

# Book Review

## *Rethinking Play as Pedagogy*

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### Abstract

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*The book titled 'Rethinking Play as Pedagogy' is one of the edited books from the series of two books published by Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York in 2019. The series editors are Sophie Alcock, Senior Lecturer in Education, at the University of Wellington in New Zealand; and Nicola Stobbs, Senior Lecturer, Department for Children and Families, University of Worcester, UK; and the series editors are Alma Fleet and Michael Reed. The book seems very handy and the cover page is fascinating and captivating since it is the blend of different bright colours, which seems to attract the readers and making them curious and inquisitive about what is there in the book. The following are the details of the book as a reference for the readers.*

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*Rethinking Play as Pedagogy* is about play as a pedagogy. Play is a critical factor of children's development with the fact that it is a significant vehicle for the development of socio-emotional, cognitive, and language competencies

as well as for self-regulation. Despite a lot of research on the importance of play, still there is much focus on rote learning for the children. Therefore, it is important that during the early years of students, teachers,

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parents and various stakeholders should come together to make a consensus on the importance of play and recognise play as a learning tool. Keeping this objective in mind, this volume has been designed, having four interconnected sections.

The theme under Section 1 is 'Being Alongside Children'. This section is subdivided into three chapters theme, that is, Chapter 1, 'Playing with digital drawing'; Chapter 2, 'Preschool teachers being alongside young children: the development of adults' relational competence in play worlds' and Chapter 3, 'Playing in and through the musical worlds of children'. Under this section, researchers have emphasised that play is child-directed. However, there are some views that showed the importance of the presence of adults in play, either explicitly or implicitly. That means adults can also be there as co-partners in play. One of the authors argued that play as a pedagogy can be instrumental with early learning and development, which could be planned purposefully beforehand. Whereas another author provides an enhanced understanding of play pedagogy. The performance of children on known and invented songs in their musical plays constitutes a play way activity that is full of social and symbolic activities, these too, the presence of adults and their engagement with the children in such activities motivates children to practise such generative and focused activities more often. Children can

be encouraged by teachers and adults by giving freedom to explore more through such activities. Engagement motivates children to practise generative activity instead of focusing on the product. Children are encouraged by the adults or teachers by giving them freedom to explore through such activities by boosting their creativity.

Section 2 deals with the theme 'Those Who Educate'. This section is sub-divided into the following three chapters: Chapter 4, 'Observing and interpreting young children playing: reflecting on feelings'; Chapter 5, 'Growing playful pedagogies: a case study of educational change' and Chapter 6, 'The role of context within early childhood education in Ireland'. This section clarifies that what we consider and perceive about childhood varies and changes according to time and culture. Those who educate young children also bring their past experiences and value systems to support learning. Therefore, to enhance the significant growth and development of children, it is important to provide support, facilitation and appropriate space to them. The challenge is to reflect critically on the understanding and practices of play and its types. One point is also highlighted under this section about the aggressiveness in children's play and the role of educators. Tools are also suggested for teachers to observe children and build connections with them during play. The chapter titled 'Growing

Playful Pedagogies: A Case Study of Educational Change', elucidates on the early childhood teacher educators' understanding and resistance to play-based curriculum. The results showed that each teacher defined the term play differently on the basis of their individual experiences.

The theme 'Embedding families and communities' under Section 3 has three chapters: Chapter 7, 'Recognising and Responding to Family Funds of Knowledge'; Chapter 8, 'Opening the School Gates: Facilitating After-school Play in School Grounds' and Chapter 9, 'Pedagogical Documentation as 'Agora': Why it May be Viewed as a Form of Citizenship for Children, Parents and Communities'. The role of teachers or adults is one of the critical points in the process of pedagogical documentation. In the process of co-construction, where space for children and adults be it a (teacher or facilitator) is provided, the teachers should know what skills they should be equipped with to understand children while playing to become experts in their field. In the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centre for children, the space for self-reflection is provided to the teachers and for parents to share their viewpoints about their children with teachers, and the community. It certainly makes the African proverb true that for raising a child a whole community is needed. Communities are central when it comes to belonging and family, early childhood centres, are also part of this. In Australia,

the government exceeded the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child by legislating a national play policy. Where it provides a broad view of different ways of considering the families and communities in rethinking play as pedagogy.

Lastly, Section 4 showcases the theme 'Working with Systems'. This section contains the following three chapters: Chapter 10 'Spinning the kaleidoscope: a conversation around play, learning, policies and systems'; Chapter 11 'Influence of macrosystems on children's spaces: regaining the paradigm', and Chapter 12; 'Micro-policies of adult-child joint play in the context of the Finnish ECEC system'. The topics discussed in the above chapters were about how communities, educators and children for whom the systems are designed to respond to the systems and other policy initiatives with challenges, on, how policies to be designed and execute the interplay between play and learning. It also raised questions about how the role of educators and their practices are influenced by the systems. Some questions were provoked on how systems try to influence children's play by the implicit ideology of play space. It also examined how the aims of various policies turned into shaping pedagogical choices by educators in pre-school's activities. Although a case study showed that the educator who supports and recognises the importance of play does not necessarily applies it in practice. So, the selection of purposeful pedagogy in pre-schools

is not dependent solely on teachers or policies related to ECCE, but also there is a need for clear policies on ECCE with a supporting environment and helping teachers achieve desired pedagogical ambitions.

This book has many points, which are of pedagogical importance. The book talks about '*rethinking play as pedagogy*', which is certainly a worthy topic to be discussed and talked about as play is one of the central and emerging tools for learning, especially when it comes to young children. Collaboration with families, communities and self-reflective practices of parents and teachers have been focused on in the book as we all are aware of the fact that we have different backgrounds, different languages and different families' conceptualisations of play. These many differences and variation in the conceptualisation about play, playfulness, practices of it inversely affects the learning aims of children. The best part of the book is to let children explore the environment and learn things by using their own experiences, their educator's experiences and value systems in play. These can be child-initiated, educator guided with or without explicit instructions where both teacher and children become part of it and make it a better experience for themselves. The comparative examples of different settings and places are some of the worth noting points to understand the wider phenomenon of play and learning related to it. The reason is,

play is something that all children want and need in order to develop as healthy adults following their own interests, creative ideas and strategies where teachers' interventions can balance the risk associated with the well-being of children. Significantly, play is not only helpful in physical development of children but also facilitates their growth through outdoor activities and pretend play is an activity where they play various roles with actions that certainly make them physically fit. As far as play or pretend play is concerned, the activities not only add spark to their creativity but also leads to their emotional and intellectual development.

Although many authors have shared their experiences mentioned in the book but there is a lack of sharing of experiences or research studies from developing nations like India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc. Including different viewpoints of these places too can throw light on the topic more comprehensively. Play as pedagogy is something that is given too much emphasis in the book, but the solutions for its effective implementation in practice in the contemporary era still remains a question. Involving teachers or educators who makes the process, like children, have different perspectives about the ideology of the play in learning and achieving future aims a bit difficult. Also, the teachers are at a stage where changing attitudes towards certain things seems challenging, but effectively addressing

the raised issue would overpower the problems which would be in the interest and mutual benefits of both children and teachers.

Overall this book, *Rethinking Play As Pedagogy* is worth reading literature for readers as it gives different viewpoints and results of research studies done by the educators or stakeholders working in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education

or Early Childhood Development. It would help build an understanding about play and also broaden the reader's vision of the mentioned topic. This piece of literature would be fruitful for those who would like to take up the research studies in this area as well as for those who would like to implement the concept into practice, to name just a few, like educators, parents, families, etc.

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