

Erasmus + Loose parts play

Module 1: Loose parts play – key points and shared understanding

Trainer's notes

Module summary

This module introduces ideas central to loose parts play which will be developed across the six modules. It can also be offered as a stand-alone session. No previous experience is required to participate and key concepts will be explained. Along with theoretical input, the session offers opportunities for personal reflection and practical experience.



Target group: As improving children's play requires a whole school approach, the full staff team should participate in this session if possible. It is for everyone directly or indirectly involved with the children.

Previous training or experience required to attend: No previous experience or training is required.

Length: 3 hours

Module 1 Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, participants will:

1. have explored the ideas contained in Nicholson's *theory of loose parts*
2. have had the opportunity to play with a selection of loose parts of different types and from a range of sources
3. have been introduced to and discussed definitions of play, loose parts and playwork experience and related them to their own experience

4. gained understanding of the role of space in loose parts play enabling them to reflect on the space they work in
5. be able to explain the key concepts underpinning loose parts play, including children's rights, to parents, colleagues and the wider school community.

Learning indicators

Enthusiastic about loose parts play and eager to delve deeper into theory and practise; basic knowledge of loose parts play and theories; practical experience of loose parts play; beginning to reflect on practise.

Resources required

Loose Parts Play Manual, paper luggage labels or post-it notes, A3 and A4 paper, drawing materials, stickers, masking tape, string, a good selection of loose parts, International Play Association article 31 (right to play) posters which can be downloaded [here](https://ipaworld.org/resources/for-children/article-31-for-children/).
<https://ipaworld.org/resources/for-children/article-31-for-children/>

Resources to prepare

Quiz questions, 'explore a space' postcards, worksheet for activity 6.



Manual: 1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7



Tool: 3



Manual: 1.5

Trainer notes

This session has been designed to be delivered outdoors, without a PowerPoint presentation but can also be delivered indoors.

Have copies of the manual available.

Introduction

Time: 10 minutes

Follow the Trainer Guidelines to ensure everyone feels welcome, comfortable and has an understanding of the session aims.

Icebreaker suggestion

Time: 10 minutes

Resources needed: none

Loose parts name game

Taking turns, each person says their name and an action that begins with the first letter of their name, for example, "My name is Susan, skipping Susan." As a group, act out the action, repeating the person's name: "Skipping Susan." Repeat around the circle.

Activity 1: What is play?

Time: 15 minutes

Resources needed: luggage labels or post-it notes, pens.



Manual: 2.1

In this activity, we will first explore personal experiences of play then link these to theories of play, referring to the manual.

Exercise: Play memories

Let participants know that this is a personal exercise, thinking back to how they played when they were children.

Allow participants a few moments to think back to this time in their life.

Ask a series of questions about playing as children and invite responses in different ways. For example:

- If you mainly remember playing outside, put up your hand.
- If there were usually adults around, stand on one leg.
- If you were doing something a little mischievous, or that you shouldn't have been doing, put a hand on your head.

Dependant on the size of the group and time available, you can invite participants to share some of their play memory stories.

Childhood experiences of playing may influence our attitudes to play as adults. It is important to explore our feelings and experiences of play because they can influence how we support play and sometimes cause us to restrict it.

Exercise: What is play?

Using the luggage labels, ask participants to write some words they associate with play, i.e. "Play is...."

If you have an international group of participants, participants first write in their preferred language, then seek translations from others in the group. At the end of the exercise, all words are presented in each language.

These words are important reminders for us as adults. Display these in the training room or if outdoors, hang the labels from a tree. Keep referring to these throughout the training and if several training sessions are planned, keep these visible at each one.

Trainer input: from manual section 2.1

Trainer notes

Everyone's experiences of play will be different. Be aware that not all will be positive. There may be more or less focus on digital play depending on the age of participants.

Activity 2: Children's right to play

Time: 15 minutes

Resources required: IPA article 31 poster, quiz questions, a ball, paper and pens.



Manual: 1.5

Exercise: Children's rights quiz

Quiz on children's rights. Prepare a series of true or false questions. This can be done as a PowerPoint presentation or written or printed on card. Here are some sample questions adapted from Children's Parliament Myth Buster Resource.

- The UNCRC stands for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It applies to everyone under the age of 18. The UNCRC applies to which age group:
 - A. Birth - 12
 - B. 5 - 12
 - C. 5 - 16
 - D. **Anyone under 18** - correct answer
- The aim of the UNCRC is to recognise the rights of children and ensure that they grow up in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. **TRUE**
- The UNCRC describes children's human rights in the 54 articles. Some rights are more important than others. **FALSE** – all rights are as important as each other. The UNCRC was written to be understood holistically.
- When we are making decisions that might have an impact on children's lives, we have to think about the best interests of children. **TRUE**
- All rights come with responsibilities. It is important that children understand their responsibilities in order to have their rights. **FALSE** – adults often say this but human rights belong to us all and do not rely on children having to earn them.
- According to the UNCRC, I have to give children everything they ask for and do everything children want, no matter what. **FALSE** – this is another myth that is often used against children's rights.
- Very young children and babies don't have rights. They would not understand the concept of human rights anyway. **FALSE** – we are born with human rights. Adults, care givers and people in responsibility have a duty to uphold rights of all children under 18.
- Article 31 of the UNCRC states that children have the right to rest, leisure and recreation, and to engage in play and to participate freely in the culture life and the arts. **TRUE.**
- UNCRC General Comment no. 17 (guidance on article 31) states that schools have a major role to play in providing for play and allowing sufficient time and space to play. **TRUE** – the guidance from the UN says that inclusive education and inclusive play should be facilitated during the course of every day throughout early childhood education and care (preschool) as well as primary and secondary school.

Trainer notes

Consider fun and interactive ways to present the quiz. For example, prepare the questions on separate pieces of paper. The person who answers a question correctly, takes the next piece of paper to ask a question. Or for a small group, uses a ball for a circle game. Stand in a circle and ask each participant a question in turn. After you have asked the question throw the ball. If the recipient thinks the questions is true, they catch the ball, if they think it is false, they let the ball drop.

Sharing the answers is an opportunity to give some more detailed information or ask the group to contribute.

Be aware this exercise introduces and highlights children's rights. Read up on children's right to play in the manual in advance.

Exercise: Resolutions

What can you do to support children's right to play?

Provide paper or card and pens so that participants can write or draw one thing they can do to promote children's right to play. Invite participants to read or share their resolutions.

Trainer notes

Children's Parliament is an excellent source of information and resources in English on children's human rights. The website includes videos, activities and tools. If appropriate, direct participants to this resource.

[Children's Parliament: Children's human rights, participation & engagement \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](http://childrensparliament.org.uk)

Dignity in School Hub

[Introductory Tools – Dignity In School \(childrensparliament.org.uk\)](http://childrensparliament.org.uk)

Activity 3: Loose parts play

Time: 30 minutes

Resources required: a bag containing a selection of loose parts, sufficient loose parts for everyone to play with, the manual, large paper and pens.



Manual: 2.2, 2.5, 2.7

There are two parts to this section on loose parts play: theory, delivered as trainer-led input, and a practical play experience.

Using a bag of loose parts, pull one out and share stories of children playing with similar items. Explain there isn't a right or wrong way to use loose parts; loose parts can be small, large, natural or man-made.

Trainer input: from manual section 2.2

Following the theory, give some real-life examples from your experience. For example, share a story of a child playing with loose parts or some feedback from children and teachers about how loose parts play has changed the playground and the benefits they've seen.

Trainer input: from manual section 2.7 - Nicholson's theory of loose parts.

Exercise: practical loose parts play.

Introduce the space you will play in, resources available and invite participants to play.

Be clear about the length of the play session and ask everyone to return loose parts at the end.

Some adults may need prompts to play. Allow them time. You can try prompts such as:

- How would you have played here when you were 6 years old or 10 years old?
- Imagine being a child in this space for the first time.
- If you had no idea what these objects were for, how would you use them?
- Which loose parts are you drawn to? How many ways can you use them?

As the play session comes to an end, model the use of visual and aural signals for example, using a flag and bell.

Trainer notes

Deliver this outside if at all possible. An interesting space will require fewer loose parts.

This may be an appropriate point for a break in the session. Let participants know if refreshments are available and when and where to meet after the break.

Activity 4: Explore a space

Time: 10 minutes

Resources needed: prepared prompts on postcards.

Explain that in this part of the session we will be thinking about space to play, different ways of experiencing space and the play opportunities this offers. Often when we think about improving children's play, we think about improving the space. In this session. We will take some time to expand on what we mean by space.

Exercise: explore a space.

Prepare some postcards with the following prompts, to support participants to explore the space you are in.

- Find the best place to share a secret.
- Find the best place to daydream.
- Find the best place to perform in a band.
- Find the best place to have an adventure.
- "Walk so silently that the bottom of your feet become ears." Pauline Oliveros
- Imagine a tour of the space as a film set. Describe the famous scenes, quote rave reviews.

Invite participants to choose a postcard and use the prompts to explore the space.

Participants can respond to the prompts in any way and choose to explore individually, in pairs or small groups. Once participants have responded, they can choose another postcard.

After a few rounds, ask participants if they noticed anything new about the space as a result of their exploration. How did they feel in different areas? Draw attention to examples where people responded differently to areas or anything unexpected.

Trainer input: from manual section 2.6 – affordances.

Trainer notes

Keep the session lively by sharing some examples, such as a child walking along a wall, or refer to something that happened in the previous exercise. You might have noticed how they small children find the potential to play everywhere.

Activity 5: Significant play spaces

Time: 30 minutes

Resources needed: A3 paper, pens, drawing materials, stickers.



Manual: 2.6

Ask participants to draw a play space that is significant to them. Invite participants to share their drawings and stories about the space with the group.

Prompter questions could include:

- What makes this significant?
- What enabled the play to emerge?

At close, ask what we see about the importance of physical, internal and cultural spaces in the stories and spaces. The space is more than the physical features – it is the people, resources, atmosphere, culture and the interactions between these.

Trainer notes

Thinking about the conditions that enable play to emerge will be developed in the next exercise.

If this training session is part of a series, ask participants to keep drawings or if appropriate, the trainer can keep them between sessions,

Activity 6: Reflecting on play in your setting

Time: 30 minutes

Resources needed: worksheets sheets, manual, large paper and pens, post it notes.



Manual: 2.1, 2.6



Manual: 2.1

Trainer input: from manual section 2.6 - quality indicators.

Group exercise

Explain we are going to have a small group discussion. Break into small groups of around four participants to ensure a fruitful discussion. It may be helpful to split into groups by interest or type of setting, as appropriate.

This activity is based on the prompter question on section 2.1 of the manual. Use prepared worksheets to focus the group discussions:

Do the play experiences in your school or setting reflect the definition of play?

In what ways?

The exercise will encourage participants to reflect on the meaning of the definition of play and how it relates to play in their school or within play sessions.

As a second stage, invite participants to discuss improvements that could be made to support children's right to play. Use post-it notes to add these ideas as a layer on the worksheet.

Trainer notes

Prepare the worksheets in advance for participants to write on. As a reminder, include the definition of play on the worksheet.

This activity could take some time. give a signal when half-way through the discussion.

If this session is part of a series of training events or play improvement project, keep these worksheets to refer to later.

Activity 7: Closing inside, outside circle

Time: 10 minutes

Explain that this is the end of the module and we will have a short group exercise to close the session. Ask participants to form two circles – one on the outside and one on the inside, with participants facing each other (i.e. if you are in the inside circle, you face someone in the outside circle and vice versa.)

Invite participants to have a discussion with the person they are facing.

Provide a prompt such as:

- Will you do anything differently as a result of this training session?
- What did you enjoy most about today?
- What learning will you take away from this module?

After a few minutes, ask everyone to take two steps to their left. This will cause the circles to move in opposite directions – one clockwise and one anti-clockwise. Everyone will end up facing a new person. Give another prompt and repeat as time allows.

Closing

- Thank everyone for their participation.
- Return to the learning outcomes you introduced at the beginning of the module to check with participants if they have been achieved.
- Ensure participants know arrangements for any other modules they can participate in.
- Create an opportunity for participants to set their own personal goal or task to carry out as a result of the session.
- Plan a short evaluation exercise to check satisfaction with the training content, the training style, the venue and arrangements.
- Provide contact details as appropriate.



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