

## Review

Suchánková, E. (2014). *Hra a její využití v předškolním věku* [Play and its use in pre-school age]. Praha: Portál.



Children's play belongs to highly topical subjects in the area of pre-school education. Play and a child are inseparable as important activities, by means of which children develop, learn to assert themselves and solve problems, especially within a group of their peers. Play reflects development-conditioned changes related to the development of pro-social behaviour. Adults, especially educators (tutors) and teachers should understand children's play, create desirable conditions for it, use it as a tool for children's development and a tool of pedagogical diagnostics, etc. This requires an abundance of specialized knowledge.

The author of a publication called "*Hra a její využití v předškolním věku*" (*Play and Its Use in Pre-School Age*) has approached this area in a comprehensive manner. She has set a goal to theoretically address specific features of play and provide readers with practical information, procedures, and ideas how to use a play when meeting the pre-school education objectives with regard to age-related and individual special features of children. The text of the publication is divided into four main chapters within which the author addresses play from different points of view. The content of the book demonstrates that the individual chapters are elaborated and interconnected, which allows readers to gain information gradually and in a logical context.

In the first chapter called "*Hra pohledem současnosti*" (*Play in the Presence*) the author describes a play and its principal features as viewed by various authors. A major part of the chapter consists of a sub-chapter dealing with the relation between play, learning, work and motivation. In this context, the author focuses in detail on internal and external motivation. She highlights making use of positive motivation, but also the risk of negative motivation applied especially as part of incorrect educational styles. In this chapter readers can find a mention of pedagogical and social constructivism or a humanistic approach to education (Rogers, Maslow). I believe that readers would appreciate more information on the approach to children's education and development as viewed by these important individuals as their opinions are still highly topical and current pre-school education is based on them because they are representative of the humanistic approach to education which requires mutual understanding and respect of those engaged in the educational process.

Chapter two called "*Hra v období předškolního věku*" (*Play in Pre-School Age*) focuses on pre-school children's play. The author expresses the substance of play in this period quoting A. S. Neill: "*Childhood means play and children can never grow tired of play.*" The author deals with significance of play. She describes the specific features and classification of play in direct relation to the pre-school age as a specific development stage. Children's play goes through qualitative changes, which are directly related to development stages. Knowing these specific features allows teachers to approach children and their play in a competent manner and, thus, provide children with desirable space for their play. Teachers and also students often find it difficult to be well versed in the classification of play. The author did not omit this area and provides readers with information on the classification of play in terms of various approaches (the level of guidance, organisation, kind of activity, etc.), which allows readers to have a comprehensive knowledge of children's play. In the last sub-chapter of the second chapter the author focuses on toys, their importance and suitability for pre-school children's play. In this aspect, the author also provides references to important documents in which adults can find out what is necessary for buying toys that are harmless to health.

Chapter three called "*Hra v pojetí předškolního vzdělávání*" (*Play Approached by Pre-School Education*) is already elaborated in the context of current pre-school education. It is already situated into the specific conditions of a nursery school and its curriculum. The basis of this chapter is formed by a sub-chapter focusing on individualization in pre-school education, which represents the principal idea and basis of the current philosophy of pre-school education in Czech nursery schools. The author briefly summarizes the changes to the paradigms and approaches in historical context. The text continues with the current approach to play within the pre-school curriculum. It is suitably completed with examples from nursery school practice. It also describes the issue of spontaneous and controlled play activities. In this part, the author uses the term "day regime", which the current curriculum does not use any longer. It is more suitable to use the term "*daily programme*" and follow the terms of the applicable pre-school curriculum. Knowing the substance of spontaneous and controlled activities and being able to plan them correctly and in a non-violent manner is certainly a feature of "mastering teaching," which develops during the pedagogical practice in relation to professional knowledge. The chapter also deals with the area of pedagogical diagnostics, planning of play activities and preparation of an environment for children's play. The author introduces and explains possible approaches when including play activities on usual days of a nursery school in accordance with the pre-school curriculum. It must be highlighted here that this part also includes the risks that the teacher should eliminate as much as possible. This area is usually not addressed much. I also appreciate the emphasis on the consistency of the pre-school curriculum on national – school and class level of the curriculum.

Chapter four called "*Hra jako prostředek individualizace v předškolním vzdělávání*" (*Play as a Tool for Individualization in Pre-School Education*) represents the theoretical bases resulting into a number of methodical procedures and recommendations for nursery school teachers concerning planning of play activities at the level of the school and class emphasizing individualization. In this part the text is completed with numerous charts allowing readers to understand the text better with regard to the particular conditions of education.

Reviewers are expected to have a critical opinion on a specialized text and thus to point out some weak points of the publication. If we take into account that the text is intended not only for pedagogues but also for teachers, it cannot be reproached at all. It is presented in a sophisticated, yet easy to understand language. It creates a comprehensive view of the pre-school play issue. The publication is certainly very good and both pedagogues working with pre-school children, and students preparing for this occupation should acquaint themselves with it.

It is a high-quality specialized publication, which readers can use not only to obtain theoretical findings but also numerous impulses for direct work with children.

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