



Play and pedagogy

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Play and pedagogy

1. What do we mean by play?
2. What do we mean by pedagogy?
3. What do we mean by effective pedagogy?
4. How do we connect play and pedagogy?
5. What is intentional teaching and how can it involve play?

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Play as a context for learning



- The EYLF (p. 9) describes play is a context for learning that:
 - allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
 - enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
 - enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
 - assists children to develop relationships and concepts
 - stimulates an sense of wellbeing

Play- what is it?

- There are many ways to define and/or describe play: e.g. types of play (function, physical, object play, rough-and-tumble play, pretend play, parallel play, social play, co-operative play etc); where play occurs (indoor play, outdoor play); the materials used in play (digital play, literacy play, numeracy play, etc.)
- There are also characteristics to define play: self-chosen and self-directed; intrinsically motivated; guided by mental rules that leave room for creativity; imaginative (Gray 2017, p. 220).
- Free play, structured play, guided play...
- Romantic views of play as always positive, inclusive, productive... *but is this always so?*

The playing-learning child

- Blurring the lines – between learning and play...
- Pramling-Samuelsson and Asplund Carlsson (2008) described the playing-learning child –
 - This is a child who does not separate between play and learning, and instead relates to the world around him or her in a playful manner. They create ideas, fantasize and talk about reality simultaneously. For example, when a teacher asks a child to draw a tree they studied during an excursion to the forest, the child may challenge the teacher by adding Winnie-the-Pooh to the drawing of the tree.
- This is an important reminder that, as adults, we might separate play and learning, but children may not make the same distinctions.
- It also reminds us of the importance of considering situations from children's perspectives, and to consider learning in terms of the connections and meanings created by the children – that is, how they make sense of the world around them.

Play as disposition

- Consider play as a 'habit of mind' – a way of approaching experiences in a playful way
- This means that almost any activity could be considered play, depending on how those involved approach it
- Lillian Katz (many years ago, even decades ago) – people learn dispositions from being around those who demonstrate them...
- *What does this mean for educators?*

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Pedagogy

- The EYLF definition of pedagogy (p. 11):

Early childhood educators' professional practice, *especially* those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning.

- Note '*especially*' not '*only*'.
- Emphasises the importance of making connections and promoting teaching and learning within the context of relationships.
- Pedagogies are shaped by what we know, as well as what we don't know, our beliefs, experiences and expectations. They are also shaped by theories, policies and controversies.

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Effective pedagogy

- Will be different in different contexts and for different children, families, educators and communities.
- Exists within relationships
- Requires educators to :
 - know, understand and use a wide repertoire of teaching and learning practices
 - plan, support and interact with children in multiple ways
 - be sensitive to the learning task, its content, and children's own expertise and development
 - recognise their own expertise and/or challenges
 - achieve balance between child- and adult-initiated experiences
 - achieve balance between what they do and the provisions they make for learning and development.
 - (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2020)

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Play is becoming extinct

Is your child ready for big school?

play or direct instruction in early years?

○ Educators face many pressures to limit play. These can include:

What we're beginning to understand about preschool kids and their digital devices

- Responding to increased academic demands (schoolification)
- Promoting children's safety in play, while also encouraging risk-taking
- Conceptualising the role of play

Young children only stand to benefit from explicit instruction

Let the children play: 4 reasons why play is vital during the coronavirus

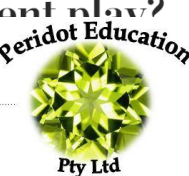
April 12, 2020 9:46pm AEST

Let them play! Kids need freedom from play restrictions to develop

May 24, 2019 6:00am AEST

What's behind this 5-year-old's violent play?

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Play-based pedagogies

- The EYLF (p. 15):

Early childhood educators take on many roles in play with children and use a range of strategies to support learning.

They engage in sustained shared conversations with children to extend their thinking. They provide a balance between child-led, child-initiated and educator-supported learning.

They create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct ...

They actively support the inclusion of all children in play, help children to recognise when play is unfair and offer constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community.

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Play-based pedagogies

- Position play as a purposeful activity
 - Play is not a 'fill-in' activity
- Are based on planning for children's play, as well as the development and enhancement of that play (adults participate, complicate and/or provoke play)
 - Planned and spontaneous opportunities for play
- Occur in well-resourced environments that support play and extend play
 - Creating environments that support play (physical, social, and emotional)
- Are based on rich interactions between and among children and adults
 - Adults do more than set up the environment

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Integrated pedagogical approaches



- Edwards and Cutter-Mackenzie (2013) describe three forms of play:
 - Open-ended play – child-guided play that encourages children to explore an idea or concept
 - Modelled play – adult illustrates or explains a concept before encouraging children to use resources to find out about that concept
 - Purposefully-framed play – educators provide a range of resources to support children's developing conceptual understandings and engage with children in a range of ways to support that conceptual development
- Each of these is important and can occur during a typical day – often in combination

The importance of balance...

- Opportunities for child-initiated and directed play, but also important for educators to participate in children's play in ways that stretch and extend the play – for educators to adopt intentional (not necessarily directive) strategies to support and extend children's play AND for children to feel this balance.



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Intentional interactions

- Intentional teaching vs 'unintentional' teaching?
- As educators we have intentions in all that we do – but we are aware that these can change depending on the children and what is happening around them.
- Our intentions are based on knowing the children involved, as well as knowing the directions their interests, understandings and challenges might lead. As educators, we intentionally plan for multiple possibilities.
- Intentional interactions seek to build complexity in play - complexity in
- Aline-Wendy Dunlop (2017) describes this as **following ahead** of children - following what children are doing, but always planning ahead about where they could go next – as well as allowing for spontaneous spin-offs and responding appropriately to these - having an idea of the general direction things might go, but being willing to go where children take us...

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Thinking about play and pedagogy

- Challenges us to think and re-think about how we engage with children's play, how we value children's play and how we position opportunities for learning and teaching with play
- Highlights the complexity and diversity of play – rather than the universality of play
- Recognises that support for play-based pedagogies does not mean promoting chaos or a 'free for all' approach
- Positions play-based pedagogy as intentional – 'following ahead'
- Reminds us respect children's perspectives and acknowledge the potential diversity and richness of play
- Acknowledges the interactive roles of adults and other children in play, as they engage in co-construction of knowledge, promote, challenge and support play that is socially and conceptually complex
- Challenges romantic notions of play as always positive and desirable
- Generates opportunities for educators to reflect on and critique pedagogies of play

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Some key questions:

- What do we each regard as play?
- How do we know what children regard as play?
- How do we express the disposition of playfulness?
- How are our pedagogies shaped by what we know, as well as what we don't know, our beliefs, experiences and expectations? How are they shaped by theories, policies and controversies?
- How do we describe the multiple roles we enact as we engage with children, their play and pedagogy?
- Do we regard all play as valuable?
- What measures do we take to achieve balance in both pedagogy and play?
- How do we 'follow ahead'?
- How do we communicate the complexity and richness of play with others?

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