

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

---

## Outlining Play and Playful Learning in Finland and Brazil : A Content Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policy Documents

Kangas, Jonna

2022-06

---

Kangas , J , Harju-Luukkainen , H , Brotherus , A , Gearon , L & Kuusisto , A 2022 , ' Outlining Play and Playful Learning in Finland and Brazil : A Content Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policy Documents ' , Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood , vol. 23 , no. 2 , pp. 153-165 . <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949120966104>

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/356014>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949120966104>

---

cc\_by\_nc\_nd

acceptedVersion

---

*Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository.*

*This is an electronic reprint of the original article.*

*This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.*

*Please cite the original version.*

## **Outlining Play and Playful Learning in Finland and Brazil. A Content Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policy Documents**

Jonna Kangas<sup>a</sup>, Liam Gearon<sup>b</sup>, Annu Brotherus<sup>a</sup>,  
Heidi Harju-Luukkainen<sup>c</sup> and Arniika Kuusisto<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland,

<sup>b</sup>Department of Education, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford, Oxford, Great Britain

<sup>c</sup>Faculty of Education and Arts, University of NORD, Norway

<sup>d</sup>Department of Child and Youth Studies, University of Stockholm, Stockholm, Sweden

### **1. Introduction**

During recent years, the OECD has taken the initiative to explore the contrasts and complexities of the different national policies and approaches to ECEC (see OECD, 2018). In this examination, Bennett (2005) has distinguished two broad categories between the national settings, particularly visible in Europe, as the pre-primary tradition (e.g. Belgium, France, Ireland, UK, and the US) focusing on cognitive goals and ‘readiness for school’ as important aims, and the social pedagogic tradition (e.g. Nordic countries, many parts of Central Europe) focusing more on children’s play and social development with an emphasis on children’s agency. This latter approach defines the developmental aims more broadly, enabling the staff to tailor the ECEC program to a local setting and to base assessment on more varied objectives than set results. As such approaches are directly linked to different perceptions of childhood. This kind of holistic curriculum approach is familiar in Nordic countries, where the education is seen through child-initiated, interactive, and playful activities instead of set-questions (see Kangas & Harju-Luukkainen, 2020). Further, OECD has expressed concerns about the risk of too much emphasis on formal teaching and other ‘schoolification’. Referring to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), OECD advocates an understanding of the curriculum in which the children should have a high degree of initiative and stresses the reinforcing of “those aspects of curriculum that contribute to the well-being and involvement of the child” (Bennett 2005, 7) and recognize child as active meaning-maker of the educational process and practices (Kangas & Reunamo, 2019). In all this, the playful learning approach has been a focal point in educational policy discussions internationally (Kangas & al. 2019, Kumpulainen 2018, Sefton-Green & al. 2015). How playful learning is defined and viewed in the policy documents give us an insight into the deeper structures of early childhood education and to the cultural construct of the play and learning of the respective country. For example NCCA (2009) and VanHoorn (2014) suggest that scaffolded i.e. guided play should be part of the daily practices of early childhood education. This type of definition provides us a window to the cultural differences, attitudes, and values of children and play in early childhood. Further, in a cross-national study by Harju-Luukkainen, Garvis & Kangas (2019), the early childhood educators viewed free play differently, making much about play and its definition culturally bonded.

From these premises, we have formulated a research question ‘How is Play and Playful learning described in Finnish and Brazilian curriculum guidelines in early childhood education?’. As data we use official documents of respective countries and

explore the textual data with the help of structural content analysis. By contrasting two very different social and educational contexts where curriculum documents have emerged, we can expose some of the values and attitudes towards playful learning, which are of importance regarding children's agency in early childhood.

## **2. Definition of play and playful learning**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines play as engagement in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose. In educational research this description focusing on children's experience has often been the definition of play. Bondioli (2001) states that the problem of the definition of play in developmental psychology is that the motive of play is generally overlooked because play is often considered "a spontaneous and self-motivated activity" (p. 111). Yet in the Philosophical Investigations, Wittgenstein (2009) delineated a problem in the definition of games as a general category that could be applied to all games. The nature and rules of games can, in other words, be defined easily – there are sets of rules – but finding a definition of a game that applies to all games is problematic. Wittgenstein used this problem of defining games as the basis for a philosophical notion of language games, the idea that we understand cultures and peoples through insights into the contingent conditions of specific time and place. This Wittgensteinian notion describes more widely the context of education: Instead of a certain list of goals set by the more advanced members of society, education can be viewed through its broader, multimodal and dynamic goals for empowering children through participation and belonging to support them to navigate and experience agency in the uncertain world (see OECD 2018; Kangas 2016; Van Oers 2008). Thus play and playful learning will have multi-dimensional and dynamic descriptions located in context and culture. The OECD Education 2030 project states that education should embrace three further categories of competencies that include creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and finally taking responsibility (OECD 2018). One solution to address these "Transformative Competencies" to support children to be innovative, responsible, and aware is to consider education through the notion that (all) play as learning (Schöning & Witcomb 2017; Pramling Samuelson & Asplund Carlson 2008). Furthermore the playful learning would be identified practices and routines related to supporting children's play and learning in the ECEC (Kangas & al. 2019). The key element is a development and revision of the cultural practices and structures in the ECEC which view play as part of children's learning (Venninen & Leinonen 2013).

However for research-based knowledge these wide political notions are not accepted as such. Following Wittgenstein (2009) that understanding one set of language games is not always or easily translated into another. For example in Russia Vygotsky (1967) has separated play from other childhood activities and concluded that only in playful learning children create meaning through imagination. Similarly, for the French sociologist Caillois (1958) the requirement for the play was that those taking part are involved in an illusion of a fictional world. In the UK educational context Whitebread & al. (2009) have been supporting the idea of simplifying the play to serve only the development of metacognitive skills and intentional, in other words the academic, learning. When considering playful learning traditional research of playful learning has focused on knowledge-creation on the learning and development processes in the mind of the children participating in playful learning.

Many traditional pieces of research of playful learning are focused on creating knowledge regarding the learning and development processes in the minds of the children participating in play. Vygotsky (1967) relates play to the development of self-control and self-regulation of children together of the development of language and symbolic representation which creates meanings for communication and belonging in the society (see also Kangas, Ojala & Venninen 2015). How playful activities and free play are viewed are also context bounded (Harju-Luukkainen & al. 2019). However, it is shown to have a role in the development of children's different skills. Skills such as enactment into learning activities through creativity and exploration or goal setting for learning through independent initiatives and choice-making were shown to be developing in the context of the playful learning environment with the participatory teaching approach of teachers (Kangas 2016). Also Piispanen & Meriläinen (2015, 233) show how play in class '...gives pupils freedom to play individually and creatively but still along the lines of the goals' Researchers have found out that also social competence is a requirement for successful play because in play the negotiations and agreements between the facts and fiction are done within the play. Therefore playful learning can be seen as a dynamic and dialogical process in an imaginary environment (Møller 2015; see also Harris 2000).

These statements have strongly influenced to research culture where children's inner speech together with memory skills, language development, and cognitive learning have been followed in the context of play (see Berk 2006; Hitch & al. 1991). Bodrova (2008) raises a warning about this trend of defining play only through cognitive learning. In her research she states that mature play can be defined to be the leading activity of children. This kind of playful learning however does not take place in many ECE settings because the time and space for children freely get involved in the play is reduced. (Bodrova 2008).

Researches about the role of playful learning in early development and education emphasise the role of adult mediation in the development of children's skills and motive of play to become as playful learning (Kangas & al. 2019; Karpov 2005; Vygotsky 1967). According to Wood (2010) playful learning refers to the use of play in early childhood education to promote the learning of young children. McInnes & al. (2011) have shown that in early childhood education playful learning can be understood as dynamic and adaptive activity without strict pedagogical actions of teachers. Here, playful learning, as part of this dialogical environment, as Vygotsky would recognise, is also part of the cultural, social, and indeed political environment. However Karpov (2005) raises awareness about children's developing motivation and skills in play and claims that adults' participation in children's play increases children's interest in playful learning. Researchers have suggested that teachers should practice pedagogy that facilitates playful learning there is a discrepancy about play and how it should be implemented in educational practices (McInnes & al. 2011; Moyles & al. 2001).

### **3. Method and data**

Documents provide a rich though often underused source of data for educational research. Documentary research holds a critical position in the foundational development of social science, where, for example, we see Marx, Durkheim and Weber working primarily from archival and documentary sources. Research on document sources has particular

applicability in educational sciences, as educational systems consistently produce excessive amounts of documentary data (Punch & Oancea 2014.)

In the ECEC setting this includes for example the national, municipal, unit, and child-specific curricula, and the documenting of children's progress, and other day-to-day evaluation in the operational environment. In the field of curriculum research, critical theory has held an influential role. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, 35) write: "It has been argued for many years that the most satisfactory account of the curriculum is given by a modernist, positivist reading of the development of education and society." As the curricular expression of this, they refer to Tyler's (1949) influential rationale for the curriculum, including four questions:

- (1) What educational purposes should the school [here the ECEC] seek to attain?
- (2) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- (3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
- (4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2017.)

In line with this, Flinders and Thornton (2004) ask in their introduction to *The Curriculum Studies Reader*: "What do schools teach, what should they teach, and who should decide?" as well as wonder what beliefs, values, and attitudes are learned from the way classrooms are, as in, "what lessons are taught but not planned, acquired but taken for granted." (Flinders & Thornton, 2004, XI). After all, the policy document level and the day-to-day implementation may not always meet in the way the policymakers have aimed for.

In this study, the National curriculum guidelines for early childhood education both in Finland and Brazil were selected for data. In both countries the focus of educational policy in the past few years has been concluding a new curriculum for the first stage of education and thus new national curriculum was published in year the 2016. In both countries these new curriculum guidelines consider the learning and educational services for children 0 to 5 years old (Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) 2016; National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2016). Both curricula also emphasise play and playful learning. For example, the EBC Agência Brazil, make a statement that "the new Base Curriculum includes play in early childhood education" (Martins 2017).

The curricula documents were analysed through qualitative content analysis. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, 564-569) describe the process of content analysis thoroughly through defining the elements of an eleven-step process. They summarize the content analysis process by saying it involves coding, categorizing--as in "creating meaningful categories into which the units of analysis - words, phrases, sentences, etc - can be placed" (ibid., p. 564), comparisons between these categories and making links between these, and finally, drawing theoretical conclusions from the text. According to Patton (2015) essential in the content analysis process is to identify meanings and consistencies through patterns, themes, and categories. The national curriculum guidelines were read through and challenging issues as "meanings" considering play, playfulness, and play-based learning were identified and categorized.

When it comes to curriculum studies, it is also notable to ask, to which extent do these document level guidelines become a practical level reality in the Early Childhood

Education settings in each of these national - and even more so, local - settings. Yang and Li (2018) have examined cultural ideology matters in Early Childhood Education curriculums across cultural settings by utilizing a three-level model by Adamson and Morris (2014), including (1) the intended curriculum, (2) the implemented curriculum, and (3) the curriculum ideology. Although the present study does not involve observation on the practical level implementation on the included national settings, it is important to keep in mind that the policy document level naturally necessitates practical level implementation which relies on the practitioners' input as well as being embedded in particular societal and cultural structures.

Though international comparisons in research designs are not unproblematic and may often also produce simplifying generalisations and categorisations (e.g. Kettunen & Petersen 2011), keeping in mind the complexities such examinations entail, they can also offer valuable knowledge for further development of national educational systems such as the here analysed policy documents as well as how these are interpreted and implemented by educational practitioners.

#### **4. Findings**

In this section we describe our findings from several perspectives. Firstly we describe how playful learning and play are defined in both Finnish and Brazilian curriculums from two perspectives: a) how many times is play mentioned and in what type of contexts and b) how is the play defined in the perspective country. This is done to give readers the context of the respective country's document. After this introduction to the respective data context we contrast the findings on two levels a) an overall curriculum context level and b) operational context level. This is done in order to answer the research question, How Playful learning is described in Finnish and Brazilian curriculum guidelines in early childhood education.

##### **4.1 Play in Finnish early childhood education curriculum**

In the Finnish National core curriculum for early childhood education and care (2016) the word 'play' occurs 55 times, but only twice as a chapter heading. The Finnish word for play is 'leikki', with word forms such as 'leikillinen' which means 'playful' (for example Lapsella on oikeus leikkiä means children have the right to play). Also the word 'pelata' (originating from 'peli' = a game) is related to the play vocabulary meaning playing games [game] (for example pelata jalkapalloa means to play football). The concept of play is mentioned twice in the heading level of the core-curriculum in chapter three (3.1), where the action-culture definition is required with "the supportive community for play and interaction". A second heading mentions (chapter 4.1) has play defined as a method for "development, learning, and well-being". In total 25 out of 55 mentions of play are within chapter 4.1.

The conception of play from the national core curriculum (2016) is that play creates joy and pleasure and thus is motivating activity and not a tool to achieve learning goals. In main concept of learning the core-curriculum states: The concept of learning is based on the conception of a child as an active agent of their own learning. Play is meaningful for the learning of children. The concept of learning is based on a holistic approach and learning happens when children play, explore, moving around, taking care of the learning environment, through self-expression and creativity. (p. 20). A child learns through play

(the play is named as a key path to learning), but in play child is not learning through cognitive assignments but more through the way of being, living, and perceiving the world. The elements that are combined through play are enthusiasm, co-operation, and challenging personal skills and competences. The play itself is motivating and joyful action, where children are learning different skills and knowledge. Children are naturally curious and they are willing to learn. (National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2016, 14)

The role of play is emphasised in the part of the curriculum that considers the learning community in early childhood education. With these nine mentions of play, it can be said that playful learning plays a crucial role in the chapter:

An operational culture that encourages children to play recognises the significance of play for a child's well-being and learning. The staff recognise factors that set limits to play and develop approaches and learning environments that promote playing. The children and staff have the opportunity to experience the joy of doing things together and playing together... Room, time, and peaceful settings are given to children's initiatives for playing, experiments, and experiences. Playing children and adults are given an opportunity to concentrate on the play. (Finnish National core-curriculum of early childhood education and care 2016, 48).

Finally, in the chapter of the concept of learning the core-curriculum emphasises that alone play has intrinsic value for children, but it has an even more essential role in pedagogics to support learning, wellbeing, and development. Kangas, Ojala and Venninen (2015) have identified from the Finnish core curriculum for early years guiding principles of autonomy, exploration, social competence, self-expression, self-control, and participation emerging through play and action. The play holds a space and place to be visible and audible. Children's initiatives to play, to try out, and to experience are supported by providing space, time, and playing peace. The children and adults who are playing are given the opportunity to focus on it.

#### **4.2 Play in Brazilian early childhood education curriculum**

In the Brazilian National Common Curriculum Baseline (Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC)) there are 31 mentions of words that are related to brincar [brinc-] which means play [playful] (for example, as crianças brincam na areia means children are playing in the sandbox. There are five mentions of words that are related to jogar [jog-] which means playing games (for example jogar futebol means to play football). In the BNCC document play is mentioned as one of the six rights of the child to ensure learning and development. In the first stage of Basic Education, i.e. the years 0 to 5 years, there are six learning and development rights: to live, to play, to participate, to explore, to express, and learn to know yourself (BNCC 2017, 36). However, at the level of explicit heading, the concept of play does not appear. In other words, if we may extrapolate some meaning from this, play is not explicitly recognised as being critical to these learning and development rights.

The role of play in early childhood education is "to play daily in different ways, in different spaces and times, with different partners (children and adults), expanding and diversifying their access to cultural productions" (BNCC 2017, 35). This statement is expressed to originate from the previous early childhood education curriculum. The DCNEI (2009) in its Article 4, define the child as "Historical subject with rights who experiences and builds, through the interaction, relationships, and daily practices, their

personal and collective identity... plays, imagines, fantasy, wishes, learns, observes, experiences, narrates, questions, and constructs meanings about nature and society, producing culture.

Play as a pedagogical practice is mentioned to aim towards appropriate learning (BNCC 2017, 8). Also, according to the DCNEI (2009) the structure of the pedagogical practices are the interactions and play, experiences in which children can build and appropriate knowledge through their actions and interactions with their peers and with adults, which enables learning, development, and socialization. Overall play is viewed to be the way of natural development for children aged 0 to 5 years old. However, it is vaguely described that this development consists of aspects of children's knowledge, imagination, creativity, emotional, corporal, and sensorial experiences, and also overall cognitive, social, and relational experiences.

#### 4.3 Comparison of playful learning contexts in curricula

The role of playful learning in the context of educational activities by the Brazilian BNCC is rather small. Considered through the rights of learning and development, the curriculum establishes five areas of experience in which children can learn and develop.

- The self, the other, and society
- Body, gestures, and movements
- Traits, sounds, colours, and shapes
- Listening, speaking, thinking, and imagination
- Spaces, times, quantities, relations, and transformations

Play is mentioned as a method of learning in the context of the self, the other, and society and in the context of my body, gestures, and movement. Both content areas have five mentions about play across the different age groups in the Brazilian BNCC (2016, 43-50) (see table 1).

Table 1 Mentions of play (*brincar, brincadeira & jogos*) in the context of learning in the Brazilian curricular areas (n)

In Finland the core-curriculum of early childhood education also names five key objectives and contents of pedagogical activities:

- Me and our community
- I grow, move and develop
- Diverse forms of expression
- The rich world of languages
- Exploring and interacting with my environment

The Finnish curriculum does not give specific learning goals for different age groups of children, but in general playful learning is mentioned within the learning area I grow, move and develop in the context of physical play and health education. Also, in the learning area of exploring and interacting with my environment play has a total of three mentions, two of which are related to media education (see table 2).



Table 2 Mentions of play (*leikki, leikkiä, leikillinen*) in the context of learning in the Finnish curricular areas (n 5)

Both curricula are emphasising the role of play strongly, but in the context of learning (learning areas in Finnish curriculum and areas of experience in Brazilian curriculum) does not emphasise nor define the play in these contexts.

#### 4.4 Comparison of the operational context of play and playful learning in Finland and Brazil

When implementing the Finnish national core curriculum (2016), teachers must ensure that children's initiatives and actions are considered. Playful learning is an important way of working in early childhood education, but this requires the teaching staff to understand the role of play to the child and the pedagogical role of play for children learning, development, and well-being. Teachers' commitment to the learning situation creates sensitivity to children's feelings and personal well-being. This requires that teachers know how to include pedagogical knowledge, cross-disciplinary information, and pedagogical expertise to the daily educational practices (National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2016, 53). A zone of proximal development (see Vygotsky 1967) is strongly underlined in the curriculum and it states that through play children learn new skills and knowledge from a more skilled member of the group (child or adult), thus the play is a social event of shared learning.

Teachers are encouraged to support and guide children to become conscious of their own learning and to perceive that they can influence their own success in learning. In Finland, a warm and personal relationship between teachers and children creates a basis for learning. Both the children and the staff have an opportunity to experience the joy of playing and of mutual action and togetherness (National core curriculum for early childhood education and care 2016, 20). Teachers are encouraged to use play as a teaching and interaction method to support children to express themselves verbally and bodily. Play can be used in versatile ways in the teaching of contents of various fields of knowledge and arts: mathematics can be explored in a playful way and the imaginary play and play worlds can be developed through drama and children's literature. (p. 39.)

Brazilian BNCC (2017) emphasised that the interaction between teaching staff and children during play characterises the daily life of children, bringing with it many learning opportunities for the holistic development of children. By joining in play, the teacher has chances to identify the emotions of children and thus support their motivation towards learning. By observing the interactions and playfulness between children the teachers can identify the expression of affections, the mediation of frustrations, the cause of conflicts, and the regulation of emotions.

The BNCC (2016) set the focus on teaching intentions of teachers to be long-lasting pedagogical relations. This intentionality includes the organisation of teaching and offering of learning experiences that makes possible the children to know themselves and the other. Through pedagogy children learn to know and understand the relations with nature, culture, and science, which translates into the practices of care, playing, exploring with varied pedagogical materials, approaching literature and meeting people.

## Discussion

In this study our aim was to define closer how playful learning is described in Finnish and Brazilian curriculum guidelines in early childhood education. As data we used official curriculum documents of the respective country and explored the textual data with

the help of structural content analysis. In this study we were able to outline different views on playful learning in early childhood education in respective countries. We were able to detect different approaches and policy orientations toward play and playful learning. However, also similarities emerged, which will discuss further.

A review of the archaeological, historical, anthropological and sociological research on play, Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja and Verma (2012) suggest two identifiable features of play: Firstly its ubiquity among all human cultures, a universality on the hand which is ‘consistently supported by adults in all societies and cultures’, and secondly play has multi-variant nature of forms in different societies. In both cases ‘these variations appear to arise from differing attitudes concerning the nature of childhood and the value of play’ (Whitebread & Basilio 2013, 78). To start with, it is important to note that the new curricula of early childhood education in both Finland and Brazil interpret that children are viewed to have competencies to transform our society and shape our future. However in order to play this active part in society, they will need skills to navigate across a variety of contexts in social space (family, community, region, nation, digital contents, and the world) (OECD 2018).

In each country the curriculum documents were emphasising the quality of early childhood education through the steering documents, focusing on the playful and holistic approach of learning as an adaptation process to culture and society. However, in an educational system that acknowledges the importance of play in the child’s holistic well-being, learning, and development, the pedagogy can be based on factors that restrict opportunities for play and simultaneously strive for developing play friendly practices and learning environments (see McInnes & al. 2011; Moyles & al. 2001). According to our results, the playful learning practices remain vague and not clearly defined. This can lead to differences in the interpretations on the operational level (for instance Harju-Luukkainen & al. 2019). To begin to open up some explanatory possibilities here we turned to Wittgenstein (2009), perhaps on the surface an unusual choice to resolve a definitional problem in ECEC. Tentatively exploring the analogical parallel here, we thought to examine the relationship between problems of definition in play and playful curriculum (Kangas & al. 2019), contextualised within major reviews of the literature on playful learning (Møller 2015; Sefton-Green & al. 2015; Whitebread & al. 2012; Lester & Russell 2010), Wittgensteinian theories of ‘language game’ and ‘form of life’ may we suggest have evident comparability to the difficulty of consistent definitions of playful learning.

Our identified factors influencing value system construction through binary notions of agency vs. education, or the classic delineation of nature vs. nurture, with different mixed method designs and data sets showing variously different individual emphases on either side of the binary equation (e.g. Teddlie, Tashakkori & Johnson 2008). Something similar seems evident in these studies of playful learning in curricula documentation. Again in tentative terms following Wittgenstein (2009) we suggest that something very important is being begun as children are initiated into different cultural and socially defined notions of playful learning, controlled and defined by educational steering documents in different national contexts. These different definitions of play, and thus also learning through play and the playful pedagogy, seem to have their roots in cultural and national definition, and the evidence we have accumulates here unambiguously supports this. (Harju-Luukkainen & al 2019; Kuusisto & Gearon 2017.)

The steering documents together with the theories have shown that the definition of play even within one document is not necessarily contextualised and unambiguous. On

the basis of our analysis we argue that variant definitions of play and playful learning can and indeed seem to provide insights into the cultural language games of peoples divergent in socio-political and historical context. It hints at something significant which links our Vygotskian notion of societal influence on the curriculum to a wider literature. The importance of such a hypothesis opens up, we suggest, possibilities for new directions in multi-disciplinary educational research on playful learning not only in the early years but across all stages of what we define as the life trajectory. We suggest, tentatively at this stage, that differing cultural and pedagogical standpoints, uncovered in this study, show not only different approaches to pedagogy in early childhood education but different attitudes to the child in the process of enculturation. The construct, definition, and cultural and pedagogical determination of playful learning is an important factor here, we hypothesise, in the pathways of this life trajectory. This would seem, even based on our initial analysis, to suggest that play in early childhood education is a sort of induction into a societal path for the person. This would be in line with Wittgenstein's (2009) notion that even the nature of play can be easily defined, there is no universal definition of playful learning, because the concept is always linked with culture and political values in the nation. As we claimed before play and playful learning will have multi-dimensional and dynamic descriptions located in context and culture.

## References

- Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) (2016). Ministério da Educação. Retrieved 11.1.2018 from <http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/>
- Bennett, J. (2005). Curriculum issues in national policy-making. *European early childhood education research journal*, 13(2), 5 DOI: 10.1080/13502930585209641
- Berk, L. E. (2006). *Child development*. 6 th edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon
- Bondioli, A. (2001). The adult as a tutor in fostering children's symbolic play. In A. Göncü & Klein, L. (eds.) *Children in play, story, and school*. New York: Guilford Press. p. 107-131.
- Bodrova, E. (2008). Make-believe play versus academic skills: a Vygotskian approach to today's dilemma of early childhood education, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 16(3), 357-369, DOI:10.1080/13502930802291777
- Cailloins, M. (1958). *Man, play and games*. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe Inc.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Planning educational research. Research methods in education*. New York: Routledge Editors.
- Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil, DCNEI (2009). Conselho Nacional de Educação. Resolução CNE/CEB nº 5/2009. Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil. Brasília.
- Flinders, D.J. and Thornton, S.J. (2004). *The curriculum studies reader*. Psychology Press.
- Harris, P. L. (2000). *The work of the imagination*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hitch, G. J., Halliday, M. S., Schaafstal, A. M., & Heffernan, T. M. (1991). Speech, "inner speech," and the development of short-term memory: Effects of picture-

labeling on recall. *Journal of experimental child psychology*, 51(2), 220-234.  
[10.1016/0022-0965\(91\)90033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-0965(91)90033-0)

- VanHoorn, J., Nourrot, P. M., Scales, B., & Alward, K. R. (2014). *Play at the center of the curriculum*. Pearson Higher Ed.
- Harju-Luukkainen, H., Garvis, S., & Kangas, J. (2019). "After Lunch We Offer Quiet Time and Meditation": Early Learning Environments in Australia and Finland Through the Lenses of Educators. In S. Faas, D. Kasüschke, E. Nitecki, M. Urban, & H. Wasmuth (Eds.), *Globalization, Transformation, and Cultures in Early Childhood Education and Care: Reconceptualization and Comparison* (pp. 203-219). (Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kangas, J. & Harju-Luukkainen, H. (2020 *forthcoming*). Creating a Framework for Playful Learning and Pedagogy - Framing the Finnish Perspective Through Systematic Content Analysis. In: Harju-Luukkainen, H., Kangas, J. & Garvis, S. (eds). *Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care - From Research to Policy and Practice*. Springer
- Kangas, J. (2016). *Enhancing children's participation in early childhood education through participatory pedagogy*. Doctoral dissertation. Helsinki: University of Helsinki
- Kangas, J., Ojala, M., & Venninen, T. (2015). Children's self-regulation in the context of participatory pedagogy in early childhood education. *Early Education and Development*, 26(5-6), 847-870.
- Karpov, Y.V. (2005). *The neo-Vygotskian approach to child development*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Kettunen, P. & Petersen, K. (2011). Introduction: Rethinking welfare state models. In Kettunen, P. & Petersen, K. (eds.) *Beyond Welfare State Models: Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Edgar, p. 1-15.
- Kumpulainen, K., 2018. A principled, personalised, trusting and child-centric ECEC system in Finland. In: S.L. Kagan, *The Early Advantage 1—Early Childhood Systems That Lead by Example: A Comparative Focus on International Early Childhood Education*. (pp.72-98.) Teachers College Press.
- Kuusisto, A. & Gearon, L. (2017). On Method: Researching Value Learning and Life Trajectories – Dialogue, Diversity and Inter-Disciplinarity. In A. Kuusisto & L. Gearon (Eds.) *Value Learning Trajectories: Theory, Method, Context*. (pp. 99-115.) Münster: Waxmann.
- Lester, S. & Russell, W. (2010). *Children's right to Play: An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide*. The Hague, the Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Martins, H. (2017). *Base curricular deve incluir o brincar na educação infantil, diz especialista*. EBC Agência Brasil 7.11.2017. Retrieved 12.11.2017 from <http://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/geral/noticia/2017-11/base-curricular-deve-incluir-o-brincar-na-educacao-infantil-diz-especialista>

- McInnes, K., Howard, J., Miles, G., & Crowley, K. (2011). Differences in practitioners' understanding of play and how this influences pedagogy and children's perceptions of play. *Early Years*, 31(2), 121-133.
- Moyles, J.R., Adams, S. & Musgrove, A. (2001). *SPEEL study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning*. Department of Education and Skills London.
- Møller, S. J. (2015). Imagination, Playfulness and Creativity in Children's Play with Different Toys. *American Journal of Play*, 7(3), 322–346.
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. NCCA (2009). Aistear: The early childhood curriculum framework. <http://www.ncca.ie/earlylearning>
- National core curriculum for early childhood education and care (2016). Finnish National Agency for Education. Regulations and guidelines 2017:10.
- OECD (2018). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Directorate for Education and Skills. *The future of education and skills*. Education 2030.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods. Integrating Theory and Practice. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. The United States of America: Sage Publications.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I. P., & Asplund Carlsson, M. A. (2008). The playing learning child: Towards a pedagogy of early childhood. *Scandinavian journal of educational research*, 52(6), 623-641.
- Piispanen, M., & Meriläinen, M. (2015). Play as Part of Learning - Learning as Part of Play. In C. Shoniregun, & G. Akmayeva (Eds.), *Proceedings of IICE 2015, Ireland International Conference on Education*. (pp. 229-234). Infonomics Society.
- Política de educação infantil: proposta. (1993). BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. Secretaria de Educação Fundamental. Brasília, DF: MEC/SEF/COEDI.
- Punch, K. F., & Oancea, A. (2014). Introduction to research methods in education. London: Sage Publications.
- Schöning, M. & Witcomb, C. (2017). *This is the one skill your child needs for the jobs of the future*. World Economic Forum: Education <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/09/skills-children-need-work-future-play-lego/>
- Sefton-Green, J., Kumpulainen, K., Lipponen, L., Sintonen, S., Rajala, A., & Hilppö, J. (2015). *Playing with learning. The Playful learning center*. University of Helsinki. <http://plchelsinki.fi/>
- Teddlie, C., Tashakkori, A. and Johnson, B., (2008). Emergent techniques in the gathering and analysis of mixed methods data. In S. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (eds.) *Handbook of emergent methods in social research*. New York: Guilford Press. p. 389-413.
- United Nation (1989). The convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Venninen, T., & Leinonen, J. (2013). Developing children's participation through research and reflective practices. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 7(1), 31-49.

- Whitebread, D., and Basilio, M. (2013) "*Play, culture and creativity.*" *Cultures of Creativity*. Billund, Denmark: The LEGO Foundation.
- Whitebread, D., Marisol, B., Kuvalja, M. and Mohini, V., (2012). *The Importance of Play: A report on the value of children's play with a series of policy recommendations*. Toy Industries Of Europe (TIE).
- Whitebread, D., Coltman, P., Jameson, H., & Lander, R. (2009). Play, cognition and self-regulation: What exactly are children learning when they learn through play?. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 26(2), 40.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2009). *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1967). Play and Its Role in the Mental Development of the Child. *Soviet Psychology*, 5(3), 6–18.