Play and Learning in Early Childhood Settings

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

Volume 1

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Early childhood education in many countries has been built upon a strong tradition of a materially rich and active play-based pedagogy and environment. Yet what has become visible within the profession, is essentially a Western view of childhood preschool education and school education.

It is timely that a series of books be published which present a broader view of early childhood education. This series, seeks to provide an international perspective on early childhood education. In particular, the books published in this series will:

- Examine how learning is organized across a range of cultures, particularly Indigenous communities
- Make visible a range of ways in which early childhood pedagogy is framed and enacted across countries, including the majority poor countries
- Critique how particular forms of knowledge are constructed in curriculum within and across countries
- Explore policy imperatives which shape and have shaped how early childhood education is enacted across countries
- Examine how early childhood education is researched locally and globally
- Examine the theoretical informants driving pedagogy and practice, and seek to find alternative perspectives from those that dominate many Western heritage countries
- Critique assessment practices and consider a broader set of ways of measuring children's learning
- Examine concept formation from within the context of country-specific pedagogy and learning outcomes

The series will cover theoretical works, evidence-based pedagogical research, and international research studies. The series will also cover a broad range of countries, including poor majority countries. Classical areas of interest, such as play, the images of childhood, and family studies will also be examined. However the focus will be critical and international (not Western-centric).

Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson · Marilyn Flear
Editors

Play and Learning in Early Childhood Settings

International Perspectives

Springer

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Foreword

This book represents the outcome of the joint activities of a group of scholars who were concerned about the lack of international research in play for children from birth to 3 years. The authors are members of the Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire (OMEP). For further information, see <http://www.omep-ong.net/>.

The idea of carrying out a research project internationally was born at the OMEP's World Congress in Melbourne, Australia 2004. All member countries were invited and 10 countries decided to participate, of which three have withdrawn during the process. The reason for this might be that in these countries only one person was working with the project, while other seven countries have been working in a team of two or more persons. The countries that have carried out research and contributed to this book with a chapter each are Australia, Chile, China, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden and USA (Wisconsin). For more information about the participating countries and their corresponding addresses, see Appendix I.

This book project started in Melbourne with a discussion about what is general in early childhood education globally, and what is culturally specific. The discussion was inspired by one of the keynote speakers, Nazhat Shameem (2004), judge in the supreme court in Fiji, when she said: "If we all think we are so different and specific in each culture, the role of human rights has no value anymore."

We formulated three questions:

- What is the meaning of play and learning, for 0 to 3?
- How do teachers work to support this?
- What are the families' views of play?

We decided to use Barbara Rogoff's socio-cultural theory as a framework for our interpretations. We used her three foci of analysis: intrapersonal, interpersonal and cultural/institutional.

We also agreed on making an empirical study including at least five children, aged from birth to three, from five different early childhood education settings, typical for each country. Some countries have collected data from more children. Each child is observed by video recordings during one whole day, and the child's teacher and parents are interviewed. The empirical data should be seen as case studies,

and can never represent each country on a more general level. However, we are convinced that different national ethos become visible in these few case studies.

Children aged from birth to three as a target group has received very limited attention in research all over the world. This age group, is increasingly becoming part of the early childhood education system in many countries, and from what we know from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluation (OECD, 2001), the staff taking care of the children in this age group seem to be those with the lowest education. What does that mean for young children's experiences in everyday life in early childhood education? We hope you as a reader of this book will enjoy reading this book as much as we who have in worked with the studies documented in the forthcoming chapters.

Göteborg
Melbourne

Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson
Marilyn Fleer

Contents

1 A Cultural-Historical Perspective on Play: Play as a Leading Activity Across Cultural Communities	1
Marilyn Fleer	
2 Play and Learning in Aotearoa New Zealand Early Childhood Education	19
Jayne White, Fiona Ellis, Amiria O'Malley, Jean Rockel, Sue Stover and Meripa Toso	
3 Play and Learning in Australia	51
Marilyn Fleer, Holli A. Tonyan, Ana Cristina Mantilla, and Corine M. Patricia Rivalland	
4 Play and Learning in Chile	81
Verónica Aedo, Leonor Cerda, Patricia Dintrans, Mirna Pizarro, Silvia Redón and Verónica Romo	
5 “Eduplay”: Beliefs and Practices Related to Play and Learning in Chinese Kindergartens	97
Nirmala Rao and Hui Li	
6 The Meaning of Play and Learning for 0–3-Year-Old Children in Japan	117
Mari Mori, Akiko Nezu, Chikage Samizo, Tomomi Naito, and Mamiko Ishizuka	
7 Play and Learning in Swedish Early Childhood Education	135
Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson and Sonja Sheridan	
8 Play and Learning in Wisconsin	155
Lenore Wineberg and Louis Chicquette	

9 Commonalities and Distinctions Across Countries 173
Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson and Marilyn Fleeer

Name Index 191

Subject Index 195

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