The challenge of play for early childhood educators

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Abstract

Play has a long history as an integral element of early childhood curriculum and pedagogy. There is consensus that play is both a vehicle for learning and a forum in which children can demonstrate their learning and development (Broadhead, 2006; et al., 2002; Pramling-Samuelsson and Johansson, 2006; Wood, 2008). Traditional beliefs reiterate the value and positive nature of play, particularly the opportunities within play for children to exercise freedom, independence, choice and autonomy (Bennett et al., 1997). While the benefits of play for children have been widely promoted, much less attention has been directed towards pedagogics of play and the role of educators within these. Indeed, traditional conceptualisations of play promote the role of educators as observers or facilitators of play, reflecting a focus on play as a child-directed, rather than teacher-directed, activity (Bennett et al., 1997).

Fingerprint

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