Play-based learning and intentional teaching: forever different?

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This presentation is dedicated to the Children Services staff and teachers of the City of Casey for their willingness to always play with new ideas.
INTRODUCTION
Play is an enduring big idea. The medium through which children learn (Stephen, 2010, p. 19)

DEFINING A ‘PROBLEM’
Intractable: Not easily managed, controlled or solved
(Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2016)
“Play is not to be identified with anything which the child externally does. It rather designates his mental attitude in its entirety and in its unity. It is the free play, the interplay, of all the child’s powers, thoughts and physical movements, in embodying in a satisfying form, his [her] own images and interests. Negatively, it is freedom from economic pressure – the necessities of getting a living and supporting others – and from the fixed responsibilities attaching to the special callings of the adult. Positively, it means that the supreme end of the child is fullness of growth – fullness of realisation of his [her] budding powers, a realisation which continually carries him [her] on from one plane to another” (Dewey, 1969, p. 118)
“Problems are never gratuitous or invented. They grow out of conflicting elements in a genuine problem – a problem which is genuine just because the elements, taken as they stand, are conflicting. A significant problem involves conditions that for the moment contradict each other” (Dewey, 1969, p. 3)
USA

Europe

South Africa

Asia


PLAY AND TEACHING IN PRACTICE
Play-based learning
A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people objects and representations (DEEWR, 2009, p. 6).

Intentional teaching
Involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and action. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have ‘always’ been done that way (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5)
1. Fundamentally commit to improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
2. Political situation of the time (Rudd Government)
3. Various theoretical flavours about children’s play and learning circulating the nation
4. Address and identify Learning Outcomes for over 1.5 million children across 8 million square kilometres of land-based and cultural diversity
6. Be deployed across multiple early childhood education and care settings

ENGAGING THE PROBLEM
"Interesting phenomena occur when two or more rhythmic patterns are combined, and these phenomena illustrate very aptly the enrichment of information that occurs when one description is combined with another."

Gregory Bateson
Intentional teaching


Conceptual play

Pedagogical activity

Sustained-shared thinking

**Pedagogical play:** the use of play in early childhood education by teachers to foster and support children’s learning (Wood and Attfield, 2005; Hatch, 2010; Wallerstedt and Pramling, 2012)
A model of integrated pedagogical approaches (Wood, 2010)

The three play-types (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011)

1. Open-ended play:
   Experience and exploration

2. Modelled play:
   Illustration, explanation and demonstration

3. Purposefully framed play:
   Discussion, open-ended questions, observations, resources, connection to existing knowledge

Three approaches (Trawick-Smith, 2010)
1. Trust in play approach
2. Facilitate play approach
3. Enhance learning outcomes through play approach
Sample sustainability topics
1. Animal habitat: such as pond life and macro-invertebrates
2. Habitat destruction: such as water pollution and species extinction
3. Plants: such as growing food and composting food

Combinations of play-types
a) open-ended, modelled, purposefully-framed
b) open-ended, purposefully-framed, modelled
c) Modelled, open-ended, purposefully-framed
d) Purposefully-framed, open-ended modelled
e) Purposefully-framed, modelled, open-ended
Two principles for using the three play-types

1. All play-types are of equal pedagogical value

2. Play-types can be used in multiple combinations to support learning (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011)
Open-ended play
Promotes children’s exploration of a new concept

Modelled play
Illustrates a concept in action by teachers with children

Purposefully-framed play
Co-develops understandings of a concept between teachers and children drawing on a range of information resources

Principle 1:
All play-types are of equal pedagogical value

Principle 2:
Play-types can be used in multiple combinations

The Pedagogical Play-framework (Edwards, Cutter-Mackenzie, Moore and Boyd, in press)
THEORY
“The creative activity of the imagination depends directly on the richness and variety of a person’s previous experience because this experience provides the material from which the products of fantasy are constructed. The richer a person’s experience, the richer is the material his imagination has access to. This is why a child has a less rich imagination than an adult because his experience has not been as rich” (Vygotsky, 2004, pp. 14–15).
ZPD

Capacity within and outside of play

Achievement with adult support

"What a child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow." - Lev Vygotsky

- Anxiety zone: Can’t do now
- Learning zone: Can do with help
- Comfort zone: Can do now
Everyday concept

Scientific concept

Mature concept

Explanatory power

(Vygotsky, 1987; Gelman & Kalish, 2006)
CONCLUSION