

# Education in the North



UNIVERSITY  
OF ABERDEEN

## BOOK REVIEW

### Introduction to Play

Jane Waters-Davies

London: Sage Publication Ltd (2022) 272pp., paperback £21.27

ISBN 978-1-5297-43562

Lesley Wallace, [l.wallace.22@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:l.wallace.22@abdn.ac.uk)

University of Aberdeen, Scotland

DOI Number: <https://doi.org/10.26203/w5n3-s946>

Copyright: © 2023 Wallace

To cite this book review: Wallace, L., (2023). Introduction to Play. *Education in the North*, 29(2) pp.125-126.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Introduction to Play

Jane Waters-Davies

London: Sage Publication Ltd (2022) 272pp., paperback £21.27

ISBN 978-1-5297-43562

Lesley Wallace, [l.wallace.22@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:l.wallace.22@abdn.ac.uk)

University of Aberdeen, Scotland

In the introduction, by Jane Waters-Davies, she describes the book as 'unashamedly introductory in nature'. Across 18 chapters, written by a wide range of contributors, the book considers what play is, why it is important and where it happens in relation to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the United Kingdom. The book is primarily aimed at students and has a consistent format across the chapters which gives it a textbook feel. Each chapter starts by clearly setting out a helpful overview of the learning objectives. This is followed by a variety of discursive and descriptive texts which are presented using research, theories, pedagogies and case studies. These case studies help bring the ideas and concepts within the book to life. There are also helpful reflection point boxes which stimulate the reader to consider the information further within their own practice. Then each chapter concludes with a chapter summary, signposts to further reading and further learning opportunities and also references.

The initial chapters of the book are grouped under 'Part 1 What is Play?'. Acknowledging that one single definition of play is not possible or helpful these chapters explore different definitions encouraging the reader to consider play across different contexts including play as a child's right, play as a recognised way of learning and play as policy. These chapters invite the reader to reflect on the complexities of defining play and the implications this has for understanding children's learning through play in educational establishments. The next chapters are grouped as 'Part 2 Why is play important?'. Throughout these chapters the reader is encouraged to consider the interconnected relationship play has with child development including health and well-being, play and creativity, play and physical and cognitive development and play and communication. These chapters clearly outline the skills, qualities and attributes that children acquire through play.

The next section of chapters are grouped under the heading 'Part 3 Where does play happen?'. Various themes are considered in these chapters including the influence of the physical play space, play in the digital world and intergenerational play. Through discussion an exemplar model and examples of planning are offered which support current debates surrounding the tensions that can arise when

planning for play while also implementing and assessing a statutory curriculum. The final chapters look outwardly and provide information regarding International perspectives of play. Key themes like the role of the adult in children's play are present across the book, continually supporting the reader to reflect on their own practice, values and understanding of play. Although the book is divided into sections many of the chapters reference each other which helps build a wider understanding of the complexities of play and its role in education.

This book is indeed a useful introduction to play which places the needs of children at its heart, viewing them as competent learners with a right to play. With useful examples and models, references to child development, neuroscience and the learning environment it highlights both the joys and constraints that surround play and its place in the role of education. This book would be extremely useful to those studying or currently working in the field of ECEC (including primary schools) as it promotes critical reflection of the policies and practice of play using a context of real world examples.