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum support the importance of holistic Wellbeing (Ministry of Education, 1996) Inspired by this series of observations, we will integrate a greater variety of physical active play in our sessions. This will include

physical games to count, identify numbers and counting as well as activities to identify shapes and colours.

Besides the physical aspect, Max is very proud of his ability to speak Te Reo as the first Observations (Appendix A and B) exhibit. This cultural identity needs to be nurtured and supported. We can help this process by implementing more Te Reo into daily routines. To get Max's attention for learning opportunities and activities, we have to find ways to make them more attractive to him. He does not like table top activities, as they restrict his need to move (Appendix C and D). Already taking activities like this to the floor, will help him to participate.

Possible activities are: putting Playdough into the huge saucers on the floor, making pictures on big paper using hands (or even feet). When it comes to mat time it shows that Max has the ability to retain all words and actions to a song. This amazing ability has not been noticed much before. It is not to forget that he is not even three years old yet. He loves to sing and dance. He is surprisingly not very interested in books. I am at the moment in the process of developing a series of interactive children's stories to foster early literacy learning opportunities for children like Max.

There has been research that making a connection between literacy and physical activities can help especially boys with reading and comprehension later (Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005). VII Observation Toll For me the Time Sample is the most effective observation tool. A time sample provides a good base for further investigations like Duration Records. The time sample gives an overview about the childs activities in a day or the specified time



frame. Special activities can be marked and developed into a narrative or learning story. A series of time samples can give insight in the child's daily routines, preferences and strengths.

The time sample can also give information about possible issues that need investigating and addressing. Time samples can help teachers to assess their work and help with reflection on current practice in a service.