

Book Review

The development of play by David Cohen

Barbara Scanlan | *New Zealand Tertiary College*

This book is written in a very accessible manner, making the read easy, yet informative. The author draws not only on a wide range of theories, he also peppers his work with links to his own children and family, thus creating opportunities for the reader to draw similarities or difference to their own situation.

Cohen (2019) explores the role of play in children's development and considers it a crucial component for children's learning. Suggesting that there might be a lack of time for free play and not enough opportunities for unstructured play times, the author also addresses the increase of screen play. He writes in detail about the various forms of play, including children's play with objects and language but also how children play with each other and their parents.

The book also considers the benefits of play and play as a platform for children's learning in the developmental areas including physical, language and literacy and social and emotional development. The author highlights the many opportunities for social learning that play offers as play often requires interaction with others, as well as offering opportunities to explore and challenges social norms. Cohen (2019) draws on recent research and further builds on the previous publications by discussing how parents can engage in play with their children and the opportunities for learning that pretend play offers. What might be of particular interest to those working in education, is the discussion of how play is portrayed in the media, as the notion of play as a form of learning is increasingly connected to educational toys.

Considering the power of play, the author also discusses play therapy as a strategy to support children to deal with stress, trauma and abuse and supports his discussion with strong links to research as well as foundational literature that discusses the significance of play. Cohen (2019) also reflects on the notion of play being one approach for people, adults and children, to realise their full potential, negating Maslow's (1971) idea that people only realise a very small part of their full potential. The author makes links to sports and notes that the interest in more risky sports, such as rock climbing is on the rise, with a focus on the technology involved in those sports. With considering the fun and playfulness of games of the past, the author suggests that many games might have become too serious to be considered play in its original definition.

In the closing chapter, the author acknowledges that the book might have led to more questions, rather than finding answers and suggests that children's consciousness of play is yet to be discovered. Cohen (2019) argues that children's increasing ability to become conscious of play and thus of rules that guide play, is in direct connection to children's growing awareness of their identity. In his closing words, the author reminds adults to play more and for educators, researcher and psychologists to play more with playing to gain further insights in the notion of play and its possible benefits.

Reference

Cohen, D. (2019). *The development of play*. (4th Ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *Self-actualization*. Big Sur Recordings.