

Rhetorics of Play in Kindergarten Programs in an Era of Accountability

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Abstract

In this paper we conduct a deductive analysis, using Sutton-Smith's "rhetorics of play," of the published kindergarten programs that have guided Ontario kindergarten teaching since 1944. Our analysis is used to gain an understanding of how we in Ontario have arrived at a point where play-based learning has been taken up by developers of the provincial kindergarten program and approved as a pedagogical focus by politicians. The predominant discourses appear to have changed from a romantic view of play as a natural, child-centered activity, to a discourse of play as progress, with an emphasis on the developmental benefits of play and learning outcomes of play. We believe that the use of the rhetoric of play as progress has been key to the continued prominence of play in Ontario kindergarten programs. It represents ideologies of schooling to which policy-makers seem to be attuned in this era of accountability.

Keywords: play, kindergarten curriculum, rhetorics of play, discourses of play

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Introduction

In the Canadian province of Ontario where we live and work, the current full-day kindergarten program, as envisioned by policy developers, is emphatically play-based. It is based on the principle that “play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p.13). As former primary teachers, we are excited about this new pedagogical emphasis—it is a return to the approach that we had embraced in our teaching since the 1980’s when pedagogical discourses assumed play to be integral to children’s learning in kindergarten. We are finding that our enthusiasm is not matched in some cases by educators in contemporary kindergarten classrooms, or by some parents of kindergarten children across the province, however.

One author is an urban Ontario school district’s vice-principal in a K-8 school and former early childhood consultant, who was seconded by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) to develop and support the implementation of the new full-day kindergarten program. She has met a number of kindergarten teachers across the province who says that they feel apprehensive about taking up a play-based pedagogical approach. In her consultative work, she has found that teachers who expressed uncertainty about implementing play-based approaches have defaulted to using didactic methods that do not recognize the complex, differentiated, open-ended, child-centered nature of play, including assembling pre-made standardized crafts or completing fill-in-the-blank literacy-related activities during periods of the day designated as play center times. Other teachers set out materials and then stand back and watch as children play with the materials. Still others use play as a classroom management technique (e.g., as a reward for the completion of work). It appears that, in their confusion over how to implement play-based learning, teachers are working from philosophies of play at both ends of the continuum, known as the *Model of Integrated Curriculum and Pedagogical Approaches* (Wood, 2013). Some teachers’ practices reflect perspectives at the “work/non-play” end of the continuum, as they systematically structure activities. Other teachers’ practices reflect perspectives at the “free play” end of the continuum, as they remove themselves almost completely from children’s play. It appears that the new play-based kindergarten program is being implemented within an environment of uncertainty about play-based learning amongst teachers.

This uncertainty extends to broader society, as discovered by the other author, a university professor who is involved in a research study examining young children’s oral language and writing in play-based kindergarten and grade one program. Some parents of grade one children appear to associate play with recreational activity and not with learning and have been uncomfortable about consenting to their children’s participation in her research project. Parental reluctance to embrace play-based learning is in evidence even in the messages sent by a sign on the lawn of an elite private school that one author noticed the other day, as well. This sign advertised play-free kindergarten; a contrast to the play-based kindergartens in public schools that follow the mandated play-based provincial program.

It appears that our province’s move toward play-based kindergarten is going against the grain of broader societal views of kindergarten pedagogies in many parts of the world. Despite the extensive research showing how children’s learning is supported through play (e.g., Rogers & Evans, 2008; Shipley, 2013), in many jurisdictions, priority is being given to kindergarten programs that take up the academic goals and didactic methods associated with formal schooling from grades one through twelve. In the USA, Hemphill (2006), for example, reports that “playtime

in kindergarten [is] giving way to worksheets, math drills and fill-in-the-bubble standardized tests” (p. B8). Further evidence is found in Russell’s (2011) analysis of three sources of public discourse (newspapers, state policy and organized professional activities in the USA) showing a widespread view of kindergarten as a site for building the foundations of children’s academic achievement. A review of the *Early Years Foundation Stage* document guiding kindergarten curriculum in the United Kingdom (Department for Education and Skills, 2013), reveals few references to play as a recommended pedagogical approach (Moyle, 2015). Accountability for achieving measureable outcomes is uppermost in the minds of policymakers in many jurisdictions around the world, as outlined in a number of academic publications, for example Anning (2015) in the United Kingdom; Bassok and Rorem (2014) in the USA; and Freeman (2015) in Australia.

We hope that Ontario policy makers will position themselves as potential leaders in working with kindergarten teachers to develop more effective play-based pedagogies, rather than as outliers who are vulnerable to pressures to adopt dominant, accountability-oriented perspectives on kindergarten pedagogies. Toward that end, in this paper we propose a set of considerations that might be taken up by policy makers and curriculum/program developers in order to resist “reductionist policy discourses” (Wood, 2014, p. 155). These considerations arise from a deductive analysis of Ontario kindergarten documents using Sutton-Smith’s (1997) rhetorics of play. We offer these considerations to educators, administrators, and policy-makers who may encounter confusion about and resistance to the implementation of the Ontario play-based kindergarten program, and to those in other jurisdictions who may be seeking ways to bring play into kindergarten programs.

With the assumption that within any text, “each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293), we use an analysis of the published kindergarten programs that have guided Ontario kindergarten teaching since 1944 to gain an understanding of how we in Ontario have arrived at this point where play-based learning has been taken up by developers of the provincial kindergarten program and approved as a pedagogical focus by politicians. We believe that the ways in which the word, *play*, are used in the program documents across decades provide a sense of cultural values and understandings of early childhood, of the role of kindergarten and of relationships between young children and teachers in kindergarten contexts, that have underpinned kindergarten program development. In our view, Sutton Smith’s (1997) rhetorics of play encompass the range of theoretical perspectives that we have found to be influential to the development of kindergarten programs in Ontario. These include Romantic views stemming from the Renaissance period, child development theories from the 19th and early 20th century, and sociocultural theories from the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Bergen, 2014). Of course, words printed in kindergarten program documents can never tell the whole story about such values and cultural meanings and so we also provide contextual information about some of the political and economic initiatives and events related to kindergartens that were undertaken while the kindergarten programs were being developed.

Rhetorics of Play

In response to what he deems are “immense problems in conceptualizing” play (p. 8), Sutton-Smith (1997) proposes seven rhetorics of play that help to understand cultural constructions of play (e.g., what can be expected of play and how it manifests itself). He defines rhetorics as “persuasive discourse[s]” or “implicit narrative[s]” (p. 8), that underlie various play theories. Each rhetoric represents cultural perspectives that have been used to influence interpretations and understandings of experience. Sutton-Smith (1997) argues that the existence of such far-ranging

and often contradictory perspectives on play has led to enduring ambiguities in how play is defined and valued within various social contexts.

We found that these three rhetorics of play have been more influential in the development of Ontario kindergartens than the others: (a) The rhetoric of play as progress; (b) The rhetoric of the self and; (c) the rhetoric of identity.

The Rhetoric of Play as Progress

The rhetoric of play as progress presents a view of play as a major source of children's learning. We argue that the rhetoric of play as progress is a dominant perspective, as it is one of the three themes within 101 articles that were written on the topic of play in articles published in *Young Children* from 1973 to 2002 (Kuschner, 2007). It is also the perspective taken up in research studies deemed to be authoritative and rigorous on the topic of play (Roskos & Christie, 2001). In our kindergarten program analysis, we take the view that the *rhetoric of play* as progress stretches from the center of Wood's (2013, p. 71) continuum (*structured play*), which takes up more of a socio-cultural perspective, to the end that she labels as *work/non-play*, which takes up more of a psychological/developmental perspective. Proponents of the rhetoric of play as progress define play as a social practice "that is influenced by wider social, historical and cultural factors, so that understanding what play is and learning how to play are culturally and contextually situated processes" (Wood, 2013, p. 8). They are most likely to position themselves in the middle of the continuum, as they see a role for adults in children's play-based learning and expect that kindergarten teachers would engage in purposeful and intentional observation, interpretation and analysis to inform their creation of learning environments for children (Hedges & Cullen, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Proponents of the rhetoric of play as progress who situate themselves toward the work/non-play end of the continuum value the developmental contributions of play, seeing kindergarten as preparation for later years in school. They advise that teachers intervene early, often and effectively to capitalize on the learning and developmental potential of play (Mustard, 2006; National Research Council, 2001). This latter view has been characterized by Wood (2014) as a technicist view of play where "the forms of learning that are privileged reflect developmental levels and learning goals" (p. 152).

The Rhetoric of the Self

Proponents of the rhetoric of the self present a psychological view of play as a natural activity from which children derive personal satisfaction and enjoyment. Stemming from Rousseau's (1762) observations of children choosing play over other activities when allowed to pursue their interests, this rhetoric describes what Wood (2014) identifies as a Romantic view of play as child-initiated activity that is a natural and normal part of childhood. Emphasizing children's freedom to explore, create and discover, and to engage with the natural world, proponents of the rhetoric of the self (Elkind, 2007; Froebel, 1887) view the kindergarten teacher's role as that of an observer of children's thinking processes and understandings as children engage in play (Piaget, 1945). The notion of naturalness of play has been critiqued by critical and postmodernist theorists (e.g., Gaskins, 2014; Brown & Suto, 2014) who provide cross-cultural evidence that there are multiple roles of play in children's lives, influenced by economic and cultural practices. Taking up a cultural-historical perspective, Van Oers (2014) further argues that

the notion of free play is illusory, as there are only “degrees of freedom” within the parameters defined by cultural expectations of play (p. 62).

Rhetoric of Identity

Sociocultural theories underpin the *rhetoric of identity*, which focuses on children’s positioning within groups and their identities as members of these groups. Play is viewed as a form of “human engagement that provides participants with solidarity, identity, and pleasure (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 106). Children’s identities within play groups are shaped by some social factors, including how children are perceived or positioned by peers and adults in various play contexts, and children’s perceptions of self while engaged in play. These identities are bounded by the cultural expectations and power relationships within the children’s communities (Taylor, 2013).

Short Descriptions of the Other Four Rhetorics

We present short descriptions of the other four rhetorics of play that either were absent in our analysis of kindergarten program documents or minimally present. The language of the *rhetoric of play as imaginary* was evident to a very small degree in the documents but did not stand out as did the three previously-described rhetorics of play. The *rhetoric of play as fate*, in which it is assumed that humans have little control over their lives, was absent, as was the *rhetoric of play as power*, which highlights competitiveness and control over others in contests and competitive sports. The rhetoric of *play as frivolous*, arises from the roles of tricksters and fools in folklore and literature, as they show alternative ways of viewing the social order and indeed, sometimes turned the social order topsy-turvy, using humour and playful activities. This view of play is voiced by critical theorists who challenge tacit assumptions about play (e.g., Gaskins, 2014; Gerlach et al., 2014).

Analysis of Kindergarten Program Documents

Data sources are four kindergarten programs that were created by the Ontario Ministry of Education between 1944 and 2010/2011. We used text analysis methods (Goldman & Wiley, 2011), using each sentence within each document as the unit of analysis. We first identified all instances where the word, *play*, was used, although, we did not include the use of the word to describe the role that something plays in learning, nor the use of the word in compound words such as a *playground*. We then tallied frequencies of sentences using the word *play*, working with the assumption that greater numbers of references to play indicate the importance and valuing of play in kindergarten programs. Finally, we conducted a deductive analysis of each sentence, determining whether the underlying assumptions in the reference to play appeared to:

1. describe a learning outcome related to content area concepts or skills (rhetoric of play as progress)
2. refer to children’s enjoyment, personal satisfaction or motivation—including to create, discover or imagine (rhetoric of the self)
3. describe the construction of identities and relationships within particular social groups (rhetoric of identity)

We further analyzed the phrases and sentences containing the word, *play*, which had been coded as representing the rhetoric of play as progress in terms of Wood's (2013) continuum (e.g., structured play at one end and technicist view at the other end.) Phrases coded as structured play appeared to have the intent of "engag[ing] children in playful ways with curriculum content [where] there may be some elements of imagination and open-endedness" (p. 72). Phrases coded as having more of a technicist view of play appeared to have more of a developmental/learning-outcome focus (Wood, 2014, p. 152).

We recognize that counting frequencies of the use of the word, play, in documents presents only a starting point for further investigations of the ways in which program developers position play in kindergarten classrooms. Accordingly, in the following section, we contextualize the views of play within each of the kindergarten program documents by providing a brief description of kindergarten-related initiatives and activities. We then present our analysis of the rhetorics of play that seem to underpin objectives, goals, and statements that refer to play within the documents.

Kindergarten Programs in Ontario: 1944-Present Ontario Context

Ontario has a linguistically and culturally diverse population of 12 million. Its huge geographically diverse land mass, encompasses northern First Nations communities with populations of a few hundred people that are accessible only by plane or winter roads, agricultural- and mining-based communities of a few thousand people, as well as suburban and southern urban areas with millions of residents on or near the Great Lakes. The Ontario Ministry of Education creates its education policies and curricula, having full jurisdiction over education, from pre-school to postsecondary education, as do all of Canada's ten provinces and three territories. Junior kindergartens for 4-5 year-old children and senior kindergartens for 5-6 year-old children are found in public schools (including publicly-funded Catholic schools) and private schools. Full-day kindergarten program, fully implemented in the 2014-2015 school year, has mandated that a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator (ECE) work together in every kindergarten classroom. The ECE's expertise in child development and play-based approaches complements the pedagogical and assessment expertise of the kindergarten teacher (OME, 2012). Although there are no province-wide achievement assessments at the kindergarten level, assessments of literacy and mathematics for students in grades 3 and 6 influence policy- and curriculum/program development in terms of preparing children for large-scale assessments.

Play in Kindergarten Programs 1944-1998

The first private public kindergarten for five-year old children was opened in the southern Ontario city of Toronto in 1883 (Corbett, 1989). Public junior and senior kindergartens were established in 1943-44. By 1995, almost 100 percent of children in this age group were enrolled in kindergarten programs (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), 2001). Public kindergarten has never been mandatory for children of any age, as specified in the Ontario Education Act (OME, 1843). As an optional program, kindergarten activities planned by teachers from 1943 to this day are not regulated by curriculum documents, but rather by policy documents created by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

The first kindergarten programme (OME, 1944) was created for junior and senior kindergarten in 1944. This programme document included a daily schedule dividing the

kindergarten day into alternating routine and play periods, with each period “follow[ing] one another in a natural series so that the child can move easily from one to the next” (OME, 1944, p. 20). The play periods were intended “to arouse a spontaneous interest in the environment which finds expression in purposeful constructive effort and to develop interest in other children and enjoyment of their company” (p. 20). The rhetoric of the self-underpins almost all of the 44 references to *play*. Notions of children’s intrinsic enjoyment of play and the importance of children’s interests guiding the play are evident in the many references to self-directed play and in cautions that teacher-directed play, intended to help children “acquire new skills and learn new uses of materials,” should be minimized (p. 35). Given that this is the only reference to *play* that we categorized as espousing the rhetoric of play as progress, it appears that policy-makers took up a Romantic view of early childhood education as a child-directed, enjoyable, form of children’s free expression. Children’s play was not to be used as a forum for teaching and learning. The “typical full-day programme” included 45 minutes of self-directed play (including outdoor play, dramatic play, leisure reading, arts and crafts, and play with toys and games) in the morning and 35 minutes of self-directed play in the afternoon (OME, 1944, pp. 20-21).

The 1944 document was the only government-generated kindergarten policy document for 22 years. The second program document (OME, 1966) included only seven references to play. Elements of the rhetoric of play as the self were explicitly expressed in six of these references to play. Free play, also described as activity time, is expected to be “a highly individualized experience which allows for much self-initiated, self-selected, self-directed, and self-evaluated activity in kindergarten classrooms of 1966 (OME, 1966, p. 17). The seventh reference to play described children’s construction of identities within their peer social group as an outcome of their play; that children “learn to live with other children, to share, to give away, to take turns, to assert himself and to take responsibility” (p. 17).

The third province-wide kindergarten program approved for use in schools in 1998 by the Ontario Ministry of Education was the first provincial document to be organized by subject area outcomes. This new organizational framework, together with societal demands for accountability in schools that resulted in the introduction of province-wide achievement literacy and mathematics tests in grades 3 and 6 around the same time, appear to have contributed to a shift in views of the role of play in kindergarten. Play does not disappear from the kindergarten program document altogether, as it is mentioned ten times in a section entitled, *Program Content and Teaching/Learning Approaches* (p. 6). All except one of the references to play takes up the rhetoric of play as progress at a position edging toward the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum. The program refers to a long-acknowledged “strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, literacy, and social skills” and encourages teachers “to play productive play activities that have specific learning goals and to provide appropriate and stimulating resources” (OME, 1998, pp. 6-7). A reference to play contexts as being those “in which children are at their most receptive” (p. 6) hints at the rhetoric of the self that underpins references to play in the 1944 and 1966 programs. The philosophical underpinnings of kindergarten were clearly oriented toward learning and development in the second province-wide program document, however.

The Early Years Report (McCain & Mustard, 1999), commissioned by the province about the same time as the kindergarten program document was published, emphasized the role of play in young children’s brain development. It appears that the report writers drew on the rhetoric of play as progress (at the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum) to make their case for a play-based kindergarten program. The authors synthesized research from science-based fields:

neuroscience, developmental psychology, human development, sociology, and paediatrics. Among their recommendations was: “Learning in the early years must be based on quality, developmentally attuned interactions with primary caregivers and opportunities for play-based problem solving with other children that stimulates brain development” (p. 7). Another kindergarten document published by the elementary teachers’ union around that time (ETFO, 2001) also used the rhetoric of play as progress from the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum, drawing on longitudinal research showing that skills-based kindergarten programs “will not deliver the desired results” in terms of literacy and math achievement (p. 14). It appears that these two documents, designed to influence kindergarten programs across the province, were reflective of a change in views of the role of play in kindergarten. The dominant rhetoric of “play as self” of the mid-twentieth century was being replaced by the rhetoric of “play as progress,” one that focused more on the psychologically-based developmental and learning outcomes-focused views, by the end of the century.

Play in Contemporary Kindergarten Programs

As part of Ontario’s ongoing kindergarten program review cycle, *The Kindergarten Program 1998* was replaced and updated with *The Kindergarten Program (Draft) 2006*. There are 65 references to *play* in the 2006 document. The rhetoric of play as self (15% of all references to play) is reflected in statements such as: “Children also need opportunities to engage with their peers in play activities of their own devising, through which they can express themselves and explore things of special interest to them” (OME, 2006, p.14). The rhetoric of play as identity (7%) is evident in the learning expectation that children should “identify and use social skills in play and other contexts” found within the *Personal and Social Development* program area (OME, 2006, p. 31). References to the role of the teacher in supporting children’s learning through play reflect the socio-cultural perspective of play as progress. The rhetoric of play as progress at the work/non-play end of Wood’s (2013) continuum predominates, however, as 78% outline the benefits of play for children’s development of knowledge and skills and play is consistently referred to as “learning based play” (OME, 2006). Further evidence of the more psychological/developmental perspective within the rhetoric of play as progress is found in a synthesis of the science-based fields taken from the work of McCain and Mustard (1999): “Opportunities for children to learn through play impel the development of multiple sensing pathways in the brain. A kindergarten program that is designed with planned opportunities for learning-based play offers sensory stimulation that the child absorbs and assimilates into core brain development” (OME, 2006, p. 14). The Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program Draft Version (OME, 2010/2011) replaced the 2006 document, as the Ontario Ministry of Education moved to a full-day early learning model in September 2010. Highly influential to the design of the 2010/2011 program document was the document, *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* (Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning, 2007). Principle 5 in the 2010/2011 kindergarten program document is taken directly from the *ELECT* document: “Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance” (OME, 2010/2011, p. 13 and Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning, 2007, p. 6). References cited in the play section of the *ELECT* document tend to come from the developmental end (work/non-play) of Wood’s (2013) continuum (e.g., Kagan & Lowenstein, 2004).

After further consultation, in September 2016 *The Kindergarten Program* was officially implemented. In our analysis of rhetorics of play within the draft version of 2010/2011 and the 2016 document that became the final version, we found 166 references to *play*. The language of the rhetoric of play as progress (78% of the play references) is used far more frequently than that of other rhetorics of play. Typical of the many examples of this rhetoric in the introductory section of the document is the following description: “When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with various materials, they are engaged in learning through play” (p. 13). The structured play perspective is reflected in statements in other parts of the introductory section, as examples of forms of play include lists of “skills and types of learning supported through play” (p. 14) and the kindergarten program is described as “the foundation for a continuum of learning from the early years to Grade 8” (p. 22). However, words, such as “noticing, wondering, . . . [and] exploring, observing, questioning”, that reflect more of a socio-cultural perspective of the rhetoric of play as progress, are also associated with play (p. 15). The rhetoric of the self is reflected in 14% of the references to play throughout the document. In a section for educators providing direction for planning for time and space, the rhetoric of play as the self can be found in the statement: “allowing children to be “in charge” of their play – engaging them in the planning of the learning activities and allowing time for unstructured play” (p. 15). The rhetoric of identity is found in 8% of the references to play.

In summary, play-based pedagogies have explicit and enthusiastic support in the current kindergarten program document. The rhetoric of play as progress predominates, often taking the more psychological/developmental perspective at the work/non-play end of Woods’s (2013) continuum. There are also many references to the socio-cultural view of play as progress, however, and there are many references to play that voice the rhetoric of play as self. Taken together, these features of the program document indicate that play has not been supplanted by didactic pedagogies, as has been the case in other jurisdictions (e.g., Bassok & Rorem, 2014; Russell, 2011).

Summary and Implications: Rhetorics of Play in Kindergarten Programs

In our tracing of discourses of play throughout the history of published kindergarten programs in the province of Ontario we find that kindergarten pedagogies, as conceived by program developers, have always included play, even though its role in kindergarten activity was greatly diminished and the rhetorics of play underpinning the use of the word, play, changed dramatically in the OME (1998) kindergarten program document. The OME (1998) document is an anomaly, however, as the OME (1944) document and the three contemporary documents explicitly and frequently identify play-based teaching and learning as essential to kindergarten activity. Even at a time when references to play were minimal in the kindergarten program document, there were high status play-supportive reports published by respected early childhood educators (e.g., ETFO, 2001; McCain & Mustard, 1999). Authors of these reports primarily used the language of the rhetoric of play as progress, with an emphasis on the developmental benefits of play and learning outcomes of play.

We believe that if play is to continue to have a role in kindergarten pedagogies, it is important for educators to take up the discourses that are valued in their social and cultural contexts, and at the same time, present alternative discourses that reflect their pedagogical knowledge and experience. We believe that the use of the rhetoric of play as progress has been key to the continued prominence of play in Ontario kindergarten programs. It represents ideologies

of schooling to which policy-makers seem to be attuned in this era of accountability. In Ontario, this approach has produced the result that Moyles (2015) wished for in her United Kingdom context, as play has a prominent place in the Ontario kindergarten program.

This rhetoric of play as progress is particularly important at a time when the Ontario government is accountable to the public for its dramatically increased infusion of public funding to kindergarten, moving from half-day to full-day kindergarten. When the program for the entire day is play-based, policy makers and program developers must be able to demonstrate that resources and attention to a play-based kindergarten result in desirable learning outcomes compatible with accountability era views of the role of schooling. However, we believe that educators should be alert to the possibility that policy makers and program developers yield to voices espousing didactic pedagogical approaches that are influencing kindergarten programs in the United Kingdom (Moyles, 2015) and in the USA (Bassok & Rorem, 2014). Given the influence of these voices in so many jurisdictions, it is important that teams of teachers and ECEs, with their strong backgrounds in play-based learning, continue in their collaborative teaching role in kindergarten classrooms. It is also important for teacher education programs to prepare kindergarten teachers who have strong professional knowledge about the complexities of peer and teacher-child interactions, as well as children's interactions with materials, in play contexts (Hedges, 2014). We propose a professional development approach that supports teachers in taking up a teacher-as-researcher stance. Our experience and the literature on action research (e.g., Galini & Efthymia, 2010; Keyes, 2000) show that teachers who adopt this stance are likely to become more certain and confident in their understanding of play and its role in children's learning and well-being. Their interactions with children and parents will be informed by their ongoing construction of knowledge about play and young children's learning, thus contributing to broader societal conversations about the importance of play, in its socio-cultural sense, in kindergarten.

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