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Book Review: Playing practices in school-age childcare by Eva Kane

Gillian Vickers
gillianvickers44@gmail.com

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Book review

Playing practices in school-age childcare: an action research project in Sweden and England

Eva Kane

Stockholm University, 2015

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Review by Gillian Vickers, Change Management Advisor, Shellharbour City Council, Australia

The question of how staff talk about and facilitate play within school age childcare (out of school hours care) can vary between countries due to differences in the various theoretical perspectives staff have on playwork ethos. *Playing practices in school-age childcare* is an action research project in which the researcher, Eva Kane, explores play facilitation in school-age childcare (out of school hours care) settings in both Sweden and England. The main aim of the research was to 'explore play facilitation together with staff in school-age childcare settings' (p.16) and Kane identified that play practices could be constrained if the play practices are 'intertwined' with the school play settings and referred to the interconnected as 'play practice architectures' (p. 17).

Following a brief introduction, Kane's dissertation is divided into two parts, consisting of a collection of chapters that explore play facilitation in school-age childcare. Part one is organised into eight chapters, beginning with chapter 2 that describes the terminology, practice traditions and national context associated with school-age childcare in England (out of school clubs with a playwork ethos) and Sweden (leisure-time centres). Chapter 3 focusses on various perspectives of play, whilst chapter 4 explores the physical localities of where play is facilitated in Sweden and England. Chapter 5 illustrates the theoretical frame of reference, with particular reference to practice architecture theory, action-research and socially shared knowledge. Chapter 6 describes the methodology around action-based research as a practice changing method and the analysis of qualitative data, whilst chapter 7 provides a summary of three articles that the dissertation was based on. The final chapter (chapter 8) summarises the research and discusses possible limitations and future recommendations.

In chapter 2, Kane provides an introduction to the practice traditions of Sweden and England school-age childcare. The national context of school-age childcare practices are compared and Kane's research highlights the differences in regards to each countries national frameworks, management models, economic arrangements and qualifications of staff. Kane draws attention to the fact that both countries have differences with regards to practice traditions. The research identified that the one thing the two countries do have in common is the environments in which they operate, as both out of school hours care services predominantly operate within primary school settings. Australian out of school hours care services share similar constraints to that of their Sweden and England counterparts. In Australia, educators are also required to be flexible and creative with the play spaces or play practice architectures they are providing within the school settings.

In chapter 3, the author explores the diverse range of research perspectives on play and compares their play theories and philosophies. Kane states that as she has identified that the practice traditions are different between Sweden and England that 'how play is talked about may also be different' (p.33). Australian out of school hours care settings would share a similar diverse range of views and perceptions of play. Play is subjective and one educator's views on what playing looks like can differ from another educator's view. Kane then extends on the perspective of play and examines previous research on practice and play in school-age childcare (chapter 4), and also compares researchers' theories and perspectives on practices around facilitating play.

Although Kane's research highlights that there was limited research into school-age childcare and the role of educators as play facilitators, it provides a well-balanced overview of theories on play facilitation and play practice architectures. Her research highlights the need for educators to establish a solid theoretical basis that underpin their ideas on how to facilitate play and the purpose or function of play in school-age childcare settings. This book would be a useful piece of literature for out of school hours care practitioners to use to reflect upon their own 'play practice architectures'. This publication will challenge out of school hours care practitioners to reflect and discuss their perspective on play and to identify their play facilitation and play practice architectures. It will also support out of school hours care educators to reflect on their play practices and philosophies so they can convey their play ethos with their children, families and community.