

Book Review

Play, learning and the early childhood curriculum **by Elizabeth Wood**

Barbara Scanlan | *New Zealand Tertiary College*

Elizabeth Wood is a professor at the University of Sheffield and teaches postgraduate programs as well as courses for early childhood practitioners.

Wood advocates for critical engagement with the notion of play and supports the validation of play in national curriculum frameworks. The author defines play, what play looks like and what purpose it serves. A wide range of contemporary sociocultural and post-structural theories underpin the author's discussion on play and how play creates opportunities for exercising and affirming group and individual agency.

The book comprises of eight succinct chapters, elaborating on understanding the complexities of and challenges to play, understanding children's learning, play in national policies, play and the curriculum, play and pedagogy, play and learning in outdoor environments, assessing children's learning in play and developing play. Offering case studies, the author encourages the reader to reflect on policies that inform how play is viewed, working with parents, social and cultural influences on and understandings of play, and play for children with additional educational needs. The detailed exploration of play encourages the reader to consider how play can be integrated into the curriculum in various contexts.

Wood utilises international contexts to explore and critically reflect on the notion of play, considering the construction of play in educational policy. The author presents the role of play in children's learning and development and challenges the discourse of free choice and free play in early childhood education, establishing play as a site of children's agency, self-regulation and control as well as an opportunity to explore their worlds.

This book is suited to students in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and providers of initial teacher education programs.

Reference

Wood, E. (2013). *Play, learning and the early childhood curriculum* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California, USA: Sage Publication Inc.